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Impacts of the changing nature of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system on educators within the VET system in Australia

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Impacts of the Changing Nature of the Vocational Education and Training
(VET) System on
Educators within the VET System in Australia

Mairead Dempsey

MEd, BEd, BA(Ed), Dip Buss, DipTAA

This portfolio is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Education
2013

School of Education
Faculty of Education and Arts
Edith Cowan University

USE OF THESIS

The Use of Thesis statement is not included in this version of the thesis.

The Doctor of Education Program and the Role of the Portfolio

The Doctor of Education Program aims to prepare students for leadership roles in the knowledge society. The principal requirement is completion of five coursework subjects, each requiring one semester of full-time study. The course work subjects included: Methods of Investigation; Learning in the Knowledge Society; the Governance of Educational Institutions; Education and the Global Economy; and, Curriculum and the Knowledge Society. As an additional requirement, candidates undertake research and a study into a theme relating to one or more coursework units and present in a portfolio of 30,000 to 60,000 words. This portfolio is presented in partial fulfilment of the final requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education.

ABSTRACT

Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Australia has experienced an unprecedented rate of change in recent times dominated by economic discourses that point to the need for the VET system to contribute to economic development. This discourse includes increasing the competence of the present and future workforce to meet the emerging needs of the economy so Australia can compete in the global market. The VET sector in Australia operates within a National Training Framework that has been constantly changing over the past decade.

This study considered the impact of the changing nature VET policy on trainers of VET. The study explored the proposition that there is a link between VET trainer competency and a high level of non-compliance in the delivery and assessment aspects of the Australian regulatory standards.

This study includes an environmental scan, a review of key literature, interviews, a survey and findings from focus groups that relate to the VET trainer profile, impacts of sector changes and benchmarks for trainers of VET. The study draws on both quantitative and qualitative data to determine some of the impacts of policy changes on trainers operating within the system, from regulatory to operational perspectives.

This study identifies a basic profile of VET trainers in Australia. It found the pace of change of government policy, regulatory changes, expectations of industry and changes in learners had placed considerable strain on VET providers and their trainers. Some of the challenges identified by trainers included the capacity to reflect the requirements of National Training Packages and meets the needs of the diverse learner's, and the use of new technology. They identified increased stress levels and pressure of time constraints to produce results.

The evidence indicated the disparity of content, delivery and assessment and modes of the benchmark Certificate IV in Training and Assessment was not conducive to consistency in trainer competency and ability to meet the changing needs of the VET environment.

An important conclusion was that the benchmark qualification for training and assessment within the VET sector does not provide sufficient skills and knowledge to enable trainers to confidently adjust to the speed of evolution within the VET sector. The findings led to recommendations that may help to inform government and policy makers who hold responsibility for the VET sector in Australia of possible future considerations in relation to trainers of VET.

DECLARATION

I certify that this portfolio does not, to the best of my knowledge and belief:

- (i) incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any institution of higher education;
- (ii) contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text; or
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Date: March 2013

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This portfolio marks the end of a long passage of learning. After more than 20 years in the Vocational Education and Training sector in Australia, I am proud to complete this chapter and ready to embark on other journeys that aim to support the development and sustainability of the vocational education and training sector. I dedicate this portfolio to the memory of my parents Mary and Bill Healy and my brother Liam.

I thank my immediate family, Mark, Emily Mary and Sean Dempsey, for their love and support.

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Glossary of VET terms commonly used in an Australian context

Accreditation

The process of formal recognition of a course by the Australian State or Territory course accreditation body in line with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) Standards for State and Territory Registering/Course Accrediting Bodies.

AQTF Standards for RTOs (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, 2010, p.71).

Accredited course

A structured sequence of vocational education and training that has been accredited and leads to an Australian Qualification (AQF) qualification or Statement of Attainment.

AQTF Standards for RTOs (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, 2010, p.71).

Assessment of competency

The process of collecting evidence and making judgments on whether competency has been achieved to confirm that an individual can perform to the standard expected in the workplace, as expressed by the relevant endorsed industry/enterprise competency standards of a Training Package or by the learning outcomes of an accredited course.

AQTF Standards for RTOs (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, 2010, p.72).

Audit

A systematic, independent and documented process for obtaining evidence to determine whether the activities and related outcomes of a training organisation comply with the AQTF Standards for Registered Training Organisation.

AQTF Standards for RTOs (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, 2010, p.72).

Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF)

The policy framework that defines all qualifications recognised nationally in post-compulsory education and training within Australia. The AQF comprises titles and guidelines, which define each qualification, together with principles and protocols covering articulation and issuance of Statements of Attainment.

Australian Qualifications Framework Implementation Framework (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment 2011).

Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)

The nationally agreed quality arrangements for the vocational education and training system agreed by the Ministerial Council.

AQTF Standards for RTOs (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, 2010, p.72).

Competency standard

The requirements for effective workplace performance in a discrete area of work, work function, activity or process and are used as the basis for defining learning outcomes and the benchmarks for assessment within the Vocational Education and Training sector.

TAA04 Training and Assessment Training Package (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2004, p. 728).

National Training Framework (NTF)

The system of vocational education and training that is applied nationally, endorsed by the Ministerial Council, and made up of the Australian Quality Training Framework and nationally endorsed Training Packages.

AQTF Standards for RTOs (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, 2010).

Trainer

Anyone who fulfills one or more activities linked to the (theoretical or practical) training function, either in an educational institution, training institution or at the workplace.

TAA04 Training and Assessment Training Package (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2004, p. 730).

National Training Information Service (NTIS)

The national register for recording information from Registered Training Organisations, Training Packages and accredited courses. Information held on the NTIS is searchable and publicly assessable via the Internet. The NTIS contains comprehensive information on endorsed Training Packages that have been approved by Ministers and includes full details of competency, a listing of NQC noted support materials and includes: full details of competency standards; a listing of NQC noted support materials with contact source; details of AQF accredited courses/qualifications; and contact and scope of registrations of all Registered Training Organisations.

AQTF Standards for RTOs (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, 2010)

Training.gov.au (TGA)

The database on Vocational Education and Training in Australia. TGA is the official National Register of information on Training Packages, Qualifications, Courses, Units of Competency and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and has been developed for experienced training sector users.

<http://training.gov.au> Downloaded 20 November 2012.

Training packages

The national industry benchmarks for nationally recognised vocational outcomes in the vocational education and training system. They are an integral set of nationally endorsed competency standards, assessment guidelines and Australian Qualifications Framework qualifications for a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise consisting of endorsed components of competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications, optional non-endorsed components of support materials, such as learning strategies, assessment resources and professional development materials.

AQTF Standards for RTOs (Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment, 2010).

List of acronyms

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACE	Adult and Community Education
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
AQTF	Australian Quality Training Framework
AVETIMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Statistical Standard
CRICOS	Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students
COAG	Council of Australian Government
DEEWR	Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations
DEST	Department of Education Science and Training
DIISRTE	The Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education
EEO	Equal Employment Opportunity
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
IR	Industrial Relations
ISC	Industry Skills Councils
LLN	Language, Literacy and Numeracy
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council of Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
OECD	Organisation of Economic and Cultural Development
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
VET	Vocational Education and Training

CHAPTER 1

PRESENTING THE PORTFOLIO

Introduction

This body of work is set in the context of Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Australia. It reviews policy directions pursued within in the past decade (2000 to 2010) relating to VET. The study focuses on the impacts of policy changes on educators within the system in Australia. There are many terms to identify educators in VET including teacher, trainer and assessor, lecturer, practitioner, workplace trainer and assessor. For the purpose of this body of work, the term ‘trainer’ will be used throughout to encompass all terms. This portfolio is likely to be of most interest to those with responsibility for VET teaching and learning policy.

The portfolio includes a literature review, environmental scan and consultations with VET stakeholders that informed a small exploratory study focusing on VET trainers. The initial consultation included the seven VET regulatory bodies charged with implementation of standards for registration of VET providers across Australia. The regulatory conditions and standards in question are called the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). A pattern of consistent non-compliance against staff competency standard 1.4 and delivery and assessment standards 1.3 and 1.5 was identified from audit results by all of the regulators. The pattern was over the several years that preceded this study; however there was no evidence of why there was a persistently poor result in these three standards in particular. It is noted the same pattern was evident (National Industry Strategic Audit, 2010) after this work was completed.

The purpose of the exploratory study was to gain a profile of VET trainers and to examine a potential link between VET trainers’ competency and the non-compliance in the delivery and assessment aspects of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) standards. It was also to identify trainers’ competency requirements, practice and views related to their professional development in response to the changing face of VET .

The portfolio is made up of seven chapters. The structure includes chapters one to four that provide an introduction to the study and a review of the related literature within the VET environment while chapter five to seven detail the exploratory study. Chapter one introduces the vocational education and training sector in Australia, and provides a basic overview and history with a focus on trainers of VET. In chapter two, the global context of VET is explored in light of the changes to the VET sector and possible impacts on the Australian environment. Chapter three provides an overview of the governance of VET in Australia. Chapter four relates aspects of teaching learning and competency to VET trainer practice in Australia. Chapter five outlines the purpose, theoretical framework and mixed methods approach taken for the exploratory study. Detailed justification is included of the chosen epistemology and methodology. This chapter also outlines in detail the research process, data collection and analysis procedures. Chapter six describes the findings from the study. There are two main sections to this chapter, the first draws on the survey data to present a profile of the respondents, and the second draws on the survey and focus group findings to identify pedagogical and broader VET environmental implications. It considers the educational approach to competency of the VET trainer and identifies VET relevant capability priorities. The final chapter, seven, identifies outcomes and conclusions, implications and recommendations for moving forward.

Background

Vocational Education and Training (VET) occupies a central place in social and economic policy throughout the world. The last 20 years have seen a dramatic transformation in the world of work, changing not only the foundations of economies and social life but also the knowledge, skills and competencies that people require in almost every field of endeavour (Baker, Bloom, Davis, 2012; Mitchell & Ward, 2010). The driving forces are familiar: dramatic shifts from agrarian or industrial eras to the knowledge era and beyond, accompanied by equally dramatic changes in the nature and structure of work. Forces include the progressive globalisation of trade and communications; technological advances that encourage constant and rapid change in economic and social life; and, demographic changes resulting from improvements in health and social conditions (Guthrie, Perkins, & Mitchell, 2005).

The literature purports that the skills of learning, the ability to process information, and the capacity to adapt rapidly to change are fast becoming determining factors in personal, corporate and national survival and prosperity (Cornford, Athanasou, & Pithers, 1996; Guthrie et al., 2005; Mitchell & Ward, 2010).

The constant state of turbulence in employment and the world of work means that education systems cannot educate and train people in the expectation that their work activities will remain stable or that they will remain in the one job throughout their working life. The life of knowledge and skills is increasingly short in any job; be they a health worker, engineer, plumber, manager or other job titles. Lifelong learning has become an imperative strategy for meeting the challenges faced by contemporary societies and is most relevant to the VET sector (Cornford, Athanasou, & Pithers, 1996).

The relevance of the study

According to Mitchell, Chappell, Roy, and Bateman (2006), new skills and resources are needed in VET in Australia to implement training programs for educators schooled in the previous paradigm of teacher-dominant, classroom-based instruction to meet the challenges of teaching learning and assessing in different workplaces. The challenges facing VET are particularly complex. The blurring of the sectorial divide between higher education, school and VET means that VET teachers are now required to teach VET in schools at the one end, and higher education programs at the other (Wheelahan, Moodie, Billett & Kelly, 2009). Karmel (2011) states there is an unprecedented interest in VET teachers, the quality of teaching and teacher training at present in Australia.

This exploratory study focused on VET trainers in Australia, who provide training programs that are nationally recognised within the National Training Framework (NTF). The findings bring new data to the debate and contribute to a broader discussion about trainers of VET in Australia in the future. There are several limitations to this study. The first of these is its scope; it is limited to a point in time profile of VET trainers. The study is also limited to the context of a mandated VET trainer qualification, the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment that is relevant to people working in VET and RTOs in Australia.

Since this study was completed, and from 2010 onwards there appears to have been a strong interest taken in the VET workforce in general, and teacher training more specifically, with the debate over the quality and nature of VET teacher training a hot issue in 2010. Those interested include Skills Australia (2010), the Productivity Commission (2010), the Australian College of Educators (Wheelahan, 2010; Wheelahan & Curtin, 2010; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2010), the National Quality Council (Mitchell & Ward, 2010) and the Australian Education Union (Forward, 2010). The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) also appeared to have recognised the importance of the topic through its own and commissioned work (Clayton, 2009; Clayton et al., 2010; Walker, 2010; Guthrie, 2010a, 2010b; Guthrie, McNaughton & Gamlin, 2011). The interest is tied to concerns over professionalism, the range and quality of available awards and issues over what is offered to VET staff to support them professionally at the beginning of and throughout their careers (Guthrie, 2010; Hillier, 2012). Training within the VET sector is by no means the only answer to a society's imperatives for economic prosperity; however, VET has become a major plank in governments search for solutions. A World Bank study (Gill, Dar, & Fluitman, 2000) found that governments often have unrealistically high expectations of their VET systems, which have led to substantial public sector involvement in VET but have a disappointing record of achievement. Governments have responded by expanding the resources they put into VET and reforming the ways in which it is planned, coordinated and implemented (Hillier, 2012). Larger employers and private corporations appear to be responding by expanding their training and workplace learning activities. In many states and territories in Australia, commercial providers of training have increased their market share where publicly funded providers lack the capacity to respond quickly or precisely to rapidly changing demand (Karmel, 2009).

Reform of VET systems or designs of new ones have become a significant preoccupation of government and institutional policy makers alike. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2010 set VET targets for significant reductions in the numbers of people without Certificate III or lower qualifications and for major increases in those with Diploma and Advanced Diploma awards by 2020. They point to research quantifying the substantial economic benefits this will bring and the need to increase workforce participation and to improve utilisation of workplace skills (Gillard, 2010).

A closely related challenge for policy makers and VET providers is to improve the quality of training to meet changing and rising demands for skilled and technical workers (Gutherie 2010; Mitchell, Chappell, Bateman, & Roy 2005; Wheelahan, 2011).

VET trainers are different because the contexts and environments they are required to teach within are more diverse than either schools or universities. School teachers mostly teach in schools, while university lecturers mostly teach in universities, although they may support their students in the workplace (such as practicums, work-placements or internships). University lecturers also teach in distance, online and mixed modes (as do VET teachers), but the range of type of providers is much narrower than is the case in VET. VET teachers teach in publically funded RTOs, private RTOs and enterprise RTOs that may be large or small. They may teach on or off campus or both, in many different types of workplaces, in prisons, and in a range of community settings, such as neighborhood houses and refugee support centers. Moreover, while schools and universities deal with diverse student populations with diverse learning needs, this is on a different level to that which confronts VET. VET engages early school leavers and young people who are alienated and disengaged from education, school completers with aspirations to go to university, students from Indigenous backgrounds (more so than higher education), refugees and migrants with little English, students with poor literacy and numeracy skills, adults from disadvantaged backgrounds, employed and unemployed workers, workers on the job and apprentices and trainees (on and off the job), welfare recipients, highly skilled workers seeking particular skills or higher level qualifications, those seeking qualifications for their current jobs and those who are seeking qualifications for different jobs. Sometimes these categories of students overlap and sometimes they do so in the one program and the one classroom or learning site (Wheelahan, 2010).

In Australia, there appears to be very little known at a national or state level about the competency of the trainers who provide vocational education and training. The search for reliable data about the profile and performance of the VET workforce was disappointing. The search for effective methods of delivering training has intensified as the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competencies relevant to modernising and rapidly changing workplaces becomes a constant feature of labour-market and educational policies, and business investment strategies (NCVER, 2012). This study aims to contribute to bridging the gap about the profile of the VET workforce.

The study of VET trainers is relevant as more than three in every five dollars spent on the public provision of VET goes on staffing costs, and there is every reason to believe that the same proportion applies for private organisations delivering VET (NCVER, 2004). With the introduction of the productivity places policy under the Fair Work Bill in 2008, the investment is likely to have increased significantly (NCVER, 2009). In early 2012 the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments introduced reforms of the national vocational education and training (VET) system to boost productivity and increase participation. The Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills and Workplace Relations, Senator Chris Evans stated there had been an investment in VET of more than \$10.9 billion over the last three years and this is likely to increase further in the next few years (NCVER, 2012).

This portfolio reports on some of the impacts of changes in developing and industrialised countries, providing a context for the exploratory study undertaken in Australia, and relating to the trainers who operate in the VET sector. It considers policy choices and outcomes, a review of contemporary aspirations and experience from which readers may draw conclusions to guide their own decisions and aims to contribute to a broader discussion about trainers in VET. This introductory chapter addresses the foundation questions: What is vocational education and training? Is VET important, if so, to whom? What are some of the key VET changes over time? It also serves as an introduction to the study.

What is vocational education and training?

There are almost 5,000 registered training organisations with around 3,700 being private training providers of VET in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012). The main difference between private and public RTOs is that public RTOs are mostly funded by government. Private providers of VET can include private training organisations, business colleges, industry associations, adult and community organisations and employers. Publicly funded VET can also be provided by higher education institutions, secondary schools and colleges, agricultural and technical colleges, and adult and community organisations. VET providers offer a wide range of subjects and programs including traditional trades, advanced technical training, para-professional and professional studies as well as basic employment and educational preparation.

Formal VET study provides skills and nationally recognised qualifications for employment. Students may also choose to complete only one or more subjects known as units of competency or skill sets to gain specific skills, without completing a full qualification.

In this portfolio the term vocational education and training, or VET, is used to describe the acquisition of knowledge, skills and competences for job performance. It is, however, an imprecise and problematic term. There is no universally understood meaning of VET, such as there is of school education. Even a cursory examination of the literature shows significant variations around the world in how VET is defined, funded and delivered in national and institutional and non-institutional settings.

Vocational education and training is the preferred term used by the World Bank and the European Union but is only one of several terms in common use. In countries such as South Africa and the United Kingdom, the phrase Further Education and Training predominates, while Technical and Vocational Education and Training is used in the Pacific. Elsewhere, terms such as Technical Education and Training, or other combinations of the above terms are common. Technical and Further Education, or TAFE, is an Australian variant on vocational education and training that describes publically funded providers of VET.

In Australia a naive definition of vocational education and training (VET) might be that it is education and training that is designed for specific occupations. Thus one would label trade training as vocational because it is designed to train tradespersons. However, much training in universities is also of this nature; occupation specific training is clearly the focus of higher education courses in medicine, engineering, accountancy and others. In the same vein, much VET training at the certificate III or IV level is quite generic in nature, in the sense that graduates of these courses end up in all sorts of occupations (Karmel, Mlotkowski & Awodeyi, 2009). In a conference paper, Karmel (2009) argued that VET's defining feature is not its occupation specific training, nor its qualifications levels, but its different funding and regulatory arrangements, and teaching and learning styles. Karmel argues that mixed sector institutions are a conundrum in the sector as they straddle the two different but merging sectors.

It is hard to pin down an explicit description of the field. The complexity of VET is outlined by Descy, Tchibozo, and Tessaring (2009) in their report on vocational education and training in Europe. They provide a description that reasonably encompasses many of the definitions of VET:

Vocational education and training (VET) comprises of all more or less organised or structured activities whether or not they lead to a recognised qualification. The qualification aims to provide people with knowledge, skills and competences that are necessary and sufficient in order to perform a job or set of jobs. Trainees in initial or continuing training thus undertake work preparation or adapt their skills to changing requirements. VET is independent of its venue, of the age or other characteristics of participants, and of their previous level of qualification. The content of VET could be job-specific, directed to a broader range of jobs or occupations, or a mixture of both; VET may also include general education elements (p. 3).

An alternative approach would be to define vocational education and training in Australia, and thus higher education, by qualification level. In fact the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) has done this, but this framework is defined along sectorial lines rather than qualification levels (AQF, 2011). Thus the higher education and vocational education and training streams are presented as separate streams, with some overlap by level. Diplomas, in particular, are qualifications that are offered in both streams. This leads us to a position which distinguishes between higher education and vocational education and training on the basis of the providers. On one hand we have universities and other higher education providers and, on the other, institutes of technical and further education (TAFE) and other RTOs. However, this distinction has largely broken down. The majority of universities are RTOs and deliver VET certificates, not to mention the dual sector universities such as RMIT University and Victoria University. We are also beginning to see some TAFE institutes awarding degrees in art and nursing (Karmel, 2011). This approach does not lead to a clear differentiation between higher education and VET.

The funding for higher education provision is dominated by the Commonwealth Government in Australia. The arrangements for VET are rather different from the funding of universities and schools.

First, the providers are registered under the Australian Qualifications Training Framework (AQTF) or nationally under the NVR standards, and hence known as registered training organisations (RTOs) to deliver certain qualifications. The qualifications are based on nationally determined training packages which set out the competencies to be achieved. The public funds for this delivery go through the state training authorities (although the Commonwealth has funded providers directly through the Productivity Places Program). While the accreditation arrangements and funding arrangements differ between the sectors, there is another very large difference: the pedagogical tradition. The curriculum for higher education courses is based on notions of knowledge and understanding, while VET courses are based on the concept of competency. The interpretation of competencies is relatively narrow, being based on the tasks and skills required. The competencies are specified in training packages, which are developed by industry skills councils. This arrangement results in the characterisation of VET as being industry-led, quite different from higher education, in which the teaching institution determines what is taught. This is actually an exaggeration because the professional bodies have a considerable say in what is taught in courses such as medicine, engineering and accounting (Karmel, 2011).

Attempts to improve pathways between VET and higher education have focused on relations between the two sectors, between educational institutions, and between the state and Commonwealth governments, which are responsible for VET and higher education, respectively. However, this is only part of the picture. A key determining feature of educational pathways is the structure of the labour market. Where there are strong occupational pathways, strong educational pathways will follow. Apart from the regulated occupations, where criteria for entry and progression are specified by professional or occupational bodies, the Australian labour market is segmented and has weak occupational pathways. The relative absence of these pathways has been exacerbated by an increase in higher and lower skilled jobs and a decline in jobs at the intermediate level. This is reflected in the declining importance of the diploma as a labour market entry qualification. Some jobs that previously required diplomas for entry level increasingly now require degrees. The segmentation of the labour market reflects segmentation in educational pathways and the weak relationship between education and jobs.

Overall, and apart from the regulated occupations, relations between education and specific jobs are very weak and most VET graduates do not end up in the jobs associated with their qualification (Wheelahan, Leahy, Fredman, Moodie, Arkoudis, & Bexley, 2012).

Consequently, in Australia we have two traditions with different pedagogical traditions and funding and accountability arrangements. These arrangements, however, are becoming blurred because they no longer line up simply with different types of providers or funding arrangements thus the assertion that VET is a complex, imprecise and problematic term.

Is VET important?

Although the distinctions between the different facets of higher education and VET in terms of different pedagogical traditions and funding and accountability arrangements appear to becoming blurred, this portfolio focuses specifically on VET. A recurring theme in this study is that VET occupies an increasingly central place in social and economic policy worldwide. VET is important to individuals, employers and governments of every political persuasion, in societies both rich and poor (NCVER, 2011). This is not surprising; education per se is widely seen as a necessary precondition for economic growth within the knowledge-driven economies of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries.

Recurrent expenditure on VET by Australian, State and Territory governments totaled \$4.9 billion in 2010, an increase of 4.3% (in real terms) from 2009. Government recurrent expenditure was equal to \$324.60 per person aged 15–64 years across Australia in 2010. In 2010, 31.4% of Australians aged 15–64 years held a certificate or diploma as their highest level qualification. These qualifications could have been completed in schools, VET institutions or higher education institutions (Commonwealth of Australia Productivity Commission Report, 2012). Approximately 1.8 million people were reported as participating in VET programs within the public sector of VET at 16,741 locations across Australia in 2010 (NCVER, 2011). Anecdotal evidence indicates there were approximately 2.2 million additional people participating in private RTOs in 2010 (ABS, 2011).

Although Wolfe (2010) questions the link between VET and economic growth, he concedes there is a clear connection between education and private benefit as measured by the rate of return. Moreover, in some countries (notably the United States and the United Kingdom) wage differentials between the educated and the undereducated have widened. This view was also illustrated in Wolfe's earlier work:

Rational teenagers and their parents know that without a qualification, an individual is increasingly unlikely to be considered for a job, whether the qualification is actually (as opposed to formally) required doing it (Holbrook & Wolfe, 2002, p. 177).

The first prerequisite of employment is the possession of basic academic knowledge and skills. As Holbrook and Wolfe (2002) comment, "Poor literacy and numeracy, especially the latter, have a devastating effect on people's chances of well-paid and stable employment" (p. 34). At the other end of the spectrum, there is a clear pay-back from the possession of higher-level qualifications, although at the top end of the qualifications scale, the wage-premium enjoyed by graduates varies depending upon the subject studied.

At the public policy level, there has been a significant shift in thinking over the last 30 years as policy makers and politicians have come to argue that the real purpose of VET is to prepare people for the world of work and to promote economic growth. In this context it is increasingly argued that spending on VET needs to be properly targeted to develop the skills and knowledge that modern economies require.

According to the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), the VET system is of critical importance because of its contribution to the development of practical skills and skilled labour being the core of business. It believes the role of the VET system is to meet employer needs. It states that VET should revolve around providing qualifications that have industry endorsement, provide entry level skills so individuals can enter the workforce. The VET system should contribute to updating skills of the existing workforce and developing new skills to meet emerging needs and providing a pathway to further education (ACCI, 2007).

The competency based qualification movement, especially evident in Australia and the United Kingdom, has been a forceful response to the desire to link VET tightly to job performance. In Australia, notwithstanding some difficult teething problems, the competency based system of training packages is now an integral part of a nationally consistent qualifications framework and quality assurance system. This is also true of the UK where it is increasingly employer driven.

One conclusion from this discussion is that the credibility and status of the qualifications offered through vocational education and training matter a great deal. In Australia the endorsed training standards (Training Packages) are driven by industry reflecting changing competencies required in the workplace. Those who consume education and training, vocational or otherwise, are careful not to waste their time and money on meaningless qualifications, and on qualifications that, however relevant to what they are doing now, may lose their relevance as they change jobs and careers within an increasingly flexible labour market.

It is curious, then, that VET appears to remain a relatively poor relation in the eyes of some policy makers and educators. Moodie (2009) argues that vocational education is traditionally defined by reference to the occupational level of its graduates, and that this in turn is related to class. Thus, while in practice vocational education comprises both trade and technician qualifications, professional and post-professional qualifications, it is typically equated with the former as a lower-status form of education. Where this happens, the invisibility and lower status accorded to training can compound the challenges for governments of providing vocational education as, where, and when it is most needed. As Kennedy remarks about the British system:

Despite the formidable role played by further education, it is the least understood and celebrated part of the learning tapestry. Further education suffers because of prevailing British attitudes. There remains a very carefully calibrated hierarchy of worthwhile achievement, which has clearly established routes and which privileges academic success well above any other accomplishment. (Kennedy, 1997, p. 1).

In the nineteenth century, technical education was viewed as the training of the hand rather than an education of the mind. However this view has changed considerably in the twentieth century. This distinction threaded through a century of debate about the differences between a liberal and a utilitarian or vocational education is still evident today in the separation of theory (higher status) from practice (lower status). It is evident that many universities have been able to take advantage of this hierarchy of achievement so that today they are multilevel institutions confidently providing both vocational and liberal education and pathways between them (Wheelahan, Leahy, Fredman, Moodie, Arkoudis, & Bexley, 2012).

There is also evidence among educators of certain unease about incorporating lower (especially sub-degree) levels of training into a university curriculum. Some seek to resolve this by creating separate organisational structures (the university-college nexus), which inevitably develop their own cultures and values that may be hard to bridge (Schofield, 1999b). Others have preferred to elevate courses concerned primarily with skills and competences to degree level even though it may leave the university vulnerable to challenge in relation to standards. It says much for the courage of their leaders that some distance teaching universities (for example, those in Bangladesh, India and Pakistan) have recognised that they should capitalise on their ability to deliver education across educational levels and across the education and training divide, without becoming too hung up on issues about what a university is (Wheelahan, 2011).

If conceptions of vocational education and training are varied, the ways in which it is structured and managed are equally diverse. Government has traditionally played a dominant role in planning, funding and managing the provision of VET, but in practice it is financed by both the public and private sectors and provided by a great range of organisations. Most chapters in this portfolio concern policies and programs sponsored by national government agencies. This should not mask, however, the huge number and variety of employer-sponsored VET activities, and the provision of technical and vocational courses by private providers. Nor should it mask the increasing trends toward collaboration among governments, educational providers, and industry and, in many countries, an increasing contribution by students themselves to the cost of their training. VET is not simply a form of education confined to one educational sector or a particular type of organisation. The eclectic range of models and frameworks reported in this portfolio testifies to the complexity of approaches to vocational education and training.

In some states and territories in Australia, vocational education is less of an organised system of educational provision and more of an eclectic mixture of public and private providers. Others have responded to demands for pre-employment and ongoing education and training of the workforce by creating a discrete, publicly-funded VET system. Until recently, this has mostly been a feature of advanced economies where links between government, education and the requirements of economic sectors have been long established. Mature national VET systems are evident, for example, in Western Europe, Canada, Singapore, Australia and New Zealand (Hillier, 2012).

In South Africa, the public further education and training system, established in the days of apartheid, is undergoing massive reform. There are signs, however, that some governments (Botswana is just one example) are moving to create national systems of VET institutions as a means of exerting greater influence over economic and social policy. In China, their Education Act (2003) give effect to the government's desire to achieve large increases in the post-secondary education participation rates and to provide a quality assurance framework within which public and private VET providers will operate (Hillier, 2012).

There are signs that Australian VET providers are moving rapidly into international waters, and new delivery models are emerging based on quasi-distance delivery methods and partnerships between local and international providers (Guthrie, Perkins, & Nguyen, 2006). It appears that VET is important, from its international position to a policy perspective and at an operational level.

Key changes to VET in Australia

To better understand the current VET sector, it is helpful to briefly review the history and some of the key changes that have influenced VET over time in Australia. A consequence of timeline path dependency is that there are seldom clear cut starting points for historical analysis and the inclusions are from that author's perspective only. The following overview concentrates on some of the key developments since the 1960s particularly changes directly related to trainers of VET.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the traditional manufacturing, mining and agricultural industries started to decline in economic significance and new industries, like communications and finance, were emerging. More women entered or re-entered education and the workforce. The 1974 Kangan Report on Needs in Technical and Further Education defined the roles and the mission of what is now commonly known as the TAFE system. Training began to change with more preparatory and pre-vocational training, and slowing growth in the traditional heartland of trade and technical training. The first national review of training for TAFE trainers was in 1978, just four years after the Kangan report was published, when the Tertiary Education Commission funded the Fleming report on the formal preparation of TAFE teachers in Australia (Fleming 1978). The report led to a series of recommendations including that all beginning TAFE trainers should undertake a formal preparation program to give them the skills and knowledge required to be effective practicing teachers. These nationally recognised formal awards were to be at advanced education level. The number of advanced education institutions conducting these programs were to be restricted (Coughlan, 1979, Gutherie, 2010).

Into the 1980s, the services industries continued to expand at the expense of the mining, manufacturing and construction industries, TAFE's traditional territory. Networks of private training providers, largely providing training to service industries, were also emerging. A number of reports pointed to the need for the training system to be driven by the needs of the individual and industry so the economy as a whole could prosper. A number of reviews were conducted in the mid-1980s of initial trainer training in various jurisdictions. For example, Butterworth & Gonczi (1984) and Oliver & Tipper (1989) in New South Wales and Seitz (1985) in Victoria. Somewhat later, in 1993, the Western Australian Department of Vocational Education and Training (DEVET) examined future options for the education of its teaching workforce (1993). In terms of how VET trainer training should occur, a model was proposed that incorporated initial periods of induction and the development of basic teaching skills in a short course of up to 20 days duration prior to teaching. This initial training was followed by a period of concurrent formal training and teaching, or blocks alternating between teacher preparations and teaching. Opinion on the length of time required for full initial training was divided almost equally between one year full-time equivalent and two years part-time equivalent for VET teacher preparation programs (Gutherie, 2010).

In the 1990s, the Deveson (1990), Finn (1991) and Carmichael (1992) reports looked at expanding training systems, increasing young people's participation in training, and creating a consolidated national system. Consensus developed across Australia that substantial reform and a unified national effort was required. All states, territories and the Australian Government agreed to the establishment of an Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) and a cooperative federal system of vocational education and training with strategic input by industry. In 1992 and 1993 a two-phase project, was commissioned by the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee's (VEETAC) Working Party on TAFE staffing issues. Amongst other things, it addressed trainers training. In 1994, the Fitzgerald Report into the implementation of the national system led to some of the current elements of today's VET system, including concepts of best practice and user choice, states and territories taking responsibility for accreditation and standards endorsement, and an industry training advisory structure.

The 1990s saw the introduction of Australian Apprenticeships, the establishment of the National Training Framework, the introduction of VET in schools and the development of Training Packages. In the early 1990s standards for workplace trainers and assessors were developed and an award implemented to complement formal training available for VET teachers. This coincided with the increased focus on the workplace as a place of significant and more formalised learning. The Workplace Trainer Category 2 award was nationally endorsed in 1994 (Robertson, 2008) and was current until 1999. In 1998, the Workplace Trainer Category 2 competencies were replaced by the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ40198). This Certificate IV level qualification was adopted as the minimum requirement for VET teachers (Smith & Keating, 2003). In implementation, the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training became known for the variable quality of its delivery and assessment practices (Robertson 2008; Simons & Smith, 2008). It could be attained in a relatively short time, with some providers offering it over a weekend. Simons and Smith (2008) suggest that the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training showed a lack of attention to the unique demands of learning within particular industries and to ways of embracing the diversity of learners in VET. In response to this widespread criticism, this qualification was replaced by the Training and Assessment Training Package, which was endorsed in 2004, with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104) then becoming the minimum qualification for VET trainers to meet the VET regulatory requirements for RTO registration.

In 2000 and beyond, the national VET system aimed to continually respond to industry, individual and community needs, all within a nationally consistent system. In 2005, ANTA's functions were transferred to the Australian Government's Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST).

During 2009 and 2010 there was a realignment of the former ministerial council for VET to the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment that signalled a shift to a new agenda in the context of the broader tertiary education sector for Australia (National Quality Council, 2009). The Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104) became the de facto minimum teaching qualification for VET trainers, because it or equivalent qualifications were mandated in the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). Concerns raised about the earlier Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training persisted with the next version (TAA40104), as did concerns over whether either of these qualifications had a sufficiently rigorous underpinning of good teaching and learning theory and practice (Gutherie, 2010).

Between 2010 and 2011 there was a shift to a national regulator for VET and a commitment of \$6.7 billion to skills and workforce development. The landscape changed in 2011 with the Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) becoming the national governance body for VET reporting directly to the Council of Australian Government (COAG), DIISRTE was linked with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and other agencies at an operational level. The National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011 was established as a new approach to national regulation of VET in Australia and a regulatory authority called the Australia Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) emerged. While the approach was identified as new, most of the regulatory requirements had not changed at all. RTOs operating solely in Victoria and Western Australia that were not registered on the Commonwealth Register of Institutions and Courses for Overseas Students (CRICOS) operate under their own state regulatory authorities. The regulatory functions for VET in 2012 were overseen by a new national agency called the National Skills Standards Council (NSSC). The NSSC commenced operations on 1 July 2011 as a committee of the Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE). As one of several Standing Councils that report to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), SCOTESE is the successor of the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment.

The Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAE40110 replaced the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAA40104 qualification as the benchmark teaching qualification. There was minimal content change to the Certificate IV qualification. In 2010, there were 36,000 VET trainers employed in TAFE and other VET institutions in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011).

This overview demonstrates a constant rate of change within the VET sector over the past decade in Australia with direct implications for trainers of VET.

Summary

In summary, this study is about Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Australia, which is important to the economy and to individuals, with a focus on the people who teach within the VET sector. The VET sector has experienced significant change over time, dominated by economic discourses that point to the need for the VET systems that not only meet the needs of a broad range of stakeholders but contributes to economic development.

CHAPTER 2

A GLOBAL CONTEXT

Introduction

Many see globalisation as a primarily economic phenomenon, involving the increasing interaction and integration, of national economic systems through the growth in international trade, investment and capital flows (Calderon & Tangas, 2006), however, it can also have a major impact on how we operate within the context of Vocational Education and Training (VET). Of interest to this study is the extent to which globalisation has impacted on VET in Australia.

There are processes in the national and international order driven by revolutions in communication and information technology that exhibit globalising tendencies. There are also a range of actions that attempt to resist globalisation. For example, the tendency towards freer trade and a perception of uncontrollable electronic commerce and operations can create a sense of the economic irrelevance of national borders and government's loss of trade power, loss of economic revenue and potential international collaboration. On the positive side there are innovations in information technology, especially the Internet, that in theory make possible the empowerment of minorities and cross borders to enable access despite distance and other barriers (Jeffery, 2006).

Commentators (Calderon & Tangas, 2006; Tosh, 2006; Calderon, 2008) distinguish between three phases of globalisation: first, the mobility of capital, second, the mobility of goods (and, increasingly, services) and third, the mobility of people. Each of these phases poses distinct challenges for VET, in terms of adapting to: economic restructuring, as nations adjust to their areas of comparative advantage; competition in education markets, as people seek the best educational opportunities and compare foreign education providers who enter the market; and, the entry and exit of skills embodied in people due to migration flows.

Inclusion of trade in educational services in the international General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) in 2000 generated an impetus for taking education and VET on a new un-chartered global path in Australia. The overall goal of GATS was to remove barriers to trade, however some consider that GATS risks undermining the ability and authority of governments to regulate commercial activities within their own boundaries, with the effect of conceding power to business interests ahead of the interests of its citizens. GATS aimed at providing market access, non-discrimination once a provider is in the market (national treatment principle) and no discrimination between the treatments of member countries (Calderon & Tangas, 2006). Between 2005 and 2008 the Howard and Rudd governments actively pursued bilateral and multilateral relations in light of slow progress in GATS, however Australia's two-way trade in goods and services was worth \$AUD488 billion in 2007 (Calderon, 2008). It was worth more than \$625 billion in 2011 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, Trade & Economic Statistics, 2012).

In more recent years, the VET sector in Australia has followed the lead of the higher education sector and begun to internationalise. On 30 June 2012 there were 307 050 international student visa holders in Australia with one quarter of these visa holders from China and around 12% from India. A large percentage of these student visas were granted for VET programs (AQF level Certificate IV to Advanced Diploma level qualifications). This was a 20% increase on previous years (Department of Immigration Australia Statistics, 2012). From a global impact position there is industry demand for skilled labour to be imported to Australia to meet demands of skilled occupations such as mining, and engineering that will meet global market demand for Australian resources. The global context has been particularly important for the resources industry in Australia over the last few years. When the global financial crisis (GFC) hit in late 2008, unemployment in Australia was rising rapidly. At that time, the level of investment in the mining sector was still strong, as work on major projects approved prior to the GFC continued. However, new project approvals weren't occurring at that time, and some marginal mining operations were closing down. However, by late 2009 it was a different story. Australia's economic climate had significantly improved. Jobs growth had returned and, based on continued industrial growth out of China, new resources investment projects were once again being approved and proceeding forward. This change in the economic climate was typified by the approval granted for the Gorgon LNG project in Western Australia.

As Australia survived the worst global downturn since the 1930s, there was suddenly a private consortium for example willing to invest \$543 billion into the Australian economy for one project (Deloitte Access Economics, 2010).

The Deloitte Access Economics-Amp Investment Monitor for March 2011 shows some \$18 billion of mining projects underway in Australia and others committed to start. Beyond that, there are a further \$236 billion of mining projects in the planning pipeline. The National Resources Sector Employment Taskforce (NRSET) conducted a public consultation which received 97 submissions on an initial discussion paper and met with key industry stakeholders. They concluded that construction jobs on new projects could peak at 45,000 in 2012 and 2013 with strong jobs growth for technicians and tradespeople and machinery operators' and drivers representing an increased demand for a skilled workforce (NRSET, 2010). The Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Western Australia modeling suggests an additional 69,000 workers will be required in the WA mining sector by 2020 (Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia, 2010). In his report, Grad highlights the long lead time for VET training and arguing there is a greater call for increased overseas migration of skilled employees to fill the predicted gap (Grad, 2010).

It appears to be accepted in Australia that economic restructuring brought about by globalisation means the nature of skills and VET training specifically required for the economy is a moving target, and can only be predicted at a highly aggregated level for several years ahead (NCVER, 2010).

Changes to the nature of knowledge, skill and work

At a global level reflected within the Australian context, changing technologies and building techniques have led to an increasing demand for a workforce that can be quickly trained in defined, highly sought-after skills, rather than a broad, traditional qualification encompassing skills, which may have limited use in the modern workplace (NCVER, 2010). Many industries have called for specialised qualifications below the full-trade occupation level. The VET sector in Australia refers to these as skill sets made up of cluster of units of competency taken from the specific industry training package.

There has been a growing recognition that the strength of the Australian economy is inextricably linked to the quality of education and training, reflecting the changing nature of knowledge skill and work. The RTO must not only teach to meet the needs of the knowledge society but recognizes emerging changes in society and teach beyond it (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 42).

The changing nature of knowledge, skill and work globally has also led to increased stress on the need for broad-based learning and skills and for the development of core skills or key competencies such as team working, being able to communicate effectively, use technology, solve problems and being willing to learn. In Australia in 2009, the VET sector identified the core skills as employability skills in every nationally recognised training package. These core skills or key competencies aim to facilitate transferability of occupational competence and work-related skills to shape new work organisations and new technology (NCVER, 2010).

To embrace the global workplace, new skills and resources are needed in VET to implement competency-based training packages with creativity, particularly by trainers schooled in the previous paradigm of teacher-dominant, classroom-based instruction. Any new concept for the education of VET professionals cannot be based merely on existing occupations and occupational fields.

Drivers of change in the global context

Many of the changes in the global context are influencing changes within the Australian VET context. In a major study that addressed the future European provision of vocational education and training, Moynagh and Worsley (2008) identified a number of drivers of change that were likely to impact on the Australian VET sector and the VET trainer. These drivers include:

- technological developments; rapid developments in information and communications technology (ICT) including the mass social uptake of broadband technology that will create a new context in which learning opportunities can be managed, delivered and experienced.
- consumerism; future learners steeped in consumer culture will expect learning products tailored to their individual needs, including utilising the new media increasingly available to learners. Customised and personalised learning will become a widely held expectation of individuals and employers using VET.

- staff shortages; A looming shortage of trainers is a major issue for many education and training systems worldwide. Competition for highly skilled graduates will intensify in the global economy, creating difficulties in attracting and retaining trainers. This will increase pressure to raise the productivity of existing VET trainers and will lead to dramatic changes in the way VET work is organised.
- engaging more learners; General skill shortages in the economy will lead to calls for vocational education and training to re-engage older learners and those who have left education and training with few vocational skills. These learner groups require quite different approaches to teaching, learning and assessment.

Guthrie, Perkins, and Nguyen (2006) indicate that drivers of change in Australian VET that have been influenced by changes in the global context also include who the learners will be (Guthrie et al., 2006). It suggests increasing proportions of VET students are likely to come from older age cohorts, international students, online from foreign locations, and others that may have little recent experience of VET education and training. In Australia, government policy is providing for increased VET pathways in high school into the VET sector. Thus VET trainers will have a range of issues and learner expectations new to them as they are drawn into closer relationships with schools and a different generation of learners, learning styles and expectations.

Australian VET national policy continues to place considerable emphasis on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous Australians. This aims to increase the participation of Indigenous learners, and trainers will need to develop a greater understanding of the values and expectations of Indigenous learners and communities. As Australia continues to diversify through migration and humanitarian programs, and as far more overseas persons study in Australia or are involved in offshore Australian programs, trainers will need the knowledge and skills to assist students from different backgrounds.

There is a global driver reflecting equality for an increasing proportion of people with one or more disabilities to participate in community life inclusive of VET programs. This requires specialist skills to understand and address learners' needs that can at times be complex (Guthrie, et al., 2006). Individual consumers are generally becoming increasingly discerning and have high expectations for training service providers. Globally the future drivers of change for Europe are similar to the drivers of change in Australian VET, identified by Mitchell, Clayton, Hedberg and Paine (2003).

These include the rising complexity and uncertainty in society and the economy; the changing structures of work; the changing structures of industry and employment; an appreciation of the value of generating and applying knowledge; the aggressive spread of the proposition that workers need to add value; public policy; new technology; shrinking time horizons; and, the shift from mass production to market segmentation. In Australia, skill shortages are also likely to increase competition between existing providers. Large employers and groups of employers may invest heavily in their own training capacity to secure essential skills and to compete with external providers for government funding for this purpose (Mitchell, Chappell, Bateman, & Roy, 2005). For VET, success factors to meet the global influences include developing trainer competency and enabling a culture that is agile and flexible, and encourages diverse thinking and individual initiative (Mitchell, Chappell, Bateman, & Roy, 2005).

Summary

Globalisation is a phenomenon that is reshaping almost every economy around the world. Australia is very much a part of this phenomenon. It is also, however, generating debate as to the positive and negative features that come with Globalisation. VET needs to contribute constructively to such debate. For VET to successfully fulfill its role of developing people's relevant competencies for their effective and efficient performance within the world of work, and for sustaining those competencies and their standards of good practice, it must accommodate, to the extent possible, the global context in which it now operates. The VET trainers must be involved in programs of initial and recurrent professional development so that they can continue to adapt to the rapid change and to help them prepare to perform successfully.

CHAPTER 3

GOVERNANCE OF VET

Overview of governance structure of VET in Australia

This chapter provides an overview of governance in VET in Australia at the Commonwealth of Australian Government level illustrated in Figure 3.1, at the State and Territory level as illustrated at Figure 3.2 and the RTO level shown at Figure 3.3.

Figure 3.1 Commonwealth governance

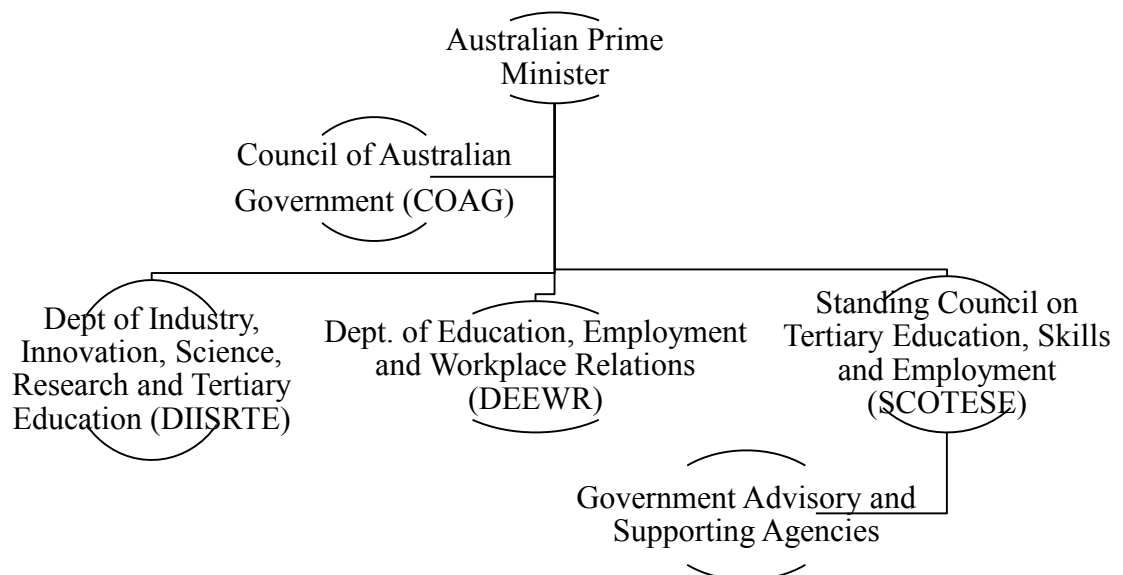
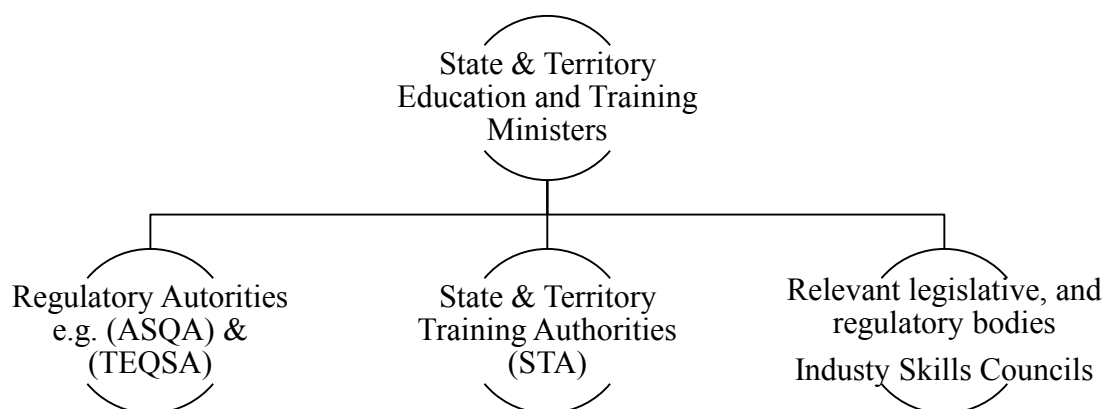


Figure 3.1 shows that at the Commonwealth level the Prime Minister of Australia (Julia Gillard in 2013) holds responsibility for governance of VET among other responsibilities. The Prime Minister governs at a Commonwealth and State and Territory level with the Australian Council of Australian Government (COAG). The Department of Industry, Innovation, Science, Research and Tertiary Education (DIISRTE) and the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) are the Commonwealth Government Departments that implement the policy directions with each having designated responsibility areas. The specific ministers on COAG for VET are part of the Standing Council for Tertiary Education Skills and Employment.

The Standing Council on Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE) was established in 2011 and has VET governance responsibilities. The National Advisory body for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (NATESE) provides the secretariat structure to facilitate and support the key advisory councils of SCOTESE. VET funding in Australia is governed by a National Skills and Workforce Development agreement between the Commonwealth and the state and territories endorsed by COAG in 2008. This agreement sets out broad national objectives and priorities and outputs for each jurisdiction and is the basis of Commonwealth funding for the states/territories. This agreement was supplemented by a Productivity Places Program (PPP) agreement through which additional funding committed by the Commonwealth Government flows through the states (having been allocated directly by the Commonwealth to providers in 2008 while the agreement was being negotiated). A further agreement reimburses the states for income lost when they agreed to abolish student fees for childcare courses. In the 2010-11 Budget, the Commonwealth offered to the states the opportunity to use PPP funding as part of their base VET funding. This governance structure is outlined in figure 3.2:

Figure 3.2 State and Territory governance



Under the Australian constitution, responsibility for VET lies with state and territory governments. Since the early 1990s, under the guise of the national training reform agenda, the Australian government has increasingly sought to play a much greater role in VET through funding arrangements, regulation and, in some instances, direct program delivery. The Australian government contributes around one third of the total public funding for vocational education and training in Australia.

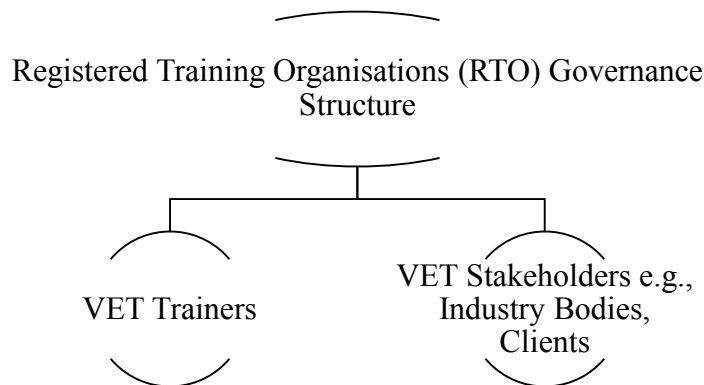
At the state and territory level, VET is governed through the responsible Minister and administered through a network of eight state and territory governments responsible for funding and support. Payments from state and territory agencies to RTOs fall into three categories: payments to technical and further education (TAFE) institutions for training delivery; payments to RTOs for training delivery for apprentices and trainees who, with their employer, choose to use that RTO; and payments to RTOs under tendered contracts for training delivery (sometimes referred to as competitive purchasing). Within state and territories, VET agencies enter into resource or funding agreements with publicly owned TAFE institutions or contracts with non-government providers. TAFE funding agreements include annual levels of funding for planned levels of student contact hours (sometimes referred to as 'profile funding'), other roles and services performed by the institution and routine maintenance and equipment grants. Payments for major capital works are either managed centrally or included in resource agreements, depending on the TAFE governance model in the jurisdiction.

In the 2010-11 budgets, the Commonwealth announced a number of new programs including: The Critical Skills Investment Fund (\$200.2 million); Apprenticeship Kickstart Extension (\$79.4 million); and Smarter Apprenticeships (\$19.9 million); Language Literacy and Numeracy Program (\$67 million); expanded community-based service development and Workplace English; Language and Literacy Development (\$28.7 million); and National Foundation Skills Outreach and Leadership Project (\$23.5 million). The state and territory regulatory authorities include the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), Territory Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA), Training Accreditation Council (TAC) of Western Australia and the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA). The Western Australian and VET Policy directions are influenced by representative industry bodies. Local governance and deployment of VET policy is at the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) level.

States and territories regulatory authorities are also required to drive the quality, consistency and industry engagement reform agenda including the introduction of a unique student identifier for VET. This data is collected, recorded and reported by each RTO. Under the conditions of registration as a RTO the senior management of the RTO must provide the regulatory authority evidence they have systems in place to enable these functions to be addressed.

The national VET system claims it is responsive to industry, individual and community needs, focusing on capturing the best advice possible from industry, meeting client needs and quality standards, all within a nationally consistent, quality VET system. At the operational level each RTO has to establish their internal governance structures as shown in figure 3.3:

Figure 3.3 RTO governance



At the RTO level, governance structure will vary based on scale and scope of operations. For example, a large TAFE college is likely to have a board of governance, however a small RTO might have a single person responsible for governing its operations. The organisation may include public and private RTOs, universities, community colleges and international RTOs. Each RTO has its own governance structure that is required to meet a set of standards and comply with the specifications of the training package or accredited course and the Australian Qualifications Framework. The regulatory function responsibility for RTOs compliance with the quality standards is held by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) except in Western Australia and Victoria where this is the state government responsibility. Industry and enterprise impacts on the governance and policy direction of the system as business and industry representatives have direct networks with and within government. Although under the Australian Constitution, the Commonwealth Government has no administrative responsibility (rather it operates under acts of parliament), it is clear through the National Training Framework, that the Commonwealth Government is positioned to have considerable influence and distribution of support such as related funding implications for industry specific programs.

Governance structures in public and private RTOs in Australia

There are almost 5,000 registered training organisations in Australia (ABS, 2012). While there are around 3,700 private training providers of VET, most VET students are engaged with publicly-funded training providers (ABS, 2012). The TAFE Directors Australia website recorded 59 TAFE Colleges within its network in 2010. These are predominately government-administered TAFE colleges or institutes. Other publicly-funded VET can be provided by higher education institutions, secondary schools and colleges, agricultural and technical colleges, and adult and community organisations. Private providers of VET can include private training organisations, business colleges, industry associations, adult and community organisations and employers (ABS, 2012). Data on governance of private providers was difficult to find, as in Australia there was no statistical data collection mechanisms for non-publically funded programs prior to 2012. This changed in 2012, with all RTOs whether public and private having National reporting data obligations. The data is to be collected by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in the future. A summary of the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) governance in Australia is provided below reflecting governance structures of public RTOs around Australia. This was based on the available data and consultations with governing bodies. This is followed later in this chapter by a summary of private RTOs governance.

Australian Capital Territory (ACT) Position in 2012

The ACT is one of two jurisdictions across Australia which have adopted the simplest governance model for TAFE training, that of a single, self-governing public RTO. The Canberra Institute of Technology is a statutorily independent entity created in 2008 by the ACT Institute of Technical Education and Further Education Act (amended in 2003 to Canberra Institute of Technology Act). It is represented by five campuses. The incorporating Act places most of the responsibility for the Institute in the hands of the Director who reports to the State Minister. A council of 12 members makes up the CIT advisory council. The Act confers considerable powers to the Minister, who provides direction to the functions and approves expenditure above a prescribed amount and determines fees, among other functions. There is also direct governance involvement by the Territory Treasurer establishing the government's ownership interest in the institute and concerns capital, cash and staff management, along with other issues inclusive of the Institute's long-term viability and continuing capacity to provide services.

Tasmania 2012

TAFE Tasmania was an Australian tertiary body of the Australian state-based public Technical and Further Education system. It included two institutes, the Institute of TAFE Tasmania and the Drysdale Institute. The Institute of TAFE Tasmania (including the Drysdale Institute) was wound up in 2008 and new legal authorities - the Tasmanian Polytechnic and Skills Institute began operating as State-wide training organisations on 1 January 2009. The Tasmanian Polytechnic was created from the merger of Tasmanian Colleges and TAFE Tasmania, following the Tasmanian State Government's reform of post year 10 education in 2009. This significant restructure envisaged taking place over a 3-year period with the expectation of all colleges making the transition by 2011. One of three new organisations created through the Tasmania Tomorrow reforms, the Tasmanian Polytechnic focuses on providing practical and hands-on learning for students of all ages. It co-operates with the Tasmanian Academy and with the Tasmanian Skills Institute to deliver more positive outcomes for students, for the local economy and for Tasmania. The Drysdale Institute, Tasmania's provider of training in Hospitality and Tourism, has been incorporated into the Tasmanian Polytechnic and Skills Institute. As of 2010 TAFE Tasmania is no longer in operation.

Northern Territory 2012

Public TAFE provision in the Northern Territory University is operated by the governance structures of two institutions, Charles Darwin University and the Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Territory Education. These providers, the Northern Territory University and Bachelor College, have their own governing councils.

New South Wales (NSW) 2012

NSW has traditionally had the most centralised public TAFE administration. The Department of School Education, the TAFE Commission and the Department of Training and Education coordination were merged into a Department of Education and Training. The Chief Executive of that department assumed the function and title of Managing Director of the TAFE Commission and itself became an advisory body. The network operates through multiple regional campuses referred to as Institutes of Technology. There are 10 institutes in NSW. The institute's report to a Deputy Director General (TAFE) within the Department and divisions report to an Assistant Director General.

Institutes are described as retaining their high level of delegated authority while TAFE system coherence is sustained by state-wide policy frameworks and support services in such areas as personnel policies, industrial relations and equity. The NSW Board of VET was created by the NSW Board of VET Act 1994. Its charter is to provide advice to the Minister, to oversight policy and planning initiatives and foster collaborative partnerships between key stakeholders in the VET system. The NSW TAFE Commission remains as an independent advisory body within the same formal powers as previously, but with much reduced influence, as the TAFE system is run by government department responsible for both school education and VET. Program management is a strong feature of NSW TAFE, previously through state-wide schools and now through the seven divisions which have a separate line of reporting from the TAFE institutes.

Queensland 2012

TAFE governance arrangements for Queensland are the responsibility of the Minister for Education administered through the Queensland Department of Education and Training. There are 13 institutes throughout the state. The 2000 Training Act provides that the Minister may establish, disestablish or merge TAFE institutions, and that they must have councils. Neither institutes nor councils have an independent existence. Institute directors are individually responsible to the Director General of the Department through performance agreements. Purchasing and public funding is the responsibility of the Qld Department of Education and Training. A board (with no statutory basis) reports directly to the minister on the overall viability and sustainability of the TAFE Queensland, efficiencies and improvements across the system and advocacy on behalf of the system. It consists of four council chairs; two institute Directors and the Departments Director General. While there is no specific structure for program management, Queensland TAFE Executive is responsible collegially for rationalisation and for the designation of lead institutes. Queensland governance arrangements are notable for the emphasis on devolution to intermediately bodies. Although Directors are responsible to the Director General, the chair of the TAFE Executive, appointed for a two-year term by the Director General, is the public face of TAFE and the Executive is collectively responsible to the Director General for strategic and systematic issues.

South Australia 2012

The Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology (DFEEST) is the South Australian Government's governing agency for VET through the public TAFE system. DFEEST is responsible to the South Australian Minister for Employment, Higher Education and Skills and Minister for Science and Information Economy. The Office of TAFE SA was established in 2010 to help TAFE SA manage the contestable VET sector funding from July 2012. Skills For All, announced in late December 2010, is the strategic direction for VET in South Australia. To support Skills For All, the South Australian government committed an additional \$194 million and set a goal as part of its Jobs Strategy, with the Productivity Places Program (PPP), to create 100 000 training places in key growth industries has been committed over six years.

Victoria 2012

As opposed to the other states in Australia there is no institution that governs all public TAFEs under its roof; no such thing as TAFE Victoria exists. Each institute governs independently although is controlled by the state regulator. In all there are 18 public provider institutions in Victoria.

Western Australia 2012

The public TAFE network in Western Australia is governed by the Department of Training and Workforce Development, which is the designated state training agency, and self-governing TAFE Institutions are created under the VET Act 1996 as statutory authorities governed by Councils, which are accountable authorities under the Financial Administration and Audit Act and employing authorities under the VET Act and Public Sector Management Act. Managing Directors of institutes are appointed as Chief Executive Officers by the Minister for the Public Sector Management.

There are 10 TAFE institutes in Western Australia, the Curtin University and the WA Academy of Performing Arts Academy also run TAFE programs. The Department of Training and Workforce Development is purchaser for the VET system and state training agency. It also acts as the Ministers agent in overall VET strategic management. The Department is advised in its state training agency role by the State Training Board.

There is no board for TAFE, although the Department participates in two voluntary consultative bodies, the TAFE Managing Directors Consultative Forum and the TAFE Managing Directors and Governing Councils Consultative Forum.

Summary of public VET RTO governance

In summary, the TAFE public RTO sector across Australia has varying structures of governance and accountability. Individual TAFE institutions (usually with many campuses) are known as either colleges or institutes, depending on the state or territory. TAFE organisations are owned, operated and financed by the various state and territory governments, with some programs funded through the Commonwealth government. This is in contrast to the higher education sector, whose funding is predominantly the domain of the Commonwealth government and whose universities are predominantly owned by the state governments. It is also in contrast to the private VET providers' governance structures.

Private RTOs and governance in the VET sector

As identified earlier in this chapter, there are many private RTOs in Australia. They range from one-person RTOs to large multi-jurisdictional organisations and enterprise RTOs. The Commonwealth Review of the Training Costs of Award Restructuring (Training Costs Review Committee, 1991) mooted the development of an open training market. However, it was not until the National Training Framework was endorsed in the mid-90s that a semi open training market emerged in practice. This framework placed significant emphasis on flexibility and the role of industry, and provided increased opportunity for private training providers. They have since become a very diverse and important component in the Australian VET landscape even though some writers have decried the unevenness of the VET playing field (Graham, 1999; Smith & Perry, 1995).

It appears the private sector governance models are based on commercial business models and, without multiplicity of authorities or councils or committees, they are positioned to respond faster to localism, diversity, and choice in market demands, which enables them to be more competitive in the global market.

Private providers are diverse and cover a wide variety of types. Generally, they are small organisations offering a wide range of programs, both accredited and non-accredited. While there are some issues relating to data availability and quality in terms of numbers and outcomes, it is clear they make a substantial contribution to the overall Australian VET effort. It is estimated that, in 2010, private RTOs had about 2.2 million students, which compares with 1.8 million students in the publicly funded sector in that year (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011). However, comparisons with the public VET sector are problematic, because there are very limited data available of the training delivered by private RTOs.

Conclusions

Vocational education and training is a buyer's, rather than a seller's, market. With the emergence and use of new technologies and flexible governance models particularly in the private VET sector, there is no getting away from considering the broader governance at a strategic and operational level of public VET for the future. The arguments demonstrate an increasing expectation that the market paradigm will dominate the provision of VET in the future and suggest that localism, diversity and choice can improve equality, access and choice, inclusive of public and private providers of VET.

Governance of the VET sector across Australia is diverse, with the greatest differences apparent between public and private RTOs. To a large extent, governance and funding arrangements for TAFEs reflect the objectives and priorities of their government owners. Australia's public TAFE sector appears to be bogged down by a multiplicity of authorities, some of which have passed their use-by dates. In contrast the private RTO governance appears to be pretty straightforward enabling them to act in response to market demand quickly while a public provider may have to get authority from a governing council and ministerial delegation or authorities. Given the range of prospective challenges facing the sector, there is a strong case for improving the efficiency and productivity of the workforce through adoption of more contemporary work practices and governance frameworks, particularly in the TAFE sector.

CHAPTER 4

TEACHING, LEARNING AND COMPETENCY IN VET

Introduction

Donald Schon once famously identified professional practice as a high, hard ground overlooking a swamp. The high ground is the place of theory and, one might add, of policy. The swampy lowland is where vocational education and training (VET) trainers meet the learners. It is where the skills, knowledge, and attitudes called competence they wish to see instilled in learners are (or are not) acquired. The problem encountered is the swampy lowlands are messy and without definitive solutions. But, as Schon insists, these are the important problems. The solutions trainers contrive here make a difference to the learning, to the opportunities and to the lives of real people (Schon, 1967). This chapter explores teaching and learning in the context of VET. The chapter is organised into four themes: competency-based training, teaching and learning in VET, training packages and the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment within the VET context.

Competency-based training

Competency based training (CBT) was introduced to Australia in the late 1980s as part of wider economic policy measures to improve the skill levels of the Australian workforce. The aim was to enable Australian industry to be more competitive in the global markets and establish new career structures for the Australian workforce (Karmel, 2010). At the core of the VET reform agenda was the desire to move away from a time-served approach focused on trainer inputs to one based on the attainment of agreed competency standards and outcomes. It was also aimed at giving industry more say, and was the first major step on the path to today's industry-led VET system (Misko & Robinson, 2000). While the early research literature suggests that the implementation of CBT in Australia was neither smooth nor rapid (Harris et al., 1995) commitment by VET participants, particularly industry and governments, has remained strong and substantial.

A generic definition for CBT that still holds relevance in 2012 was that put forward by the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) in 1992:

Competency based training is a way of approaching vocational training that places primary emphasis on what a person can do as a result of the training (the outcome), and as such represents a shift away from an emphasis on the process involved in the training (the inputs). It is concerned with training to industry specific standards rather than an individual's achievement relative to others in the group. (ACCI, 1992, p.2).

This definition does not include several other CBT elements as described in Australian literature. Many of the characteristics have been summarised by Smith and Keating (1997) as: based on competency standards; focused on outcomes not inputs; involving industry; taking account of recognition of prior learning (RPL); assessment based on demonstration of skills rather than knowledge; criterion-referenced and ungraded. This list of characteristics includes features that can exist apart from CBT and, in some cases, are features of systems utilised by some education providers before the formal introduction of CBT.

The Australian CBT model was strongly based on the functional competency approach used in the United Kingdom, and based around a system of national vocational qualifications. It was workplace focused and performance-oriented, like its United Kingdom counterpart. Australia, therefore, drew heavily on the United Kingdom experience and literature, and many of the issues raised about CBT and its implementation had parallels (Guthrie, 2009). Following the roll-out of CBT in Australia was the development and introduction of the key competencies and, later, employability skills. The introduction of training packages, the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) and the progressive development and implementation of national quality standards were further elements of CBT.

A concern about CBT is that by being outcomes based and not input based, it is not concerned with how learners learn to perform the desired outcomes but only with the outcomes (Figgis, 2009). In simple terms the learner may be able to perform the tasks but not have the depth of knowledge to understand why. CBT also provides for and encourages opportunities for learners to gain qualifications through a process known as Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which is an assessment-only pathway rather than a learning pathway to gain a nationally recognised qualification.

The concern is around the rigour of the implementation of the assessment in terms of validity reliability and sufficient evidence to reflect competence. This is further demonstrated by the recommendations in the Council of Australian Governments Communiqué (COAG, February 2006) which outlined the need for increased attention to RPL and commitment to further funding for RPL in the VET sector.

According to Smith and Dalton (2005), a key concern with CBT is that there is a very strong focus on on-the-job training instead of off-the-job training. They state on-the-job is often carried out by workplace supervisors rather than competent VET trainers. This has led to shifting practice away from teaching and training to a focus on assessment with the assumption that the knowledge and skills will be acquired through on the job experiences.

Some literature suggests that CBT tries to bridge the gap between education and job requirements, but descriptions of competence may fail to adequately reflect the complexity of competence in work performance (Harris, Guthrie, Hobart, & Lundberg 2005; Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). Much of the literature argues that competence is a broader concept than the ability to perform workplace tasks. Competency-based training often stresses work performance, and the outcomes of that which are observable, measurable and assessable. But performance is underpinned by the constituents of competence: personally held skills, knowledge and abilities which collectively underpin and enable performance (Schofield & McDonald, 2004). Conceptually, therefore, the ‘whole’ is greater than the ‘sum of the parts’ (Harris et al., 2005).

Another view of competency is that competence may be seen as a virtue of an organisation, which recognises the complex interaction of people, skills and technologies that drives company performance (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005). In other words, competence is context dependent, and the competencies that people display and value vary in these different contexts. Equally, we might apply the concept of competence to a business unit or work team, not just an individual. There are many conceptual definitions of competence and competency. However, an integrated approach to the competency concept opens the opportunities to learning approaches such as problem-based curricula, authentic learning and similar approaches (Gonczi, 1999; Torr, 2008) which have a long history in the higher education sector.

More recently Figgis (2009) also highlights the use of problem-based and authentic learning approaches in the VET sector as beneficial to the learner as well as the organisation as a whole. Competence cannot readily be captured through generic descriptions and there is an over-reliance on standardisation of competences. Competencies are strongly dependent on context (Mulder, Weigel & Collins, 2007). As Lum (1999) argues, the assumption that human capabilities can be unequivocally described and accurately communicated by means of language is unfounded. Competency definitions and competency standards are useful guides but we should be wary of assuming the actual realities of what competencies are reflected in the words used to describe them.

Teaching in VET

Initially, teaching is seemingly at the centre of competency, but this view immediately gives way when we consider the context within which learning occurs, to projections about what beliefs and actions different learning opportunities will produce, and to past and present beliefs, practices, and arrangements of power that produce these opportunities or, at least, are being used to rationalise them. The traditional theories of learning dating back to the 1960s and before with educational theorists, such as Dewey (1859- 1952) Skinner (1904 -1990), Piaget (1896- 1980) and Vygotsky (1949 – 1968), introduced behaviourist, constructivist and scaffolded theories that appear to have influenced some aspects of VET teaching in the modern context. According to Young (1998), the “power of some to define in terms of what is valued knowledge leads to the question of accounting for how knowledge is stratified and by what criteria” (p. 15). He identified two aspects to stratification: prestige, referring to “the different ways that different kinds of knowledge are valued” and property, referring to “how access to knowledge is controlled, in modern societies, largely by professionals and other experts” (p.17). Penney’s (2007) proposition that teaching competency relates first and foremost to the transmission of established bodies of knowledge is arguably no longer tenable, as modern day competency has a focus on skills and performance in the workplace. According to Hargreaves (2010), VET trainers must think not only of how to teach for the knowledge society, but also of how to teach beyond it, to address other compelling human values and educational purposes relating to competency not just those that make a profit.

Competency teaching should be concerned with character, community, democracy and cosmopolitan identity. This includes the ability to form networks, forge relationships, and contribute to as well as draw on the human resources of the community and wider society (Hardgreaves, 2010). Karmel (2011) declares that VET teaching should be about the facilitation of learning rather than the transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the learner. This means the VET trainer must be able to help people learn to learn, as well as to teach and assess people aiming to become competent at specific tasks. In the context of VET, learning and therefore competency can be seen as building skills for a current or future job. The diversity of VET clients and their sites of learning also have implications for the way people learn.

VET trainers have a role in shaping and focusing curricula and learning programs defined by training package outcome statements to meet the needs of their clients and the training package. According to Simons, Symons and Clayton (1995), some of the greatest challenges in the working lives of VET trainers have been the introduction of training packages, increased competition among training providers and changes to funding. These are followed by technology, competency-based training and flexible delivery. Wheelehan (2010) argues that the demands on VET teachers are more complex than either schools or higher education, and the qualifications they are required to have vary depending on the level at which they are training. This means there is no uniformity in their base level qualification, particularly in comparison to qualifications required to teach in schools. Schofield and McDonald (2004) state that VET trainers are confused about how to work with competency-based training packages, even though the packages are the basic building blocks of the national system. They highlight the need for more skills for trainers in the design of VET teaching strategies.

School teachers must have four years pre-service training, either in a 4-year education degree, or a 3-year discipline degree and a 1-year education graduate diploma. Higher education teachers are at least degree qualified but a research higher degree is regarded as the key qualification. While the numbers are still small, increasing numbers also have a graduate certificate or a 1-year diploma in higher education teaching, and the Australian government is considering using this as an indicator for universities to demonstrate that they are implementing professional development that enhances the quality of teaching (DEEWR, 2009).

VET trainers are required to have a relevant occupational qualification at the same level or above the level at which they are teaching, plus a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as their teaching qualification, which might take from three days to six months to complete. In practice, VET trainer's occupational or disciplinary qualifications range from certificates to PhDs, and while they are required to have a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, a growing number have teaching or education qualifications ranging from bachelors to masters degrees (Guthrie, 2010). The proposition is that the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment does not sufficiently position VET trainers to develop teaching learning and assessment programs to a level that perhaps a teaching degree may offer.

VET teaching qualification

In the decade 1998 to 2010, the BSZ40198 Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104) and more recently the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE40110) became the prescribed base foundation qualification for those who provide training and assessment in the VET sector in Australia. This was identified in the regulatory standards of the 2007, the 2010 Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and the 2011 national VET regulator (NVR) standards. The AQTF and NVR standards are the standards that must be met by an organisation that plans to become a nationally recognised provider in Australia, known as a Registered Training Organisation (RTO).

Because of the pivotal nature of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification in VET in Australia, it is important to reflect on its origins and revisions. As Smith (2005) identifies, during the early 1990s, units of competency were developed for workplace training and assessing. The original workplace trainer units divided workplace trainers into two categories: Category 1 trainers were those who occasionally undertook training tasks as part of their work; Category 2 trainers had training as their main activity. The units for Category 2 trainers were, therefore, supposed to be more rigorous and detailed than those for Category 1. The Certificate IV in Workplace Training in 1998 was the replacement qualification title for Category 2 trainer qualified.

Training for workplace assessors was primarily for people who carried out assessment in the workplace, but was sometimes undertaken by people who taught in VET institutions. This served to accentuate the academic and vocational divide and the notion of ‘stratification of knowledge’ in which some kinds of knowledge, usually the vocational, are accorded lower status (Young, 1998).

The legitimating of national industry standards raises questions about whose views are privileged and what agendas are pursued. The certificate IV qualification being seen as evidence of the capacity to teach and access in the VET environment is based on “a static model of society” (Young, 1998, p. 152). This bears little relationship to a “constantly changing, informational society” where “knowledge is a flexible, fluid, ever-expanding and ever-shifting resource” (Hargreaves, 2003, p. 8). In the NCVER review of the TAA40198 Training and Assessment training package conducted between 2000 and 2004, some shortcomings were identified related to how they were being delivered and applied within the VET sector across Australia (NAWT, 2001). These shortcomings were raised again in 2010 in the national strategic industry audit of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment that found the quality of training and assessment was poor and often not meeting AQTF standards (NAWT, 2001). Although industry driven implementation guides identified nominal hours for the AQF Certificate IV qualification between 280 and 350 hours, it was in fact being delivered between two and fifteen days. The average was 10 days. The report found a wide variation in the level of compliance. It identified 50% of the RTOs audited were compliant with the standards and provide a good program and support services to learners. The other 50% who were found to be non-compliant had issues with learning and assessment strategies and evidence gathering tools that do not meet the requirements of the training package and had poor record keeping system (NSIA, 2010). Other studies (Lowry & Turner, 2007) state that those holding only the Certificate IV qualification in Training and Assessment have a different approach to those who hold a degree level qualification and understand CBT. The former tend to have a restricted view and be uncritical and unreflective in their teaching practice (Lowry & Turner, 2007).

While there was concern about the quality of the Certificate IV qualification, the contrasting perspective was balanced with the concern about keeping the cost of trainer education and professional development neutral.

Small RTOs require staff to hold the Certificate IV qualification prior to employment at their own expense to meet the requirements the regulatory standards. Mitchell et al. (2006) note that many VET trainers still need skills in implementing training packages, as well as being able to support workplace learning and take advantage of new learning technologies. The demand-driven and outcomes-oriented VET system requires a new professional who is better able to meet the expectations of industry clients and individual learners.

The kinds of knowledge and skills within the Certificate IV qualification that have become marginalised through the regulatory standards and the Training Package contrast with the views of Hargreaves (2003) and Young (1998). They consider VET teachers to be catalysts of the knowledge society, key agents for developing and promoting deep cognitive learning, creativity and ingenuity in the application of knowledge to unfamiliar problems, and hold a capacity for risk-taking. Also, according to Hargreaves (2003) and Young (1998) VET teachers need to link the purposes and activities of both learners and teachers with developments in the wider society.

In summary, it is ironic that the qualification that prepares people to teach in VET is viewed as the worst taught qualification in the VET sector (Smith & Dalton, 2005). Overall this does not provide a platform for development of a teacher who could be positioned to meet the challenges of the national training reform agenda, engage VET communities and collaborative learning environments to support innovation and creativity in an ever evolving knowledge society.

Learning in VET

It could be argued that VET requires a different kind of learning, one that enhances trainability thus employability. According to the International Labor Office (ILO) 2011, for the individual, learning for employability means developing the capacity to find, keep and change employment, or to generate self-employment. Employable skills facilitate the vertical and horizontal mobility of workers in the labor market and their continuous adaptation to changing technology and new forms of work organisation. For the worker, learning for employability means life-long learning and the acquisition of competency in flexible skills that enhance mobility and job security. However, the ILO (2011) conclude that learning, does not automatically lead to employability.

Certain approaches in industrialised and rapidly industrialising countries indicate a shift from the old paradigm of VET and an active search for new responses. Some of these are given below (International Labor Office, United Nations, 2011).

Old paradigm	New paradigm
Supply-driven approach	Search for demand-driven approaches
Training for employment	Learning for employability
In-service training	Concept of continuing life-long learning
Training and focus on the teacher/trainer	Self-learning and focus on the learner
One-time learning	Continuing recurrent life-long learning
Education and training separated	Education and training integrated (a sound general education and broad-based initial training are essential bases for life-long continuing learning)
Specialization in one skill	A search for multi-skilling
Skill recognition based on training period and examination	Recognition based on competency and prior learning
Rigid and fixed entry and exit	Flexible and multiple entry and exit
Focus on formal sector	Recognition of the need to focus both on formal and informal sectors
Training for wage employment	Training for wage and self-employment
Centralized system	Decentralized system requiring both strong national and decentralised institutions
Policy and delivery dominated by state	Policy and delivery separate, market-driven
Governance dominated by the state	Participatory governance, recognition of multiple actors, social dialogue

Figure 4.1 Old to new learning paradigm (International Labor Office, 2011).

It could also be argued that VET training and learning in Australia is focused on employability, and that this rests at the core of the new paradigm. Learning in VET calls on the capacity of the individual to adapt to changes in work and different organisations, to combine different types of knowledge and skills but also continue to develop and build on them through a lifelong learning process. Learning is a part of what contributes to the complexity of the VET sector and training packages are central to learning within VET.

Training packages

Teaching and learning in VET in Australia is strongly tied to nationally recognised training packages which specify outcomes statements on what skills and knowledge students must acquire to demonstrate competency (Karmel, 2010). Training packages do not include curriculum, learning guides or assessment resources.

A training package is a set of nationally endorsed standards and qualifications for recognising and assessing people's skills in a specific industry, industry sector or enterprise. They are developed by national Industry Skills Councils (ISCs). Training packages are a key feature of Australia's national vocational education and training (VET) system (NCVER, 2010). They are used as the basis for most of the programs delivered in the VET system, including Australian apprenticeships, training courses offered by TAFE and private training organisation, VET in schools programs, recognition of existing skills, and occupational licensing. Training packages are designed to enable diverse and relevant vocational learning outcomes, and to regulate training outcomes through nationally recognised qualifications (NCVER, 2010).

Despite the name, training packages do not describe how people should be trained. Rather, they provide the nationally endorsed industry standards against which training can be developed and flexibly delivered to meet particular local, individual, industry and enterprise requirements (Service Skills Australia, 2012). Training packages are developed with industry and are not owned by an individual training provider. The skills and qualifications are nationally recognised, they are not unique to one state or an individual training organisation. They provide a consistent, national benchmark for skills, and ensure that skills gained in one state will be recognised across Australia (Service Skills Australia, 2012).

Only registered training organisations (RTOs) are able to issue training package qualifications or statements of attainment. All training packages are developed by ISCs according to a set of rules set down by the Commonwealth Government, are endorsed by the National Skills Standards Council (NSSC), and signed off by the state and territory education ministers. A Training Package comprises two components; endorsed materials and non-endorsed support materials. The NSSC oversees the endorsed component.

The model of evaluation is that training packages are expected to be reviewed every three years, and sometimes more frequently, and dependent of the industry context; for example, information technology is reviewed on an ongoing basis due to the nature of the industry. Perhaps this model provides some form of risk management to address slippage in the training package content needed to meet evolving industry practice. The endorsed component of all training packages includes three major components: qualifications; units of competency and assessment guidelines (Service Skills Australia, 2012).

Qualifications and units of competency

Training packages contain nationally recognised qualifications and units of competency. Units of competency define the particular skills and knowledge and the standard required to be competent in each unit. A qualification combines several units of competency that are required to work within a particular occupation or at a particular level within an industry. These components of a training package mean that an individual can have his or her skills recognised in two ways:

Qualification: A qualification indicates that the individual is competent in all units of competency required to attain a qualification.

Statements of Attainment: A statement of attainment indicates that the individual is competent in one or more units of competency, but not in the full range of units required for a qualification. Statements of attainment stand in their own right to show that the individual holds particular skills, and they can also be used as credit toward full qualifications if the individual wishes to finish a qualification in the future (Australian Skills Quality Council, 2012).

Assessment guidelines

The training.gov.au (TGA) database provides information about training packages and their make-up. Each training package includes assessment guidelines that define the rules for how assessment must occur under the training package (TGA, 2012). They include issues such as: how assessment can be conducted; what qualifications assessors need to hold and the conditions under which assessment should occur, for example, some training packages may require that assessment of certain units must take place in a real work environment.

Non-endorsed component of Training Packages

The non-endorsed component or support materials to be used in conjunction with a training package can be produced by RTOs, private and commercial developers, State Training Authorities, or other organisations (TGA, 2012). These materials may comprise of:

- learning strategies that assist training providers to design specific training programs to help trainees attain the required competencies;
- assessment materials that can be used by assessors to gather sufficient evidence of competency to make reliable judgments about whether a person has met the required competency standard; and
- professional development materials that provide information, hints and resources for trainers and assessors to help them successfully implement the training package.

There is literature that considers that competence can be conceptualised in two broad ways. One takes a view that competence is a personal construct, while the other grounds competence in the context of an occupation and even a particular workplace (Guthrie, 2005). It points to the idea that a balance needs to be struck between these two constructs. The support for CBT and training packages remains strong, but evidently attention needs to be given to the quality of teaching learning and assessment. The literature also indicates that training packages could be better understood and used, and that some refining of the underpinning concepts, processes and products is required (Guthrie, 2005).

The professionalism of vocational education and training trainers needs to be reemphasised and enhanced, the benchmark certificate IV qualification in particular (Wheelahan, 2011). It may be timely to revisit the nature and level of training for VET's trainers thus part of the impetus for this study.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework of this study is presented as a visual representation (Figure 4.2) of the concepts, the system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and theories that supports and informed the exploratory study. Miles & Huberman, (1994); and Robson (2002) defined a conceptual framework as a visual or written product. Miles & Huberman, (1994) definition was that a conceptual framework “explains, either graphically or in narrative form, the main things to be studied, the key factors, concepts, or variables and the presumed relationships among them” (p. 18). Chapter one of this portfolio explored the diversity of VET in relation to: the history of VET; what is VET in Australia; VET policies and how VET is legislated for and regulated. This led to the discovery of VET regulatory authorities across Australia identifying a pattern of consistent non-compliance against staff competency standard 1.4 and delivery and assessment standards 1.3 and 1.5. This inspired the study with a focus on trainers of VET as the specific angle to explore possible reasons. Chapter two considered a bigger picture of VET and trainers of VET in the global context while chapter three looked at governance of the sector for strategic and operational relationships. Having trainers of VET as the potential study focus it was important to explore links within teaching, learning and competency covered in chapter four. The study problem and questions emerged and are detailed in chapter five. A mixed methods approach was taken for the exploratory study so as a survey and focus groups could be utilised. The survey was of a representative group of VET trainers. It was considered, who better to represent a VET group than those who train the trainers of VET. The purpose of the exploratory study was to gain a profile of VET trainers and to examine a potential link between VET trainers' competency and the non-compliance in the delivery and assessment aspects of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) standards. It was also to identify trainer competency requirements, practice and views related to their professional development in response to the changing face of VET. Chapter five, six and seven detail the rationale, process and results of this exploratory study.

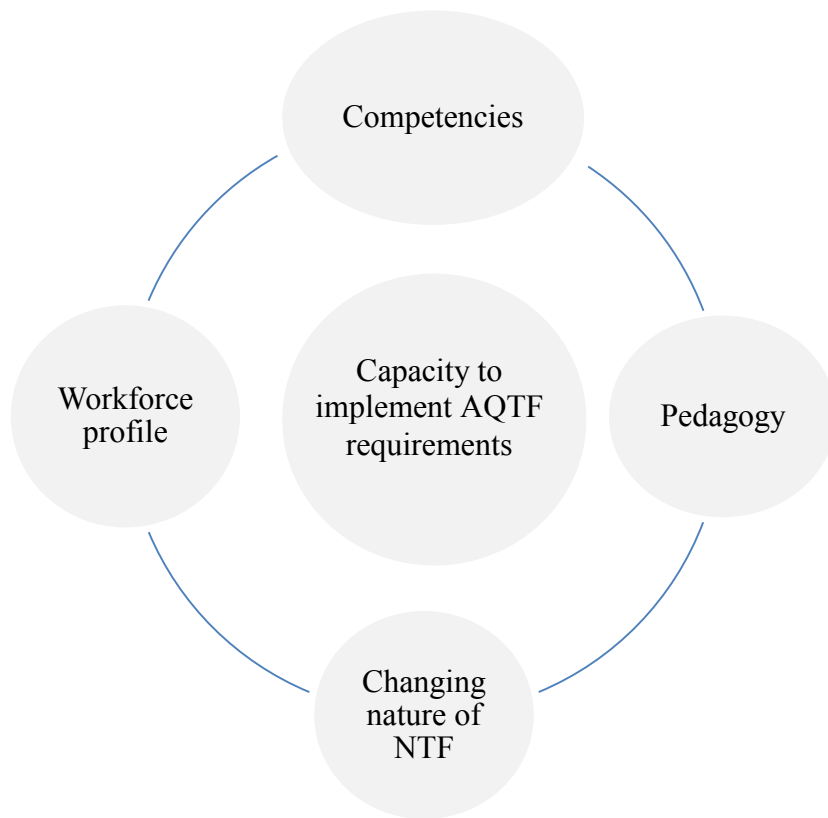


Figure 4.2 Visual representations of concepts for exploratory study.

CHAPTER 5

THE RESEARCH STUDY

Introduction

This small exploratory study used a mixed methods approach that included primary data collection and analysis, secondary data analysis and conceptual analyses of contemporary practices. The interpretative research project focused on the specific social setting of the Australian VET sector, RTOs and trainers that operate within them. As noted by Erickson (1986), Patton (1990) and Denzin and Lincoln (1994), within the interpretive approach there are many methods, but they all share the same philosophical assumption, which is that reality is constructed by individuals interacting with their social worlds (Merriam, 1998). As indicated in chapter one, this exploratory study was framed by the literature review and environmental scan. The study explored VET policy decisions pursued between 2000 and 2010 in Australia and how they impacted on the sector and educators within the system, namely trainers of VET.

The first section of this chapter outlines the problem, purpose, and research approach taken for the study. Detailed justification is included for the chosen epistemology and methodology. The second section of this chapter outlines the data collection and analysis procedures.

Problem

As identified from the literature outlined in chapters one to four, unprecedented changes to government policy, expectations of industry and learners for providers of VET in Australia between 2000 and 2010 had placed considerable strain on the sector (Guthrie, Perkins, Chappell, Roy & Mitchell, 2005, Mitchell & Ward, 2010). It appears that very little is known about the competency of the VET trainers (Cornford, Athanasou, & Pithers, 1996, Guthrie et al, 2005, Mitchell & Ward, 2010). From consultations with VET regulatory body representatives in each jurisdiction in Australia, it became apparent that each jurisdictions regulatory body in Australia between 2001 and 2007 reported the most RTO non-compliance against the AQTF standards concerned with staff competency

and training and assessment. No explanation for the problem was available. The literature at the same time showed that there was minimal data available about the profile and performance of the VET workforce, with data collection patchy and inconsistent across states, territories, RTOs and national research centres.

This research study is important as the literature states we know less about VET trainers than teachers in other sectors of education in Australia. The demands on VET trainers are more complex than either schools or higher education, because of the variations of VET training contexts and the diversity of the VET client base with which they work. The vocational or industry specific qualifications and experience trainers of VET are required to have vary depending on the industry competencies and the level at which they are training. As summed up in a recent NCVER report on the VET workforce the data on the VET workforce is very problematic and while an overall picture may be possible, this must be viewed cautiously (Mlotkowski & Guthrie, 2010). The report also stated that further study was required in this area.

Purpose and research questions

The purpose of the exploratory study was to gain a profile of VET trainers and to examine a potential link between VET trainers' competency and the non-compliance in the delivery and assessment aspects of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) standards. It was also to identify trainers' competency requirements, practice and views related to their professional development in response to the changing face of VET . Previous studies (Rumsey, 2002; Schofield & McDonald, 2004) showed that there was little evidence of correlation between the competencies of the trainers and the recognised VET benchmark called the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment required for trainers (Rumsey, 2002). This study investigated the profile of trainers and the value of a benchmark qualification to meet the AQTF performance outcomes within the VET sector in Australia. The study investigated the skills, knowledge and attributes held and required by trainers of the VET workforce in Australia at a given point in time.

This research adds new knowledge regarding trainers of VET and will perhaps guide future policy directions. The study addressed the following research questions:

1. What is the profile of VET trainers in Australia?
2. Is there a link between VET trainer competency and the high level of non-compliance in delivery and assessment aspects of the AQTF standards?
3. What are the trainer's views on the existing benchmark VET qualification and operating within the VET sector?

A Research Approach

Research using a mixed methods methodology involves combining both quantitative and qualitative collection and analysis of data, either through a single study or a series of studies (Collins, 2010; Creswell, 2010; Greene & Caracelli, 1997; Josselson, 2007; Miller & Crabtree, 2004; Morse, 2010). The mixed method approach to research is commonly applied in the social and behavioral science disciplines, especially within education. Creswell (2009) explains that mixed methods research combines numerical and narrative data which enhances the depth and strength to a study. Studies based on the complementary nature of the different types of data derived from such sources are usually rich in contextual information (Flyvbjerg, 2006). Interviews, a survey, focus groups and analysis of quantitative and qualitative data were utilised for the study. Greene, Caracelli and Graham (1993) also highlight the value of mixed methods evaluation. The complementary nature of this research approach clarifies and illustrates results from one method with the use of another. The qualitative data are often employed to explain the quantitative findings (Creswell, 2010; Plano Clark & Creswell, 2007).

Interview as a method for qualitative research

The qualitative research interview seeks to describe the meanings of central themes in the life world of the subjects. The main task in interviewing is to understand the meaning of what the interviewees say (Kvale, 1996). In this study, the interviews with the regulatory body informed the survey and the focus groups. A negative aspect is that interviewing as a technique is believed to be highly subjective with the possibility of bias always existing (Bell, 2005).

The interviews in this study were structured in their approach. The set of questions for the interviews were prepared in advance and pilot tested, to support consistency. Bell (2005) acknowledges that the preciseness of wording of questions may not be as important during interviews as in questionnaires. In this study rephrasing of questions occurred occasionally through the interview process, to provide clarification. The technique of repeating back an answer was used to ensure the intended meaning was recorded and to allow the subject to clarify or elaborate their response. Prior to participating in the study, participants were asked to read an information letter and sign the consent form.

Survey as a method for quantative research

A questionnaire or survey is an effective method of gathering data from a large and dispersed group of participants (Busha & Harter, 1980; Goldstein, 2005), as was the case in this study. The 400 RTOs on the national database registered to deliver the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment across Australia were chosen as the target study group. The instrument was designed so the questions fell into a logical sequence. This was to support the respondent understand its purpose, and as a result the quality of answers may be improved (Arsham, 2002).

Focus groups

Kitzinger and Barbour (1999) defined focus groups, as group discussions exploring a specific set of issues that are focused because the process involves some kind of collective activity. However, while distinguishing other methods such as group interviews, nominal groups, brainstorming, delphi groups and other consensus groups that could be identified as focus groups, they conclude that the key feature of focus groups is the active encouragement of group interaction among participants and the gaining of a majority consensus (Kitzinger & Barbour, 1999). The dynamic nature of the questions asked by the moderator and the group process produces a level of insight that is rarely derived from unidirectional information collection methods such as observation, surveys and less interactional interview techniques (Morgan, 1993). According to Krueger (1994), methods of recording and analyzing information gathered from focus groups, including strategies for collecting unbiased information have helped focus group research to gain credibility as an accurate and useful source of information collection.

In summary the study used a mixed methods approach and combined interviews, surveys and focus groups. The interviews informed the design of the survey and focus groups helped interpret the survey data.

Participants

The main part of the research was conducted between February 2004 and November 2009 in the context of the VET sector in Australia. The initial part of the study process included engaging the regulatory authorities (seven in total) in discussions on possible trends and patterns in data. The regulatory authorities were chosen based on their key role within the VET sector in a governance and regulatory role. Theirs is a unique perspective, they collect and analyse a lot of data and are central to maintaining the VET system in Australia. The sample of people for the survey of VET trainers were a targeted group of registered training organisations (RTOs). The source of data on the RTOs was the VET national database, called the National Training Information Service (NTIS). The database was accessed to identify RTOs that had the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment on their scope of delivery. This group was identified as the population of RTOs that train the trainers and they also operate within the VET sector as RTOs. This survey study group were unique as they included public, private, large and small organisations. There were a total of 400 RTOs registered, of which 141 participated by returning surveys.

Table 5.1 *Number of RTO returning surveys by jurisdiction*

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
Responses	33	28	19	24	13	8	5	11	141

For the validation part of the data gathering process, five focus group discussions were undertaken with identified pre-existing VET stakeholder network groups.

Table 5.2 *Focus groups*

Focus groups – piggybacked on established network groups meetings	
Group	Number of participants
Consortium Private Providers	Western Australian Based (12 participants)
WA Trainer and Assessor Network	Western Australian Based (10 participants)
TAFE PD Strategy Network	National Group (4 participants)
Department of Education and Training Learning and Assessment Strategy Advisory Group	Western Australian Based (6 participants)
Fresh Thinking in VET Group	National Group (7 participants)

The survey and follow-up focus group interviews were used to gather data directly from the trainers of the Australian trainer workforce.

Phases of the study

There were three key phases to the study. Phase one included preliminary contact with stakeholders, consultation, literature search and interviews. Phase two included planning, and development of the survey instrument, pilot testing, and administration of the survey and analysis of the data. Phase three involved validation and interpretation of findings from the survey. A PowerPoint was used to present the data to the focus groups for discussion of key findings. Recommendations were informed by the themes that emerged in the focus groups.

In phase one, the literature search and general environmental scan was conducted to access pertinent information and published data on issues and developments relevant to VET and trainers of VET. This included on-line searching, library research and networking. All necessary protocols were used to gather permission and approvals from relevant persons, committees, authorities prior to accessing data. This search was flexible enough to include emerging or new research as it developed and it pertained to the study. A series of consultations were undertaken with regulatory bodies across Australia to gather data on results of audits against the AQTF standards over the 2001 to 2007 period and it emerged that there was a common pattern across all states and territories in Australia.

Representatives from the seven Australian regulatory authorities for the VET including the Chief Executive Officers from Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Northern Territory and Tasmania were interviewed. The purpose was to identify any trends or patterns in regulator findings particularly during the three year period leading into the study. The focus was on RTOs practice around Australia's and the Australian Quality Training Framework. The regulatory bodies undertake annual analysis of findings against standards. A pattern of consistent non-compliance against staff competency standard 1.4 and delivery and assessment standards 1.3 and 1.5 was identified from audit results by all of the regulators. The pattern was over the several years that preceded this study; however, there was no evidence to explain why there were persistently poor results in these three standards in particular. It should be noted that the same pattern was evident (National Industry Strategic Audit, 2010) after this work was completed. This was the basis for initiation of the exploratory study reported in this portfolio.

For phase two, the survey study participants were chosen because of their critical role within the VET sector being those that trained the trainers for the sector. They delivered the benchmark qualification competency standard from the nationally recognised training package. The actual number of RTOs formally registered under the Australian National Training System to deliver and assess the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment at the time of the study in Australia was 400. The survey instrument was developed and a pilot run was initiated. It was tested for question ambiguity and for ease of collation of data using Excel software. The pilot involved a trial of the survey with ECU University colleagues and others. Adjustments were made before the final version was complete. The survey was distributed to the targeted population of RTOs by email using contact names and email addresses that are publically available on the national VET database National Training Information Service (NTIS).

For phase three the focus groups, whom were VET stakeholder representative groups were chosen because they were existing recognised VET networks and established sector groups. The focus groups were piggybacked on to the regular meetings of these groups. Five focus group workshops were conducted over a six-day period with the stakeholder representative groups including; the Training and Assessment Consortium of Private Providers; Western Australian Assessment and Workplace Training Network; The TAFE Professional Development Strategy Network; The Department of Education and Training Teaching, Learning and Assessment Strategy Group; and,

the Fresh Thinking in VET Research Group. A total of 27 participants took part in the focus groups (see Table 5.2).

Instruments

Interviews

The interview (see Appendix 1) was standardized, the same questions were asked to all interviewees. This approach facilitates faster interviews that can be more easily analyzed and compared (Kvale, 1996). The regulatory body interviews at the start of the study were one-one with the senior management in each of the eight jurisdictions in Australia. Interviews were audio recorded and transcribed.

Survey

In designing the survey instrument, a number of factors identified by Arsham (2002), were considered including: questions to be simple and unambiguous, the best kinds of questions are those which allow a pre-printed answer to be ticked, the survey was made as short as possible; questions to be neither irrelevant nor too personal. Leading questions were not asked. The survey was designed so that the questions fell into a logical sequence. This enabled the respondent to understand its purpose, and as a result improve the quality of answers. The survey instrument was comprised of four sections (see Appendix 2). Section A included questions about trainer competence. Section B included multiple choice questions aimed at gathering data on background, occupational benchmarks, professional development. Section C utilised a 5-point Likert scale to gain quantitative measurable data on perceptions of good practice. Section D also utilised a 5-point Likert scale to gain quantitative data measures on views of the VET trainer qualification and modes of support. The first issue of the survey had an 11% return rate which did not constitute a representative sample; however, follow up email and direct phone calls to the RTOs combined with a second distribution enabled a return rate of 141 from 400 RTOs which is an overall return rate of 36%. Sometimes respondents were contacted a second or third time to further encourage them to respond.

Focus group protocol

For each focus group meeting there was a comfortable setting, refreshments, and participants sat in a circle which helped to establish the right atmosphere. The group size was between 5 and 12 people. Sessions lasted one to two hours. Group discussion particularly was useful as the interviewer had a series of open ended questions (see Appendix 3) and wished to encourage research participants to explore the issues of importance to them, in their own vocabulary, generating their own questions and pursuing their own priorities. People were encouraged to talk to one another, ask questions, exchange anecdotes and comment on each other's experiences and points of view. The method was particularly useful for exploring people's knowledge and experiences and provided some insights into participants' thinking and why they think that way. Participants were selected to reflect a range of the total study population (VET trainers and RTOs). The group discussions were recorded and transcribed with careful notes and highlighted corresponding responses. Planning and preparation for the focus groups was conducted using a presentation taken from the outcomes of the literature review and survey findings. This information was emailed to focus group participants at least two weeks prior to the meetings to allow familiarisation with the content and time for participants to consider positions. At the focus groups, participants were asked to identify strengths, weaknesses and interesting aspects of the outcomes and vote on preferences. The focus groups were run at the end of a network meeting already scheduled and was arranged as an agenda item with the organising body responsible. This was to enable efficient use of time, minimize inconvenience to participants and maximize attendance at the focus groups.

Research rigour

To support the validity and reliability of the study, the planning allowed for three sources of data; interviews with regulatory bodies, survey of trainers at RTOs with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification on their scope of registration, and the five focus groups. The interviews informed the development of the survey. The survey was run as a pilot. Use of the focus groups was to validate data interpretation. The use of focus groups and interviews supplemented the data gathered through the use of the survey in order to triangulate one set of data with the other.

The process of triangulation of data supported a more valid and reliable set of data results (Denzin, 1978; Patton 1990; De Vos, 1998). To enhance the validity of the survey, the survey items were limited to reflect the key issues to have emerged from the literature review and consultations undertaken with the regulatory authorities. The study acknowledges that the richness of data from focus groups relies on the establishment of a relationship with the focus group participants. Time was taken to ensure rapport was established with each group before the commencement of the meetings. The wording of questions can be a possible source of bias and unreliability. Pilot testing helped improve the clarity of questions. Responses in interviews were repeated or paraphrased to elicit agreement on understanding the meaning of participants' responses (Guba & Lincoln 1989; Patton, 1990). Acknowledging the potential for misinterpreting responses and attitudes, the data were scrutinised for evidence of bias, personal or other (Brenner, 1985). Bias was minimised by maintaining a neutral stance, so as not to endanger the validity of the information.

Data analysis

For the surveys (141 returned), a coding schema was used to categorise the choices made by participants. Coded responses were entered on excel software program for ease of analysis, and then some were summarised using a median, the most suitable measure of central tendency. The survey instrument was divided into four parts:

Section A: The AQTF and teacher/trainer/assessor competency (coded A.1, A.2 (2.1-2.6) to A.3),

Section B: Profile (q coded B.1-B10),

Section C: Developing good practice (coded C.1 (1.1-1.7)-C .2 (2.1-2.10),

Section D: Modes of support (D.1 (1.1-1.4)-D.3).

The responses in each section were collated with a numerical value for example, how many A.1 out of 141 responses was yes and how many no responses. For question A.2, how many choose A2.1, A2.2, A2.3 ...to A2.6 to get highest numerical similar respondents. A color code was assigned to each section red, green...then answers corresponded with colours; green for same responses, red for number responses with value so they could be collocated with highest values informing results reported.

Strauss and Corbin's (2009) inventory of analytic techniques was used as a guide for conceptualizing and classifying the data. Their key idea is that the processes of data collection and data analysis are intimately connected, each informing and guiding the other. From the surveys and focus groups the patterns and common themes were highlighted in colour codes. Open coding and layered coding was applied for data analysis.

Similarly the analysis of the focus group records were matched to the four categories identified in the survey instrument. Then that data was colour coded to draw out the common themes and patterns in responses across each respondent and all five groups.

Limitations of the study

The limitations of the study are acknowledged, including limited generalizing from the sample of 141 RTOs to a population of 400 and the possibility of selection bias among respondents, particularly as they are all providers of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification. The survey data was not analysed in terms of particular sub-groups which reflected the proportionate representation of trainers across the VET sector (e.g. non- English speaking respondents, Aboriginal, low income, other industry RTOs). However, there was a good distribution of respondents from the RTOs who participated across states and territories in Australia, representative of RTOs. The regulatory body interviews conducted at the start of the study were one-one with the senior management in each of the eight jurisdictions in Australia but were limited to explore the results of the AQTF audit findings and accuracy of their reporting and recording within that defined period. The study focus groups may have had a bias toward their group focus (see table 5.2), for example one group represented private RTO providers only and Western Australia was over represented in the sample.

Summary

The use of a mixed methods approach enabled gathering of quantitative and qualitative data from different vantage points including trainers, program managers, senior management and the VET community that enabled different interpretations of the social reality by different groups. The methodology included the use of interviews, a survey, focus groups and discussions. The interviews informed the development of the quantitative data gathered through the use of the surveys and focus groups informed the interpretation of the survey data. The process of triangulation of data supported a more valid and reliable set of findings. Chapter six provides an overview of the findings drawn from the data collected.

CHAPTER 6

STUDY FINDINGS

Introduction

The findings from the exploratory study draw on: the interview responses from the Australian VET regulatory authority's Chief Executive Officers; responses from a survey administered to a select group of RTO trainers who deliver the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to VET trainers across Australia and focus group responses related to the findings from the survey. The data identifies perceptions of competencies required to operate within the VET sector and provides some insights into the impact of the changing nature of the VET National Training Framework on trainers in Australia. There are two main sections to this chapter: the first draws on the survey data to present a profile of the respondents, and the second draws on the survey and focus group findings to identify pedagogical and broader VET environmental implications on the educational approach and competency of the VET trainer and identifies VET relevant capability priorities.

Profile of VET Trainers

Demographic data is reported for VET trainer survey participants in relation to gender, location, age, employment status, qualifications and priorities for operating within the VET environment in Australia. This chapter also reports on priorities in terms of competencies to operate within the VET sector, pedagogical perspectives, the VET workplace and views on skills and knowledge. At the time of the study there were 400 RTOs delivering this qualification (known at the time of the study as TAA40104 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment). This group was chosen for the study as they represent a group of people that train the trainers within the VET sector. A total of 141 RTO trainers participated in the survey component of the study, with a response rate of 35% of RTOs. The following profile of the participating VET trainers is drawn from analysis of the survey data and has been combined with qualitative data from the survey and the focus groups.

Gender and location

As expected, the majority of those responding to the survey were from the largest states. Respondents from NSW and Victoria accounted for 43% of the sample and the ACT, Tasmania and the Northern Territory provided 17%. The number of females was larger than the number of males in all jurisdictions except the ACT. Overall, there was 67% female respondents in the sample of 141 participants. The gender and location distribution of the sample VET trainers is presented in Table 6.1

Table 6.1 *Distribution of trainer respondents by gender and location*

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total Number
Trainer	33	28	19	24	13	8	5	11	141
Male	7	11	8	5	4	3	2	7	47
Female	26	17	11	19	9	5	3	4	94
Total	33	28	19	24	13	8	5	11	

Age and employment status

The data from the survey in Table 6.2 shows that in every state and territory across Australia the majority (about 70%) of VET trainers was over 35 years of age. The data shows a mature aged population within this employment group, with 28% of participants in the 45- 60 years age bracket and 6% in the 60+ age group.

Table 6.2 *Percentage of VET trainer by State/Territory and age*

Age	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	NT	ACT
	(n=33)	(n=28)	(n=19)	(n=24)	(n=13)	(n=8)	(n=5)	(n=11)
< 25	5	5	2	4	1	1	2	4
25-35	21	19	14	17	12	16	17	16
years								
35-45	39	36	34	36	35	35	33	33
years								
45-60	28	34	41	37	48	42	44	39
years								
60+ years	7	6	9	6	4	6	4	8

Employment status

More than half of the respondents were working in trainer positions on a full-time basis, approximately one-quarter work part-time (26%) and one-quarter on a contract, casual or temporary basis.

Table 6.3 *Trainer employment status across Australia*

	NSW	VIC	QLD	WA	SA	TAS	NT	ACT	Total
F/T	15	14	10	13	5	6	3	5	71
P/T	6	4	6	7	7	6	0	1	37
Contract	4	2	3	2	0	0	0	0	11
Casual	5	4	1	4	0	0	0	1	15
Temp	2	4	0	1	0	0	0	0	7
Seasonal	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total									141

The survey data (Table 6.3) shows most respondents are employed on a full-time or part-time basis with a minority employed on contract, casual or temporary basis.

There was no seasonal employment which may indicate this part of the VET industry does not have seasonal peaks of demand.

The study identified across the sample that 45% of trainers were female and working full-time (Table 6.4) of which 80% were aged over 35 years old, compared to 23% male population employed full time, with 19% over 35 years old. There was a total of 25% from both gender employed part-time. The majority of respondents were working full-time (Table 6.4) which contrasted with a concern identified by the same respondents of the increasing use of casual and contract type arrangements for trainers. This concern was identified by 25% of total respondents. This could be attributed to the traditional workforce changes due for retirement and variations in values related to work life. It was noted that many respondents also identified concerns about the rate of pay not reflecting of the heavy workload, and not having enough time to do the job to enable a high quality outcome.

Table 6.4 *Number of respondents by employment status, gender and age*

	Full-Time	Part-Time	Other
Male	33 (23%)	12 (8%)	2 (1%)
Female	64 (45%)	25 (17%)	5 (3.5%)
<35 years	80 (56%)	28 (19%)	5 (3.5%)
>35 years	17 (12%)	9 (6%)	2 (1%)

The VET workplace

The results of this study identified a range of workplaces and institutions that VET trainers operate within, having the distinctions of TAFE and Non-TAFE institutions, Registered Training Organisations including enterprise based and private providers. TAFE institutions, the government funded institutions, located around Australia were the major providers of VET programs. Non-TAFE public providers are government funded institutions such as secondary schools (VET in School programs), community and agricultural colleges, and universities registered to provide VET programs and services. Registered Training Organisations are training providers around Australia registered by state and territory authorities under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF),

or nationally under the VET Act 2011 and NVR standards, to deliver training products and services according to a specific scope of registration (nominated qualifications, accredited courses, and units of competency). Registration enables RTO to award outcomes within that scope of registration; for example, an RTO might have industry expertise in building and construction and might offer a Certificate II, III, IV, and Diploma in carpentry or in the electrical trade. An individual or a group of individuals who can satisfy AQTF or NVR standards can become a Registered Training Organisation. RTOs include secondary schools, international colleges, adult community colleges (ACE), private training colleges, enterprises, adult and community providers, universities, group training companies and agricultural colleges. Private providers are usually commercial (business colleges, training consultants), community (adult education and community centers), industry (skill centers, group training companies) and enterprise (in-house training).

Qualifications

It was interesting to identify the qualifications trainers currently held (see Table 6.5). The results indicated that majority (58%) held a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, 12% Diploma qualifications, 13.5% held an undergraduate degree and 6% held a teaching related higher degree. Some respondents held multiple qualifications. It must be noted that the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is a regulatory requirement within the AQTF standards that must be met under the National Training Framework. Therefore, it was a little concerning that a small proportion did not hold the Certificate IV qualification considering they were in a position to be teaching others competencies within that qualification. Although the majority of respondents were in the over 35 year age range, the less than 35 year age group held a slightly higher proportion of AQF level qualifications at degree level and above. All trainers aged less than 35 years held at least a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Table 6.5 *Qualifications held by age group*

Category	Number trainers	Number trainers	Total % rounded
	< 35 yrs.	>35 yrs.	
PhD	0	2	1
Master	4	3	5
Degree	9	10	13
Dip	4	30	12
Cert IV	8	68	58
Cert III or other	0	14	10

In terms of qualifications in the additional comments sections from the study, some respondents (22%) identified a particular need for a Certificate level III qualification to be part of the VET sector and that the level of knowledge packaged in the Certificate IV qualification was never used for some VET roles. This was a surprising piece of information and not something that had been raised in the literature reviewed. Participants identified some trainers operating in VET they felt did not need a full Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. The examples included people whose role was only to collect evidence of on-the-job of competency, people teaching base literacy and numeracy type programs, people undertaking volunteer training. The following quote illustrates the point:

“We have guys on the job that are workplace assessors whose role is to collect evidence on the candidate’s performance using the assessment instrument and criteria we have designed that don’t need a full Certificate IV qualification but do need the assessment competencies and industry knowledge and experience”. (R1, Focus Group T&A Network, 2, 2008).

Profile summary

In summary the profile of participants identified a mostly female workforce (67%), with three times as many females delivering the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment in NSW and WA than males. The majority of male and female respondents were working in full-time positions. Across Australia 70% of the respondents were over 35 years old indicating an aging workforce. The most common VET qualification held by the respondent trainers in VET was identified as the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Broad impacts of VET sector change on trainers

The broad impacts of change on the VET trainer (data taken from open questions on survey and focus group themes) identified by respondents included a range of themes. The changes fell into the broad themes of: changes to training packages; skill shortages and workplace change. The study data demonstrated what the respondents identified as external changes were areas that they felt they had no control over and were struggling with.

Changes to Training Packages

The findings indicated that a common impact on the VET trainer within their workplaces was the ongoing review and changed implementation of training packages. For example:

“I just have my resources and instruments bedded down and they changed the units of competency in the Training Package” (R6.FG3, 2008).

Similar comments were identified by respondents in the open questions section of the survey. The National Skills Standards Council (NSSC) is the governing body for VET responsible for overseeing development and implementation of Training Packages. The NSSC guidelines for training packages is that review of each training package takes place every three years.

“We (VET trainer) have to unpack them and make them into learning programs, produce learning and assessment strategies and develop assessment tools, and record and track the individual student each step of the way” ” (R1.FG4, 2008).

They also spoke about increased demand by their employers for them to attend industry consultation meetings and moderation meetings and general staff meetings because of changes to training packages.

Skill shortages

Skill shortages emerged as a common theme identified by respondents as impacting on trainers’ workplace for a range of industries and industry sectors. It was stated that skill shortages and industry drivers put pressure of VET trainers to get people into the workforce with an emphasis on speed of completion of training programs.

“If we don’t get the apprentices signed off we don’t get the money from the government” (R2.FG1, 2008).

“The demand from the International training market is high and is based on the migration skills list so they have a chance at permanent residency in Australia” (R3.FG.2, 2008).

VET workplace change

A finding from the study discussions was that many external changes have transformed the orientation of RTOs away from training and education and more towards business and services. In particular, a common trend that came up at all focus groups was that the work levels of trainers in VET have intensified. Examples of some of the changes to the role now included:

“validate assessment outcomes with industry; a lot more paperwork for quality assurance systems within the RTOs; use of email, mobile phone and SMS follow-up communications with students outside of teaching time; and more travel to meet demand for on-site-training and assessment. ” (R3.FG1, 2008).

The major area of agreement across the focus groups was increased workload as a direct result of changes within the sector over the past several years (2005-2008 being the

time frame indicated at the time of the study). The word that was most frequently used (90%) used to describe the impact of changes based on trainer experiences was ‘stressful’. The following direct quotes are examples that sum up the overall group responses:

“I got into training because I think know the trade well and when I hurt my back I felt I could pass my skills to another generation because we need more skilled tradespeople. I had no idea about all the rules in VET and all the paperwork, it was a shock and to tell the truth I still don’t fully understand why we have to fill out so many forms” (R2.FG1, 2008).

“All the changes coming are putting more stress on us than ever before, when do we get time to teach, the college is only interested in assessment results” (R2.FG3, 2008).

In summary the data indicates that training packages changes, skill shortages and workplace changes have led VET trainers to express feelings of increased stress levels.

Educational approach and competency of the VET trainer

In section B.8 of the survey participants were asked how well the VET Certificate IV in Training and Assessment program had prepared them for further education or training. The scale was 1-5 in being very poorly prepared to very well prepared. Almost half (45%) indicated the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment only somewhat prepared them for further education or training (see Table 6.6). A low mean rating (see Table 6.6), indicates that trainers felt the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment only somewhat prepared them for further education or training.

Table 6.6 *Adequacy of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification for VET trainers*

	Number of trainers giving various ratings of adequacy of preparation					Mean rating
	N/A (1)	Very Poorly (2)	Somewhat (3)	Well (4)	Very well (5)	/5
Certificate IV in Training and Assessment	2 (1.4%)	31 (21%)	64 (45%)	42 (30%)	2(1.4%)	2.4

This finding was concerning, as the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is the benchmark qualification for the VET sector across Australia. The low level of satisfaction is further illustrated in the rating for trainer capabilities not covered by the Certificate IV qualification and identification of their competency priorities.

Throughout the consultations and focus group meetings, it was identified by participants that trainers need to become highly-skilled professionals. This assertion was based on discussions about of the study responses, major changes emerging such as the flow-on effect of globalisation on VET, the knowledge-based society, advancements of technology in industry, and different needs and types of learners. Some of the specific skills the focus groups commonly identified included a high level of knowledge and skill in their industry currency, using more client focused and centred approach. They also affirmed a need for better understanding of technology, VET system expertise, pedagogy and andragogy, rather than traditional transmission pedagogies. They identified the capacity to work with the diversity of the VET learners, multiple clients in multiple contexts and across multiple learning platforms such as e-learning, on the job and site-based learning. The study group respondents identified and rated importance of additional capabilities (Table 6.8) required by trainers that were not covered within their experience of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification.

Additional trainer capabilities

The trainer capabilities identified for training others in order of importance (Table 6.7). The findings shows client focus being rated as most important closely followed by industry currency. VET system expertise, pedagogy and use of technology all rated similarly high

Table 6.7 *Capabilities required for training others*

Capability	Number of trainers giving various ratings of importance					Mean rating
	No focus (1)	Minimum focus (2)	Useful but not critical (3)	Strong focus (4)	Critical (5)	
Client focus	0	0	5	34	105	4.7
Industry currency	0	3	10	30	98	4.5
VET system expertise	0	11	30	80	20	3.7
Use of technology	0	6	88	12	35	3.5
Pedagogical expertise	2	11	78	43	7	3.2

Priorities and focus on VET trainer competencies

Participants were asked to prioritise what they felt as most important on a scale of 1 to nine from a set of nine competencies identified through the literature as being those required to operate in VET in the next decade (Cornford, Athanasou, & Pithers, 1996, Gutherie et al, 2005, Mitchell & Ward 2010). As illustrated in table 6.8 below, the most important thing they identified was to continuously upgrade their skill and knowledge followed closely by teamwork and networking across organisations.

Table 6.8 illustrates that 79% of the study group felt it was important to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge which may relate to their experiences of a changing and evolving VET environment. Over 50% of all of the respondents identified career development, leadership and knowledge work capabilities as being high on their priority list (see Table 6.8) The lowest on the priorities list was preparation for fragmented

or specialist roles such as assessment, this was surprising considering the regulatory bodies had found a majority of non-compliances with the AQTF standards in the area of assessment. There may be a case for the old saying: you don't know what you don't know.

Table 6.8 *Priorities and focus on VET trainer competencies*

Element	Priority	Strong or critical focus (%)
Continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge (C 2.5)	1	79%
Learn to work in teams, across organisations and within networks (C 2. 9)	2	68%
Self-manage their own careers and development as they move across RTOs and within industry (C2. 7)	3	65%
Management and leadership capabilities (C 2.2)	4	63%
Knowledge work capabilities, i.e. the ability to access, create and use knowledge to add value to the business they are in. (C 2.4)	5	54%
Coaching, mentoring and networking skills (C 2.3)	6	41%
Embedding ICT in learning and teaching activities (C2.6)	7	39%
Accommodate identity shifts as they move across roles and organisations (C 2. 8)	8	39%
Be prepared for more fragmented and specialised roles, such as in assessment (C 2.10)	9	27%

Table 6.9 illustrates how respondents identified and rated their preferred modes of training support for VET trainers. A national or state-wide mentoring program for trainers was top of the list of importance with a central online support centre a close second in the ratings.

Table 6.9 *Preferred modes of training support for trainers*

Modes	Number of trainers giving various ratings of importance					Mean rating
	No focus (1)	Minimum focus (2)	Useful but not critical (3)	Strong focus (4)	Critical (5)	
A National or State-wide mentoring program for trainers	0	0	23	79	39	4.11
A central online support centre	1	1	19	43	77	4.3
Video exemplars of good practice	5	2	12	87	35	4
Samples of good practice resources mapped to one training package qualification	0	2	14	98	27	4
communities of practice	1	3	21	80	36	4

High ratings were also scored for support through the use of video exemplars of good practice, samples of good practice resources mapped to one training package qualification and communities of practice. The participants identified some other capabilities have pedagogical implications for training. These included: use of technology; learner focus; client focus and diversity and generational changes of learners in VET.

Use of technology

Participants were also asked about the knowledge and expertise in using new and emerging technologies, in particular to stay in touch with and advise students, as well as for flexible delivery. According to the literature these skills are also important to enable practitioners to stay in touch with each other, including through communities of practice and other networks, and can help to combat the isolation many teachers and trainers experience (Mitchell, Chappell, Bateman & Roy, 2006). When asked what level of focus on use of technology was needed in VET, 21% indicated it needed a strong focus and 35% felt it was critical for VET trainers.

Learner focus

Some of the literature identified learner focus as a specific capability. This includes the ability to promote and support self-directed learning, as well as to cater for individual learning differences, and enable lifelong learning (Corben & Thomson, 2001). Many respondents identified learner focused and centered as the same thing however, the literature also stated a learner-focused approach is not the same as learner-centre learning in which the VET practitioner is one of a range of resources available to the student (Dryen, 2003). When asked what level of focus on learners for self-directed learning was needed in VET, learner focus ranked very high, with 75% identifying it as critical and 24% felt it should get a strong focus.

Client focus and diversity

Respondents identified current clients coming from a diverse society, through international migration and humanitarian programs together with increasing numbers of overseas students coming to study in Australia. A common theme was identified as being an increasing number of students with English as a second language and students with one or more disabilities or special needs participating in VET. The impacts identified by respondents included having to develop brokering and relationship-building skills, to enable trainers to provide advice to clients (including students and enterprises), establish and maintain relationships, network with industry, customize training and delivery to meet client needs, and evaluate and monitor outcomes. When asked what level of focus on clients was needed in VET, client focus got almost the same results as learner focus. The focus group discussions indicated the diversity and client focus changes had added to their workload and was impacting by putting additional pressures on VET trainers.

Generational changes of learners in VET

The other major area of impact on VET trainer that was not raised in the survey but was identified through the focus group meeting results was the trainer's identification and discussions on a different generation of learners. The focus groups discussions was expanded based on voicing information about research on XY and Z/Alpha generations of learners. The responses captured were also likely to have been influenced by the respondent's discussions about their understanding of the generations X, Y and Z.

It was stated by participants in all focus groups interviewed that there was an increase in learners from the Y and Z generations participating in the VET sector. In focus groups one, two, three and four, respondents stated that members of this generation have something they described as a chip on their shoulders. A quote on generational changes from focus group participants illustrates:

“I had a group of year 10s this year for one day a week from ... high school. About 1/3 of them would not come back after break time, they were disrespectful to our staff. I reported it to the ... high school as the students were all less than 18 years but the school did nothing. We had to contact the parents directly; it is a lot more work for us to manage these kids” (R2.FG3, 2008).

After broad discussion the consensus from the focus groups involved in the study discussions was that generational differences should be embraced, accepted and respected even though they bring new challenges to the trainers within the VET sector. The distinct generational difference was summed up:

“My mature aged students are great with the workbooks but battle with the online information however the school based learners are great online when the information is interactive, fast paced and has visual aids” (R4.FG2, 2008).

In summary the main priority for trainers of VET was to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge and working in teams across organisations and networks. Additionally, generational changes appeared to be one area where VET trainers identified a gap in the required skills and knowledge to help them to accommodate teaching and learning changes within the sector.

The implications of the findings

A positive result from the study was the identification a basic VET trainer profile (see Tables 6.1 to 6.5), as there was minimal data available, and in 2012 there was still minimal data available about VET trainers. This study demonstrated an aging workforce, mostly employed on a permanent full-time basis within their respective RTOs. The majority (over 53%) of participants (see Table 6.5) had a highest teaching qualification of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

This is not a teaching qualification but a VET industry identified minimum benchmark (determined by the NSSC) with broad variations in experiences and timeframes for delivery and assessment. This could have implications and opportunities for the VET sector that are outlined further within chapter seven. The study identified a broad range of changes, including changes to training packages; skill shortages and workplace change that had a direct impact on the trainers involved in the study. This finding alone has many potential implications. The findings shows industry currency being rated as most important to trainers of VET followed by client focus. VET system expertise, pedagogy and use of technology all rated similarly high. An important finding to come out of the study was the priorities and capabilities not covered in respondents experience of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. These were mostly related teaching, learning and assessment. The study findings for the most part correlated with what the literature reviewed had purported. The implications of the study findings is that in determining individual skills needs, personal career plans and strategic organisational needs there are a broad range of factors within the VET sector that must be taken into account.

Chapter seven outlines outcomes and recommendations made as a result of the findings of the study.

CHAPTER 7

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

Introduction

The study found that the Australian VET sector has a key role to play in meeting the demands of the rapidly changing global environment. The focus of this study was on one aspect of that sector being the trainers of VET. The first part of this chapter provides a profile of VET trainers and identifies a link between the benchmark qualification for the sector and concerns about performance in the delivery and assessment aspects of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) standards. The second part of this chapter identifies competencies in the form of skills, knowledge and attributes required by trainers of the VET sector and the priority order of potentially addressing the gaps in competencies inclusive. The chapter concludes with recommendations for action. This research adds new knowledge regarding trainers of VET and may serve to guide future policy directions.

Outcomes and conclusions

The profile of VET trainers in Australia

Based on the study findings, VET trainers are made up of a predominately female (70%) workforce (see Table 6.4). Over half are employed in trainer and assessor positions on a full-time basis, some on a part-time and some on a contract, casual or temporary basis. There was no seasonal employment indicating no seasonal peaks of demand.

Across Australia 70% of the respondents were over 35 years old showing an existing mature age trainer workforce, with 28% of participants in the 45- 60 years age bracket and 6% in the 60+ age group (see Table 6.4).

There is a large range of workplaces and institutions that VET trainers operate within, having the distinctions of TAFE and non-TAFE institutions, Registered Training Organisations including enterprise based and private providers.

As expected, due to a regulatory requirement, the majority of trainers held the qualification Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (see Table 6.5). A total of 12% held a Diploma in Training and Assessment, 13.5% of respondents held an undergraduate degree and 6% held a higher related teaching degree. It should be noted that most VET trainers also hold competencies or qualifications reflective of the industry area they train within e.g. trade certificate in hospitality, or building and construction etc. Although the majority of respondents were in the over 35-year age range, the less than 35-year age group in proportion held slightly higher AQF level qualifications at degree level and above, perhaps indicating the younger generations desire for a higher level qualification to better position them to meet the demands of the VET environment.

A link between VET trainer competency and a high level of non-compliance in delivery and assessment aspects of the AQTF standards

The findings show, the most common VET qualification held by the respondent trainers in VET was identified as the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (Table 6.5). In response to how well trainers felt the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment program had prepared them for training, the outcome was that it somewhat prepared them (see Table 6.7) for further education or training. In fact 21% felt it prepared them very poorly, while only 31.45 felt it prepared them well or very well (Table 6.7). This clearly indicated a lack of satisfaction with the use of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as a qualification to position trainers to operate effectively in the VET sector. In terms of the related trainer capabilities the challenges identified were mostly about teaching, learning and assessment. The conclusion drawn is that there is a link between trainer competency based on the VET trainer benchmark qualification and a high level of non-compliance in teaching learning and assessment aspects of the AQTF standards. It is concluded there is a need to further investigate this link in more depth than was able to be achieved within the constraints of this study.

What are the trainer's views on the existing benchmark VET qualification and operating within the VET sector?

The findings show a lack of satisfaction with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as the benchmark qualification to position trainers to operate effectively in the VET sector. The data also revealed a number of challenges faced by VET trainers.

VET trainer challenges

Respondents identified the capacity to work with the diversity of the VET learners, multiple clients in multiple contexts and across multiple learning platforms such as e-learning, on the job and site learning as major challenges for their sector.

Data from open questions on the survey and focus group themes identified the broad impacts of change on trainers which included: changes to training packages, skill shortages and workplace change. The study data demonstrated what the respondents identified as external changes being areas that they had no control over and were struggling with. In summary the changes had led VET trainers to express feelings of increased stress levels.

Another major area of impact on VET trainers that was not raised in the survey but identified through the focus group meeting results was the trainer's identification of the challenges of teaching different generations of learners. After broad discussion the consensus from the focus groups involved in the study discussions was that generational differences in the generation should be embraced, accepted and respected even though they bring new challenges to the trainers within the VET sector.

VET trainer capabilities

The study asked respondents to identify capabilities (Table 6.8) required by trainers to operate within the VET sector not covered in their experience of the Certificate IV in Training experience. The findings from the study showed industry currency being rated as most important closely followed by client focus and VET system expertise, pedagogy and use of technology all rated similarly with an overall mean rating of 3.5 out

of a possible 5. The specific capabilities the focus groups commonly identified included; knowledge and skill in their industry currency and using a client focused and centred approach. They also affirmed a need for better understanding of technology, VET system expertise, pedagogy and andragogy, rather than traditional transmission pedagogies. This assertion was based on their discussion about of the study responses, major changes emerging such as flow on to VET of globalisation, the knowledge-based society, and the advancements of technology in industry, and different needs and types of learners within the VET sector.

Priorities and focus on VET trainer competencies

Participants were asked to prioritise what they felt as most important on a scale of 1 to nine from a set of nine competencies identified through the literature as being those required to operate in VET in the next decade (Cornford, Athanasou, & Pithers, 1996, Gutherie et al, 2005, Mitchell & Ward 2010). The findings illustrates that 79% of the study group felt it was important to continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge which may relate to the changing and evolving VET environment. Over 50% of all of the respondents identified career development, leadership and knowledge work capabilities as being high on their priority list. The lowest on the priorities list was preparation for fragmented or specialist roles such as assessment, this was surprising considering the regulatory bodies had found that assessment one area with a majority of non-compliances with the AQTF standards (standard 1.5 in particular).

As preferred mode of trainer support a National or State wide mentoring program for trainers was top of the list of importance with a central online support centre a close second in the rankings.

Implications

It could be argued that by determining the benchmark qualification of trainers, the pedagogical understanding and quality of training required will follow, and Information Communications Technology (ICT) will do the rest. The study shows that this is not the case. It is evident from the findings the VET benchmark qualification Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is not the be all and end all.

The key implication is that the qualification alone is not sufficient to support trainers to operate effectively within the ever evolving VET sector in Australia. There were several VET capabilities and competencies not addressed within the qualification that respondents felt important.

The study identified VET trainers need highly developed personal learning strategies, and the knowledge and skills to help their students develop these as well. Although there will always be a need for professional development focused on basic skills, there is also a need to move beyond these to assist trainers to develop more advanced pedagogical expertise, with a focus on the skills associated with reflective practice, ICT and strategic inquiry.

Despite ongoing challenges and changes within the VET system, trainers are passionate and have a desire to improve practice. Respondents identified capabilities and priorities for addressing their needs to operate more effectively within the VET sector that correlate and add to assertions identified within the available literature.

The views expressed by respondents in this study suggest the need to share real practice in the teaching, learning and measurement of knowledge and skills, including what has been learnt from trying to implement the training packages. There would be value in finding ways to recognize and support attainment of these competencies. This is done to some degree in the benchmark qualification Certificate IV in Training and Assessment but this study clearly demonstrates a shortfall in the qualification. The lack of confidence in this qualification may be a contributor to the feeling among participants that VET trainers are perceived as the poor relation to other sectors of education and the wider community and not identified as professionals. In most other sectors in Australia a minimum of an undergraduate degree is the benchmark for professionals. The question then is does the qualification needs to be reviewed and compared to higher level qualifications that are recognised in Australia as those that give the person a professional status.

The implication of the study findings is that in determining individual skills needs, personal career plans and strategic organisational needs there are a broad range of factors within the VET sector that must be taken into account. The following is a summary of recommendations that go some way to addressing those factors.

Summary of recommendations

Based on the findings that emerged from the study some recommendations as a way to move forward for government and policy development in Australia include:

1. Review the benchmark qualification Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as a regulatory requirement for trainers in the VET sector.
2. Further study on the link between VET performance requirements and competency and qualification of trainers
3. Place greater emphasis on advanced pedagogical skills for trainers focusing attention on the importance of reflective practice and strategic enquiry for VET trainers.
4. Develop formal programs to educate trainers how to engage and manage different VET learning cohorts, such as those from different cultural background, generational differences and those with specialised learning challenges.
5. Support quality teaching learning and assessment outcomes by focusing on a way of giving recognition for trainer's ongoing personal and professional development.

Final conclusions

The VET workforce is in some respects unique. It is highly diverse and rapidly changing, particularly in the nature of work, not only job responsibilities but also where and how people work. It is not only a workforce that develops and delivers products and services to customers; it is also a workforce that is charged with training and developing the workforces of many of Australia's vital service and production industries. As such, VET can't settle for being adequate; it needs a workforce that can lead, create new knowledge that in turn creates value across economic and social sectors.

The constant state of turbulence in the VET sector and the world of work in general, mean that education systems such as VET cannot educate and train people in the expectation that their work activities will remain stable or that trainers will remain in the one job throughout their working life. As this study illustrates with a mature age and aging workforce the sustainability of VET trainers needs some serious consideration.

A primary challenge for government in Australia is to find ways to improve access to VET, particularly for those who are already in the workforce, are unemployed or seeking a first job for example. A closely related challenge for policy makers and providers is to improve the quality of training to engage different learners and meet changing and rising demands for skilled and technical workers. What has not been given the attention it deserves is how the trainers, educators and systems are placed to cope with the onslaught.

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Appendix 1: Interview protocol

Background data

i. Type of organisation:

Private RTO?

TAFE?

Enterprise-based RTO?

Community-based RTO?

Group Training Company?

Other?

ii. Title of position you currently hold?

Title of position you held five years ago?

Title of position you held ten years ago:

iii. Your length of service in the VET sector (years)

iv. What modes of delivery do you predominantly work with?

Predominantly on-line?

Predominantly classroom based?

Predominantly workplace-based?

A combination of the above (please specify)?

v. Your employment status:

Permanent full-time?

Permanent part-time?

Contract full-time?

Contract part-time?

Sessional/HPI?

Interviewer to complete: Locality of interviewee?

Gender of interviewee?

Appendix 2: Survey instrument

SECTION A: THE AQTF AND TEACHER/TRAINER/ASSESSOR COMPETENCE

- A 1. In Australia between 2001 and 2006 state and regulatory bodies consistently reported the most non-compliance against the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) for Registered Training Organisations against standards 7, 8 and 9 and the competency of Vocational Education and Training Educators. In your opinion is there a relationship between the high level of non-compliance and the competency of VET trainers/assessors?
- o Yes (go to next question)
 - o No (skip to Section B)
- A 2. Why do you think there was a high rate of non-compliance against AQTF standards 7, 8 and 9 and the competency of VET trainers/assessors?
- o VET relevant qualification 'the TAA40104 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or demonstrated equivalence' does not address the AQTF standards 7, 8 and 9 (A2.1)
 - o Not enough rigor in the implementation of 'the TAA40104 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or demonstrated equivalence' by some RTOs in Australia(A2.2)
 - o Not enough rigor in the implementation of 'the TAA40104 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or demonstrated equivalence' by most RTOs in Australia(A2.3)
 - o AQTF standards 7, 8 and 9 do not reflect appropriate VET teaching learning and assessment practice (A2.4)
 - o Not enough professional development opportunities to support VET trainers in ongoing implementation of AQTF standards 7, 8 and 9 in their own environments (A2.5)
 - o Other (A2.6)
- Please explain: _____

A.3. Your Comments:

SECTION B: PROFILE OF VET TEACHER/TRAINER/ASSESSOR

The following questions concern your current VET job. If you have more than one job, respond with respect to the job in which you spend the most time. We will refer to this as your 'main' job.

B 1. What is your occupation (job title)? _____

a. Are you employed full-time or part-time?

☐ Full-time (B1.1)

☐ Part-time → By choice? ☐ Yes ☐ No (B1.2)

☐ Permanent paid employment (B1.3)

☐ Contract (B1.4)

☐ Casual → By choice? ☐ Yes ☐ No (B1.5)

☐ Temporary → By choice? ☐ Yes ☐ No (B1.6)

☐ Seasonal (B1.7)

☐ Other (B1.8)

Are you:

☐ Male (B1.9)

☐ Female (B1.10)

Age Range (please circle)

1	2	3	4	5
Under 25 yrs.	25-35	35-45	45-60	60+

B 2. Of the most common qualifications what teaching training /assessment competencies/qualifications do you think trainers working in the VET sector hold generally at this point in time?

☐ Undergraduate degree (e.g. BSc, BA, etc.)(Specify field) _____(B2.1)

☐ Master's degree (specify field) _____(B2.2)

☐ Doctoral degree (specify field) _____(B2.3)

☐ Diploma program (specify field) _____(B2.4)

☐ BSZ40198 Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (B2.5)

☐ TAA04 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (B2.6)

☐ Certificate III, one or more cluster of units of competency or Train the Trainer or such course accredited prior to BSZ402198 (B2.7)

☐ Combination of two or more of the above (please tick most relevant two)(B2.8)

☐ None of the above (B2.9)

☐ Comment (B2.10) _____

B 2. What minimum teaching training /assessment competencies/qualifications you think trainers working in the VET sector need to hold?

☐ Undergraduate degree (e.g. BSc, BA, etc.)(Specify field) _____(B3.1)

☐ Master's degree (specify field) _____(B3.2)

☐ Doctoral degree (specify field) _____(B3.3)

not applicable very poorly prepared very well prepared

B.9 Have you completed any other professional development programs in the last five years (e.g. undergraduate program, another graduate program, professional continuing education)?

☐ No

☐ Yes → Name of Program/s: _____

Year Completed: _____

How helpful was the professional development to your teaching and assessment practice

1	2	3	4	5
not applicable		moderately helpful		very helpful

B.10 Are you currently pursuing further education or training?

☐ No

☐ Yes → Primarily full time or part time? ☐ Full time ☐ Part time

B.11 [OPTIONAL] What was your main reason for a VET education or training program ?
(choose one)

☐ to satisfy job/career requirements or goals (B8.1)

☐ to change fields or learn a new occupation (B8.2)

☐ to study at a more advanced level (B8.3)

☐ to increase earning power (B8.4)

☐ to obtain/maintain AQTF registration (B8.5)

☐ lack of suitable employment opportunities (B8.6)

☐ Other (specify (B8.7)) _____

SECTION C DEVELOPING GOOD PRACTICE

C.1. Of the sample elements identified below, what do you think needs to be included in the development of trainers for the VET sector should include and level of focus?

	Elements to support your role training others in the VET sector should include	No Focus 1	Minimum focus 2	Useful but not critical 3	Strong focus 4	Critical 5
C.1.1	Pedagogical expertise. This includes the capacity to adapt learning and teaching strategies to suit individual students, pedagogical understanding and access to a range of learning theories and techniques. Increasingly it will also involve understanding and applying new pedagogical approaches, such as those identified in the TAFE NSW pedagogy project – including coaching, mentoring, and facilitating learner-centred, self-directed learning, and learning at work (CURVE and University of Ballarat 2003: Dryen 2003) In VET what level of focus is needed?					
C.1.2	Learner focus. Some studies identify learner focus as a specific capability. This includes the ability to promote and support self-directed learning, as well as to cater for individual learning differences, and enable lifelong learning (Corben and Thomson 2001). However, a learner-focused approach is not the same as learner-centred learning in which the VET practitioner is one of a range of resources available to the student (Dryen 2003). In VET what level of focus is needed?					
C.1.3	Industry currency. Vocational expertise in the practitioner's subject area is as critical as pedagogical expertise. This is particularly important as it is highly valued by employers and students alike. However, demand for generic skills among employer's means that practitioners need to be able to balance delivery of technical and industry specific skills with generic employability skills In VET what level of focus is needed?					
C.1.4	Use of technology. This covers knowledge and expertise in using new and emerging technologies, in particular to stay in touch with and advise students, as well as for flexible delivery. These skills are also important to enable practitioners to stay in touch with each other, including via communities of practice and other networks, and can help to combat the isolation many teachers and trainers					

	experience In VET what level of focus is needed?					
C 1.5	Client focus. This involves brokering and relationship-building skills, to enable teachers and trainers to provide advice to clients (including students and enterprises), establish and maintain relationships, network with industry, develop partnerships, customise training and delivery to meet client needs, and evaluate and monitor outcomes. In VET what level of focus is needed?					
C 1.6	VET system expertise. This includes working with Training Packages and the AQTF, applying competency-based assessment, RPL, and emerging requirements such as employability skills and client focus. In VET what level of focus is needed?					
C 1.7	Personal qualities and attributes. Personal attributes are identified as being absolutely critical for all VET practitioners. However, there is some variation in the way these are defined by different authors. For example, Corben and Thomson (2001) identify a passion for learning and teaching as a key aptitude, together with communication skills, and a commitment to self-development. Rumsey (2002) suggests that these attributes include capacity to deal with change, self-directed learning, managing time and managing knowledge. In VET what level of focus is needed?					

C.2. Of the sample elements identified below, what do you think needs to be included in the development of trainers for the VET sector should include and level of focus?

C 2.1	Elements to support your role training others in the VET sector should include	No focus 1	Minimum focus 2	Useful but not critical 3	Strong focus 4	Critical 5
C 2.2	management and leadership capabilities					
C 2.3	coaching, mentoring and networking skills					
C 2.4	knowledge work capabilities, i.e. the ability to access, create and use knowledge to add value to the business they are in.					
C 2.5	continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge					

C 2.6	bedding ICT in learning and teaching activities					
C 2.7	self-manage their own careers and development as they move across RTOs and within industry					
C 2.8	accommodate identity shifts as they move across roles and organisations					
C 2.9	learn to work in teams, across organisations and within networks					
C 2.10	be prepared for more fragmented and specialised roles, such as in assessment					

MODES OF SUPPORT

Finally, if there were opportunities to support the development of trainers in the VET sector in Australia, what format do you think would be most effective?

	Modes/models to support your role training others and the role of teacher/trainer/assessors in the VET sector in Australia should include	No focus 1	Minimum focus 2	Useful but not critical 3	Strong focus 4	Critical 5
D1.1	DVD/Video reflecting samples of real life good practice in teaching, learning and assessment focused around VET in Australia					
D1.2	Set of sample good practice teaching and learning Resources mapped around one Training Package Qualification					
D1.3	Central online support centre for VET practitioners perhaps linked to an established/recognised site such as the National Training Information Service (NTIS)					
D1.4	Mentoring programs set up National and or state level that directly assists (On-the-Job) VET staff Professional development					
D1.5	Local area networks/communities of practice					
D1.6	self-manage their own careers and development as they move across RTOs and within industry					
D1.7	National Training Packages development changed to included standard teaching and learning resources					

D 1.8	All of the above					
D 1.9	None of the above					
D 1.10	Other ...Please specify					

D.2 If you could make one change to improve the educational experience of VET trainer/assessors what would you suggest?

D.3 Any additional comments?

THIS COMPLETES THE SURVEY. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR TIME.
Appendix: Consent form

CONSENT FORM

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONCERNS OR COMPLAINTS CONTACT:
Mairead Dempsey maireaddempsey@iinet.net.au (08) 9275 1302 Mob 0431 266 275

DESCRIPTION: You are invited to participate in a **research study** on 'trainer capacity of the VET sector with a focus on Australia'. You are invited to complete the attached survey. The individual participants will not be identified in the collation or reporting of their responses.

CONFIDENTIALITY: Only the researcher has access to the survey records. To protect the confidentiality of records (primary data) the researcher undertakes to store all hard and printed electronic/mailed copies of surveys returned in the locked filing cabinet at the one/same facility for the duration of the study. However once the data from the primary records has been entered on to SPSS all copies will be destroyed using the facility paper shredded and disposed of into a compost heap. As a risk management procedure if within the required five year period to keep SPSS records, the have to be moved from the facility (e.g. researcher moves, illness, wins lottery!) records from the SPSS platform will be copied onto thumb drive disk and archived at the Western Australian Batty library.

RISKS AND BENEFITS: There are no known or foreseeable risks associated with this study are. The benefits which may reasonably be expected to result from this study are a body of knowledge that may contribute to policy decisions and inform future study into supporting the capacity of trainers operating in Vocational Education and Training.

TIME INVOLVEMENT: Your completion and return of the survey should take approx. 20-30 minutes. It will need to be faxed (08) 9276 8063 or scanned & emailed to maireaddempsey@iinet.net.au or post to 35 Lynmouth Rd, Dianella Perth WA 6059

RIGHTS: If you have read this form and have decided to participate in this project, please understand your participation is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss. If you agree, your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

Name & Signature of Participant.....Date.....

Appendix 3: Protocol for the focus groups

[Welcome, introductions, overview of the process, timing, audiotape]

PowerPoint, Comfortable seating, temp and snacks and drinks available.

Appendix

Interview schedule

During the past few months, we have been conducting a survey study with people from a range of RTOs on the factors that are generating changes to the work of people in the VET sector. The information obtained from these focus groups was of a general nature and we are now conducting a number of focused interviews with staff in a range of RTOs to examine the extent and impact of these changes on your work in the VET sector.

1. From your perspective, how much change have you experienced in the following areas over the past five years?

Please rate the extent of change using the following scale, then explain how this change has affected your work.

Provide 'evidence' of what your work was like FIVE YEARS AGO and what it is like NOW.

A lot To some extent Slightly Not at all 4 3 2 1

Changes to your work responsibilities 4 3 2 1

FIVE YEARS AGO:

NOW:

Changes to relationships with students/trainees 4 3 2 1

FIVE YEARS AGO:

NOW:

Changes to relationships with other trainers within your program area/organisation

4 3 2 1

FIVE YEARS AGO:

NOW:

Changes to relationships with industry 4 3 2 1

FIVE YEARS AGO:

NOW:

Changes to relationships with other RTOs 4 3 2 1

FIVE YEARS AGO:

NOW:

2. On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 = very negative and 10 = very positive), how do you feel about the changes to your work over the past five years?

3. On a scale of 0 to 10 (where 0 = no control at all and 10 = entire control), how much control do you think you have had in managing the changes to your work over the past five years?

4. What three changes have had the greatest impact on your work over the past five years? Please rank these in order of importance:

5. What do you think have been the main drivers of the changes you have experienced over the past five years?

6. In a recent study, we asked a group of key stakeholders in VET to identify the most critical challenges that VET practitioners generally will face over the next seven years.

We'd like you to rank these challenges in priority order where 1 = the most critical challenge you believe VET practitioners must face, 2 = the next most critical challenge etc.

Changing to the role of facilitator

Understanding dilemmas in educator's work (e.g. industry needs versus education)

Using technology

Understanding the changing nature of work

Operating in a competitive environment

Keeping up with/understanding the changes in VET

Understanding/working with Training Packages

Flexible delivery

7. What three changes will have the greatest impact on your work over the next five years? Please rank these in order of importance:

8. What single professional development activity you have undertaken over the past five years has been **the most helpful** in assisting you to respond to the changes to your work?

9. What single professional development activity do you think would be most beneficial at this point in time to assist you further with the changes to your work?

10. Apart from professional development, what has management done to help facilitate change in your organisation?

11. What advice would you give to policy makers and VET managers in relation to the changes that have been implemented in the VET sector over the last five years, particularly in relation to the impact of these changes on the work of VET practitioners

Interviews

[Welcome, introductions, overview of the process, timing, audiotape]

Teachers'/trainers' work

- How does your work today differ from this list? In what ways (scope, location, complexity etc.)
- What factors have influenced the changes you have observed over the past five years?

Workplaces

How have your relationships with:

- students/employees (trainees/apprentices)
- your colleagues (other trainers you work with)
- senior management changed over the past five years?

- What factors have influenced the changes you have observed over the past five years?

Wider networks/broad issues

- How have your relationships with the industries you work with changed over the past five years?

What has been the impact of these changes on your role?

How has the relationship between registered training organisations changed over the past five years? What has been the impact of these changes on your role?

How have the role and status of vocational education and training changed over the past five years? What factors have influenced these changes? What has been the impact of these changes on your role?

Are there any other influences that have impacted on the role of the vocational education and training professionals in the past five years?

What are the most important factors that have influenced the changes you have experienced as vocational education and training professionals in the past five years?

Understanding of the concept of ‘vocational education and training professional’

- What does the term ‘vocational education training professional’ mean to you?

(Prompts: *The term VET professional has only been recently used in the vocational education and training sector. To whom does this term apply (assessors, workplace trainers, others)? What distinguishes the work of a vocational education and training professional from other people who teach/train/work in the sector? What factors do you think have contributed to the development and use of this term?*).

Appendix 4: Study development ideas

