

MASTER OF EDUCATION

TAFE Institutes as Learning
Organisations

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JAYNE PITARD

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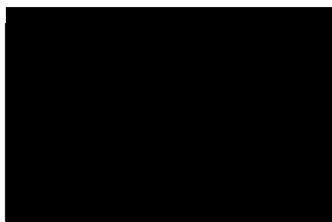
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DECLARATION

“I, Jayne Pitard, declare that the Master by Research thesis entitled ‘TAFE Institutes as Learning Organisations’ is no more than 60,000 words in length including quotes and exclusive of tables, figures, appendices, bibliography, references and footnotes. This thesis contains no material that has been submitted previously, in whole or in part, for the award of any other academic degree or diploma. Except where otherwise indicated, this thesis is my own work”.

Signed:



.....
Jayne Pitard

Date:

27 October 2010
.....

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ABSTRACT

This thesis investigated TAFE Institutes to explore progression towards being learning organizations. The general aim of this research was to investigate the extent to which, and the ways in which, TAFE Institutes have adopted the concept of the learning organization.

Two TAFE Institutes were used as case studies and four interviews were undertaken in each Institute, including the CEO, a middle manager and two teachers.

The data revealed a desire by the CEOs to be seen as practising the principles of a learning organisation but the reality as voiced by the managers and teachers sometimes belied these aspirations. Themes of perceived conflict by managers in balancing the requirement for achieving commercial targets with achieving good student outcomes, teacher understanding of reward as getting to keep your job, teacher isolation from decision making, teacher fear of not remaining relevant in a world of rapid technological development accompanied by resistance to change, were revealed as consistently manifest in the interview transcripts.

Based on Kurt Lewin's Forcefield Framework, my recommendation is for further research to be undertaken within TAFE Institutes using an action research approach to evaluate the impact of change in one area before implementing change in another. This may reveal the impact of individual change on the organization as a whole, thus allowing for organizational change to be a learning process.

Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The story of my induction as a TAFE teacher in 1988 underpinned my interest in undertaking this research.

“In 1988 I walked into Western Metropolitan College of TAFE to commence teaching. I had completed a Business Studies qualification the year before and had never stood in front of a class except to deliver a presentation to fellow students as part of my course. I was not a trained teacher.

I had been given 24 hours notice that I had a job and a class to teach. Being reassured by the Head of Department that I would cope, I was advised that if I needed to collect myself in front of the class I could suggest they write a page about themselves so I could get to know them. I had been so inveigled I did not really feel anxious – until they’d finished writing their page on themselves. We had a text book to follow, chapter by chapter, with exercises for class activities and homework. As I followed this step by step guide, I found the students started talking amongst themselves, clearly unsure about how this learning was relevant to them.

I sought advice and was given a book to read “From Tears to Teaching”, a book which was significant at the time but which has faded into oblivion as I cannot currently locate its author or publisher. So commenced my self-training in effective teaching.”

This story may be unfamiliar to commencing TAFE teachers today. The benefits of student centred learning and the incorporation of the principles of adult learning into Vocational Education and Training (VET) delivery are now widely acknowledged. Minimum teaching qualifications for VET professionals have been introduced under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF), and the VET sector has developed curricula specific to training VET teachers. (Keating, Smith 2003, ANTA 2004, Mitchell, Clayton, Hedberg, Paine 2003).

However, the picture is not all rosy. Frustration still haunts the corridors of TAFE Institutes and change fatigue is a common grievance (Clayton, Fisher, Harris, Bateman, Brown 2008). Change has dominated the VET sector for more than a decade and the introduction of quality standards under the AQTF has loaded VET professionals with the responsibility for excellence in their teaching practice (Mitchell et al 2003). TAFE Institutes are implementing not only Training Packages, but also the AQTF quality and reporting requirements and flexible delivery using new technology. There is increased pressure from

funding bodies to grow commercial activity and in Victoria some Institutes have merged with higher education (university) partners, imposing issues of duplicated management and obligations to two sets of funding and regulation bodies. TAFE Institutes who concentrate solely on surviving these changes are likely to achieve mediocre success in the short term, but for fundamental change to occur, TAFE Institutes must strive to adopt the principles of a learning organisation.

1.2 BACKGROUND

Since 1990 and the publication of “The Fifth Discipline” (Senge 1990) Peter Senge’s vision of a learning organisation as a group of people who are continually enhancing their capabilities to create what they want to create has been deeply influential (www.infed.org 2004). The amount of literature on learning organisations indicates it is a concept that is widely embraced and accepted as a sound basis for successful management practice in general business and policy forming areas (Senge 1990, Argyris 1999, Schon 1973). Research in the education sector has incorporated study of the educational institutions as learning organisations. Nonetheless, no comprehensive study of TAFE Institutes has been undertaken to quantify the extent of understanding of, commitment to, and experiences of the TAFE Institute as a learning organisation.

The general aim of this research was to investigate the extent to which, and the ways in which, TAFE Institutes have adopted the concept of the learning organisation. In this investigation I propose to:

Define the terms ‘learning organisation’ and ‘lifelong learning’ based on a review of current literature;

Investigate the current level of practice of the principles of the learning organisation at two TAFE Institutes;

Identify strategic issues facing TAFE Institutes and their impact on the TAFE Institute’s ability to practice as a learning organisation;

Identify what gaps might exist between desired and actual performance as a learning organisation;

Suggest some strategies for TAFE Institutes to implement in order to encourage TAFE professionals to participate in organisational learning.

It is anticipated that some readers of this research will not be familiar with the evolution of the VET sector or the issues facing TAFE Institutes currently, so I propose, as part of my literature review, to give a brief history of VET in Australia and to identify some of the current issues for TAFE Institutes. I

believe this background knowledge of the VET sector is crucial to understanding current mind-sets, particularly of the more experienced TAFE teachers.

1.3 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

My major research question is to what extent do TAFE Institutes follow the principles of a learning organisation?

- a) To what extent do TAFE professionals understand the principles of a learning organisation?
- b) How do they perceive their own organisation as a learning organisation?
- c) How do they perceive their own practice within the context of their Institute as a learning organisation?
- d) What are the indicators of progression towards being a learning organisation?

Some strategic issues are:

1. What are the key external factors that relate to the success and/or growth of a TAFE Institute as a learning organisation?
2. What are the most important internal issues that relate to the success and/or growth of a TAFE Institute as a learning organisation?

Some professional issues are:

To what extent do managers and staff regard their Institute as a learning organisation?

To what extent are TAFE professionals aware of their own Institute's aspirations towards becoming a learning organisation and how have they gained this awareness?

How do TAFE professionals regard the concept of the learning organisation?

Do they personally support their organisation becoming more like a learning organization?

How do they view their own contribution?

1.4 JUSTIFICATION FOR THIS RESEARCH

Very little documentation can be found on the development of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) over the past twenty-five years. It is interesting to note that this is not so for schools and higher education institutions, who have always appeared to have defined roles within Australia's educational structure and about which many research reports have been written (Goozee, 2001). In writing her report *The*

Development of TAFE in Australia (Goozee, 2001) Goozee relies on government reports, departmental annual reports and interviews with people who played a major role in events at the time.

The VET sector has undergone consistent and sustained change since late 1980 when training reforms commenced in Australia. Chappell, Johnston (2003) list amongst the changes a review of the design of Training Packages; experimentation with shortened apprenticeships; increased provision of VET in schools; continued emphasis on the provision of services that recognise candidates' existing skills in lieu of enrolling in courses; and the embedding of employability skills in all Training Packages. There are also challenges in meeting the accountability requirements filtering from the Commonwealth/State Agreements (Skilling Australia's Workforce Act 2005) and the Council of Australian Governments' Human Capital reform agenda together with multiple layers of targets within State Performance Agreements (age related, industry related, qualifications requirements). Added to these are the Victorian Government initiatives in 2006 – the skills statement *Maintaining the Advantage* (DET 2006) and the Education and Training Reform Act 2006 (DET 2006).

These challenges in the VET sector have brought about significant changes to the work of VET staff and the focus of their roles (Chappell, Johnston 2003). A report on the VET workforce commissioned by ANTA in 2004 found the role of senior managers is increasingly focused on the external environment and building links with stakeholder organisations (ANTA 2004). Their beliefs and personal approach have been found to have a strong influence on the culture of the organisation and its response to change. Front-line managers focus on internal business practices and how to modify these to meet new clients' needs. Business, change management and educational leadership skills are described as needing to be enhanced with further development of skills needing to be linked more strategically to organisational needs and capability. The role of VET teachers is becoming more diverse and team-based, often cross-organisational and multi-disciplinary (Mitchell et al 2003). Within these teams, teaching support staff play a critical part. With an increasing range of learning environments (workplaces, online) teachers often facilitate learning by taking on a mentoring role, thus requiring a more diverse range of knowledge and capabilities for teachers. With an ageing workforce, the rapidity of change needs to be managed carefully by VET providers to reduce resistance and encourage knowledge sharing. It should be managed in such a way that it is used as an opportunity to enhance job satisfaction for existing and future teachers. (ANTA 2004).

1.5 METHODOLOGY

My research has focussed on two Victorian TAFE Institutes. The two TAFE Institutes are case studies of progression towards organisational learning. Yin (1994:13) defines a case study as "...an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries

between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. It is particularly valuable in answering the who, why and how questions in management research.” The case study methodology approach has been used to gather data and a grounded theory approach has been used to attempt to define the forces present within the two case study Institutes.

In Victoria, there are 19 dedicated TAFE institutions and university TAFE divisions offering VET-accredited programs. The sector accounts for more than 70% of the state’s post-secondary education enrolments – approximately 490,000 students (NCVER 2009). The diversity within the network of TAFE Institutes led me to choose to study two TAFE Institutes which operate under different criteria:

A dual sector metropolitan TAFE Institute which may be impacted by its close association with its higher education partner.

A single sector metropolitan TAFE Institute to understand the impact of autonomy and a diverse geographic spread.

Modern TAFE Institutes are multi-campus and are often geographically widespread and diverse. Some of them have student numbers topping 50,000. Often metropolitan TAFE Institutes have regional campuses.

1.6 OUTLINE OF THE REPORT

This thesis is divided into six chapters. The introduction establishes the research to be undertaken and the rationale. It also introduces the chosen methodology to give the reader a sense of being able to navigate their way through the thesis in an informed way. For those reading this thesis that are unfamiliar with the education sector, a list of definitions is provided to explain the various stakeholders, the sectors and the educational needs they seek to address. Finally, the limitations of this research are discussed.

Chapter 2 is the Literature Review, which covers two essential areas – the evolution of the VET sector and TAFE Institutes, and the concept of the Learning Organisation. Chapter 3 addresses the methodology used to investigate TAFE Institutes as Learning Organisations. An explanation of how and why the two TAFE Institutes were chosen is followed by a description of the research procedures.

The analysis of the data is detailed in Chapters 4 and 5, explaining how the data was collected and the challenges faced during this particular phase of the research. Chapter 5 in particular uses themes to explore the illumination on indicators and inhibitors towards being a learning organisation. Chapter 6 brings the research to a conclusion and outlines a recommendation as a result of this research.

1.7 DEFINITIONS

Key terms used in this research may not be familiar to readers outside the field of Vocational Education and Training. Definitions taken from the Department of Education Science and Training website (2009) are listed below as a reference.

ANTA (Australian National Training Authority) – an Australian Government statutory authority with responsibility for the development of national policy, goals and objectives for the vocational education and training sector; the development, management and promotion of the National Training Framework; the administration and funding of national programs; and the collection and analysis of national statistical data on the vocational education and training system. This authority was established in 1994 and disbanded in 2005.

AQF (Australian Qualifications Framework) – a nationally consistent set of qualifications for all post-compulsory education and training in Australia.

AQTF (Australian Quality Training Framework) – the nationally agreed quality arrangements for the VET system agreed to by the Ministerial Council (State and Federal Ministers of Education).

AVETRA (Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association) – a national independent association of researchers in vocational education and training.

CBT (Competency Based Training) – an approach to vocational education and training that places emphasis on what a person can do in the workplace as a result of completing a program of training.

LEARNSCOPE – a professional development program funded by ANTA designed to assist vocational education and training providers to develop their skills in flexible delivery.

LIFELONG LEARNING – the process of acquiring knowledge or skills throughout life via education, training, work and general life experiences.

NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) – a national research, evaluation and information organisation for the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia, jointly owned by the Australian Government, state and territory ministers responsible for vocational education and training. As well as conducting VET research and evaluation on national projects, and commissioning and managing the national program of VET research (NVETRE), NCVER provides research, development and implementation assistance on a commercial consulting basis. NCVER also collects and disseminates national VET statistics and manages a program of surveys of VET graduate students and employers.

RTO (Registered Training Organisation) means a training organisation registered by a registering body in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework, within a defined scope of registration.

TAFE (Technical and Further Education) – a publicly funded post-secondary organisation which provides a range of technical and vocational education and training courses and other programs, e.g. entry and bridging courses, language and literacy courses, adult basic education courses, Senior Secondary Certificate of Education courses, personal enrichment courses and small business courses. Each state and territory has its own TAFE system.

VET (Vocational Education and Training) – post-compulsory education and training, excluding degree and higher level programs delivered by higher education institutions, which provides people with occupational or work-related knowledge and skills. VET also includes programs which provide the basis for subsequent vocational programs. Alternative terms used internationally include technical and vocational education and training (TVET), vocational and technical education and training (VTET), technical and vocational education (TVE), vocational and technical education (VTE), and further education and training (FET).

VETiS (Vocational Education and Training in Schools) – Vocational education and training should be included as VET in Schools if it is undertaken as part of a senior secondary certificate and its completion by the student provides credit towards a recognised VET qualification within the Australian Qualifications Framework.

VCAL (Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning) – The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) is a hands-on option for students in Years 11 and 12. The VCAL gives practical work-related experience, as well as literacy and numeracy skills and the opportunity to build personal skills that are important for life and work. Like the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE), VCAL is an accredited secondary certificate.

Training Package – An integrated set of nationally endorsed standards, guidelines and qualifications, for training, assessing and recognising people's skills. Developed by industry to meet the training needs of an industry or group of industries.

1.8 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Choosing two TAFE Institutes to research was dependent on gaining the participation of two CEOs and gaining access to a middle manager and two teachers from each Institute. It is important to remember that the sample size of two TAFE Institutes was not intended to give a generalised view on what is happening in TAFE Institutes but rather to frame two case studies to determine whether each Institute's aspiration to

become a learning organisation is being implemented in the sample departments. This research seeks to determine the indicators of progression towards becoming a learning organisation rather than giving a definitive answer to the research question.

Interviewing teachers with questions about how they see their TAFE Institute in terms of progressing to being a learning organisation could present as an opportunity to air complaints and frustrations about what they might interpret as shortcomings in the systems and processes. The use of strategic questions to investigate the reasons behind the frustrations rather than just noting the frustrations was employed to overcome this tendency but it remains that teachers could have viewed the interviews as an opportunity for venting.

As the researcher has been working in a TAFE Institute for 20 years, personal bias cannot be discounted in interpreting the data. However every effort has been made to eliminate bias from the data analysis by using the interviewees' individual stories to capture the essence of their experience. In addition, the research has been conducted over a period of several years and the circumstances of the teaching departments in this study may have changed since the data was collected. Nonetheless this research is a faithful 'point in time' study from which valuable insights can be drawn.

1.9 CONCLUSION

Chapter 1 has given some background to this research as a place from which to begin, outlined the research questions and given a brief overview of the methodology used. It has also reflected on the limitations of the research and provided the reader with some definitions of terminology as a point of reference. To gain a greater understanding of the research questions, Chapter 2 provides a brief history of TAFE Institutes and the VET sector and address the literature and what it says about learning organisations. This information underpins the significance of this thesis in adding to the body of research that already exists around TAFE Institutes as learning organisations.

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The history of the evolution of TAFE and the VET sector forms an integral part of this literature review with the purpose of linking the identified continual and significant change over a long period of time to the current evolution of TAFE Institutes as learning organisations. The literature review relates to the national VET sector and more specifically in some parts to VET in Victoria.

The literature demonstrates that change is fundamental to modern life and that the organisation which adapts and creates systems to enhance learning through the change process can truly become a learning organisation.

The literature review also seeks to discover what constitutes a learning organisation and outlines several theories. These theories are by no means exhaustive but are adequate in providing a set of indicators with which to approach the analysis of the data later in this thesis.

2.2 THE EVOLUTION OF TAFE AND THE VET SECTOR

Many people are uncertain when the terms TAFE and Vocational Education and Training (VET) should be used. VET is “an international term that describes the development and improvement of skills and knowledge for the specific purpose of improvement in an individual’s capacity in productive work”. (Smith, Keating 2003:3). Currently there are three main avenues for the delivery of VET programs:

VET programs are now offered in schools under the term “VET in schools” (VETiS)

Private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) offer VET programs and receive Government funding

TAFE Institutes receive government funding and offer VET programs. Similarly, TAFE Institutes offer more than VET programs, such as general adult literacy and numeracy programs, and fee for service qualifications.

These terms TAFE and VET are relatively modern terms for a system which has evolved over almost two centuries. Technical training in Australia commenced with the establishment of apprenticeships in the early 1800s to assuage the shortage of skilled labour. The first formal adult technical education occurred

with the development of Mechanics Institutes, which were established first in Hobart in 1827, with the other states following over the next 13 years. These Institutes provided libraries and reading rooms, and offered lectures to adults, progressively broadening the variety of lectures to include mechanical drawing, chemistry and geology. (Goozee, 2001) Towards the end of the 19th century Australia experienced a period of enormous population and economic growth due to the gold rush and by 1890 technical institutions in Australia included 10 school of mines, and working men's colleges in both Sydney and Melbourne. In all, sixteen technical institutions, all of which were independent of government control, were created between 1870 and 1890 (Goozee, 2001).

The development of these technical institutions prompted several enquiries into the development of technical education in the early 1900s, first in Victoria (1899), then New South Wales (1901), Tasmania (1904), South Australia (1905) and Queensland (1909) (Goozee, 2001). The reports of each of these inquiries were consistent in finding 'incoherent administration, lack of established aims, expediency and haphazardness and a failure to develop as a co-ordinated part of the educational and social system' (Hermann, Richardson and Woodburne cited in Goozee, 2001). Another development to the technical system came in 1910 when the Education Act (Victoria) allowed for the establishment of junior technical schools, which became technical high schools and remained part of the education system until the 1980s.

It seems the establishment of technical institutions has mostly reflected the interests of government, business and the community, a trait which is still apparent today. Smith and Keating (2003:7) concur stating

"Murray-Smith (1967) laments the fact that these interests could not produce and sustain a broad vision of technical education that would combine both scientific and technical learning and a broader liberal education. This failure he argues ensured that technical education was pushed down a more narrow, and separate track than secondary and higher education in Australia. As a consequence it has lacked both the status and the level of government support that it otherwise might have had." (Smith and Keating, 2003:7)

The term TAFE was first used 1974 with the release of the report of the Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education, chaired by Myer Kangan, and the subsequent establishment of the Technical and Further Education Commission introduced Commonwealth Government funding to TAFE. This put TAFE on the national agenda and provided an impetus for a national identity for TAFE. Although TAFE remained the responsibility of the States and Territories, substantial Federal Government funding was injected into the system.

The Kangan Committee was established by the Whitlam Government in 1973 to provide information and advice to the Minister for Education, the Hon Kim E Beazley, on matters relating to the development of technical and further education in Australia, including the provision of financial assistance to the States for these institutions. The mandate of the committee included the identification of needs and priorities. In

'Kangan: 20 Years On' (Kearns and Hall 1994:59), Schofield, in her essay, recognises that Kangan's philosophical base was freedom for individuals to choose a course to suit them, 'as distinct from those seen by industry to best suit its demands'. An emphasis on enabling people to develop their potential as individuals has endured and is incorporated in the concept we use today of lifelong learning.

Another legacy of the Kangan Committee report was its positioning of TAFE firmly in the tertiary education sector. Until this time, TAFE's main role had been seen as producing the skilled manpower necessary for the development of the economy.

The period from 1976-1982 saw growth for TAFE with increased Commonwealth funding. This was accompanied by a growing awareness of the potential for TAFE to be a major instrument for implementing Commonwealth economic and social policies. Rather than training people for trades and technical occupations, and in some cases agriculture, the role of TAFE was seen as expanding to include educational and social purposes. The combination of economic, social and political changes at both State and Commonwealth levels changed the charter, the structure, and the nature of the student population and the education profile. This resulted in growth in both female enrolments and the enrolments of adults in TAFE in the period 1975-1982 (Goozee, 1992).

The early 1980s were important years for the development of TAFE as they saw the growth of national co-operation between the State systems. The Australian Conference of TAFE Directors was formed to develop more consistent and integrated policies, programs and strategies and to provide a national focus for TAFE. Also a national centre for TAFE research was established.

The late 1980s saw unparalleled change for all sectors of education, mainly in response to a decline in current account deficit and a growth in foreign debt for Australia prompting a drive to make industry more efficient and competitive. Changes to the way education was funded and delivered were seen as solutions to the crisis. Commonwealth funding for TAFE Institutes became competitive based on outcomes by States to pursue improvements in productivity, target growth in designated courses of high priority and changes in administrative arrangements to retain revenues from entrepreneurial effort. Two papers by John Dawkins, the Green Paper and the White Paper (Dawkins, 1987) sought a number of opportunities to foster closer links between TAFE and higher education, among them course articulation and credit transfer and the legitimate role of TAFE in providing higher education courses on its own account. Another result of these papers was the demise of the Colleges of Adult Education as they either became universities or were subsumed. It was during this period that Competency Based Training was introduced for VET and the National Training Board was established, which developed the Australian Standards Framework (a precursor to the Australian Quality Training Framework) as a set of reference points for standards of qualifications. In 1993, the Australian Qualifications Framework was established to provide national consistency in recognition of outcomes achieved in qualifications.

Between 1986 and 1992, TAFE restructuring became a constant process, with each State restructuring in a different way, but with a common theme of supplementing funds through generation of income from commercial activities. The Commonwealth Government's One Nation paper in 1992 proposed a comprehensive package for the establishment of a new system of VET with total Commonwealth control of funding, including the transformation of TAFE into a new and expanded system of Institutes of vocational education (Goozee, 2001). Prime Minister Keating announced that if the States resisted, the Commonwealth would set up its own vocational and training system. As a result of a stand off, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) was subsequently established and it was agreed that the States and Commonwealth would jointly fund the national training system through ANTA. The aims of ANTA were to promote a national VET system, forge closer links with industry and VET providers and improve cross-sectoral links between schools, higher education and VET. ANTA was dismantled in 2005 and today Commonwealth funding for TAFE is distributed by the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) through State Governments.

The reform of TAFE has been accelerating since the 1980s and this has been driven largely by the 'National Training Reform Agenda' and by the complex negotiations between State governments and the Commonwealth which led to the formation of ANTA (Seddon and Angus 1999). During this time, the VET sector expanded with VET being offered in schools, often under the auspice of a TAFE Institute. There was also a rise in the number of private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) offering a wide variety of VET courses. The introduction of 'User Choice' for apprentices meant that customisation over and above that which was publicly funded could be negotiated and purchased by the client. TAFE Institutes were forced to become more flexible and offer courses at times and places to suit clients. This put pressure on TAFE teachers to move out of the mould of 9-5 teaching and to start viewing students as clients.

Seddon and Angus (1999) state that reform in Victoria was determined by the Victorian State Training Board strategic directions declared in 1994 along the following lines:

From TAFE to VET – the maturing of the vocational education and training system, made up of a diverse range of providers which combine competitiveness with co-operative action in meeting the demands of their clients;

From Supply to Demand Driven – emphasis on the needs of our clients and the greater orientation of the system to a more client-focused culture based on the relationships between providers and their clients. Improved responsiveness in the supply of vocational education and training will be driven by industry, enterprise and student demand rather than past patterns of supply;

From Activity to Outcome – focus on performance, both in terms of efficiency and effectiveness. Best practice will be the goal for all parts of the system and will largely direct where resources flow in years to come;

From Quantity to Quality – our products and processes, in particular curriculum, the skills of teaching staff, and accreditation and regulation are critical to the ongoing relevance of the system. Continual improvement of these is integral to the system's success;

From Control to Devolved System – the strength of our system rests on the responsiveness of providers to their clients. The relationship between individual providers and enterprises and students will be a central focus of the system. This can best be achieved through independent and accountable providers. The management relations of the system must facilitate this not hinder it. (Seddon and Angus 1999)

Seddon and Angus further contend that mechanisms put into place to realise these strategic goals have created a high decentralised state training system.

TAFE Institutes in Victoria are, now, autonomous training enterprises subject to intense competition from other public and private training providers, and from schools and universities. The reduction in public funding to TAFE, alongside this intensified competition, has pressed Institutes and their staff towards a variety of efficiency measures, particularly casualisation of staff, and increased income generation in order to survive (Seddon and Angus 1999:492).

Further strain was put on TAFE teachers and management when in 1997 the Victorian Minister for Tertiary Education and Training commissioned a Ministerial Review which resulted in new structural arrangements for TAFE Institutes. In line with the recommendations, existing TAFE Institutes were amalgamated to form super Institutes, namely Chisholm Institute and Kangan Batman Institute. Three dual sector universities emerged when Eastern Institute of TAFE was merged with Swinburne University of Technology, Western Melbourne Institute of TAFE was merged with Victoria University of Technology, and Ballarat University merged with the School of Mines and Industry, Ballarat and Wimmera Institute of TAFE.

Currently, greater pressure is being put on TAFE Institutes to maintain quality while demand is increasing and government funding is relatively unchanged. This has forced TAFE Institutes to grow their commercial work, sometimes to above 50% of their income (Mitchell et al, 2003). TAFE Institutes are meeting industry needs through customisation of courses, more flexible delivery strategies and greater use of new and emerging technologies. The implications for teachers are that they must be more highly skilled, have current qualifications and be prepared to work flexibly. Managers must empower their teachers to work in teams, customise courses according to the needs of client groups and in a climate of

competition and increased commercial activity, they must themselves be empowered to expect teachers to provide a quality teaching and learning experience for all students.

The number of students enrolled in the public VET system in 2008 as reported by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research was 1.7 million. VET training providers in 2006 included:

57 TAFE Institutes

5 other government providers, including agricultural colleges and multi-sector higher education institutions

513 community education providers

over 1400 other registered providers (private providers). (NCVER 2006)

TAFE remains the leading provider, with 79% of students. Five of these TAFE Institutes operate in dual sector universities (Victoria University, RMIT University, Ballarat University, Swinburne University and Charles Darwin University). Total operating expenditures in Australia's public VET system increased from \$4874.5 million in 2004 to \$5173.6 million in 2006.

2.3 WHAT IS A LEARNING ORGANISATION?

Several theories on what constitutes a learning organisation have emerged from the literature review. According to Hayes and Hillman (1995:9) in the National Commission Briefing Paper to the UK Government, learning organisations:

Anticipate future problems

Pay attention to the external environment

Continuously seek improvement

Approach problem solving through conceptual analysis and on an organisation-wide basis

Reward initiative and creativity; and

Define jobs to encourage risk-taking, exploration, initiative and knowledge sharing.

With a greater emphasis on personal transformation, Fisher and White (2000) define learning organisations as social entities in which individuals interrelate and create a ‘collective consciousness’. They have characterised organisational learning as:

...a reflective process, played out by members at all levels of the organisation, that involves the collection of information from both the external and internal environments. This information is filtered through a collective sense-making process, which results in shared interpretations that can be used to instigate actions resulting in enduring changes to the organisation's behaviour and theories-in-use (Fisher and White 2000:447).

In his book ‘Beyond the Stable State’, Schon’s (1973) central argument is that change is a fundamental feature of modern life and that it is necessary to develop social systems that can learn and adapt.

“The loss of the stable state means that our society and all of its institutions are in continuous processes of transformation. We cannot expect new stable states that will endure for our own lifetimes. We must learn to understand, guide, influence and manage these transformations. We must make the capacity for undertaking them integral to ourselves and to our institutions.(Schon 1973:28)

We must, in other words, become adept at learning. We must become able not only to transform our institutions, in response to changing situations and requirements; we must invent and develop institutions which are ‘learning systems’, that is to say, systems capable of bringing about their own continuing transformation.” (Schon 1973: 28)

Schon’s work has been extended by Peter Senge in his book *The Fifth Discipline* (Senge 1990). Peter Senge’s work on the learning organisation at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology has become very influential on the way businesses are conducted today. According to Senge (1990) learning organisations are:

“...organisations where people continually expand their capacity to create the results they truly desire, where new and expansive patterns of thinking are nurtured, where collective aspiration is set free, and where people are continually learning to see the whole together.” (Senge 1990:3)

In explanation, Kofman and Senge (1993) contend that a learning organisation is one that continuously adapts to a changing and interdependent environment. In order to achieve this, we have to make shifts in how we think and interact in the workplace. We have to move from guarding our territory in a competitive manner to understanding that sharing our creativity will double or triple what we can achieve together. We must concentrate on building learning communities by shifting our reactionary beliefs to focus on co-operative behaviour. Many management teams believe this can be achieved by designing a corporate culture.

Corporate culture is a broad term used to define the unique personality or character of a particular company or organisation, and usually includes such elements as core values and beliefs, corporate ethics,

and rules of behaviour. Designing a corporate culture does not necessarily involve an understanding of the interdependence of staff in an organisation. Management teams will spend months, sometimes years, designing a corporate culture and summarizing that culture in a mission statement or strategic policy. Assisting staff to understand this corporate culture and to practice the dictates of the strategic policy will not alone assist the organisation to move towards becoming a learning organisation. Building learning organisations requires basic shifts in how we think and interact (Kofman and Senge 1993).

Kofman and Senge (1993) ask questions about confronting learning opportunities with fear rather than wonder, as we instinctively did as a child. One of the critical acts for a learning organisation is to develop the capability to talk safely and productively about dangerous and discomfiting subjects. They also ask why it is that we derive our self-esteem from knowing as opposed to learning and why we criticise before we even understand what it is we are criticizing. Fear of being labelled as un-informed stops us from asking the very questions that could enlighten our creativity and enhance our standing in the eyes of our colleagues. How often do we quickly criticise an innovation or decision without having examined the rationale, simply because we feel threatened?

Psychological safety is defined as a state in which people feel safe in honestly discussing their mistakes and what they think, and how they feel (Lipshitz, Popper and Friedman, 1999). Schein (1993) noted that learning new behaviour and expertise sometimes is emotionally difficult because it involves unlearning and making mistakes, which raises anxiety owing to feelings of incompetence. Thus, people are more likely to act with integrity, and to investigate their own mistakes with honesty when they are psychologically safe rather than under threat.

Assisting team members to understand that we live in a world of inter-dependence is crucial in the quest to becoming a learning organisation, and this is not necessarily going to be achieved through the design of a corporate strategy. Without communities of people genuinely committed to changing their basic reactionary beliefs, we will not be creating an opportunity for moving forward.

Senge (1990) states that our organisations work the way they work, at the end of the day, because of how we think and how we interact. He states that workers must examine how they think about their jobs. They must become aware of deep-seated suppositions they may not even know they have that can inhibit their performance or blind them to opportunities. Senge asserts that only by changing how we think can we change deeply embedded policies and practices. Only by changing how we interact can shared visions, shared understandings and new capacities for co-ordinated action be established.

Learning communities and systemic change are the basic tenet of Senge's vision of a learning organisation. He identifies five basic disciplines or 'component technologies' which are said to be

converging to innovate learning organisations. The concept of a learning organisation originated in systems thinking and is epitomised by Senge's (1990) model of these five disciplines.

- (1) **Systems thinking** integrates knowledge. It focuses on wholes rather than parts, looks at the underlying structure of events and leads to experiencing the interconnectedness and inter-relationship of things. Since "organisations learn only through individuals who learn" (Senge, 1990:139) individuals must be able to learn continuously and improve their skills, leading them to lifelong learning.
- (2) **Personal mastery** manoeuvres people into a position of continual learning.
- (3) **Mental models** refer to subconscious beliefs or tenets that limit thinking about how the world works. These are beliefs that we take for granted and which determine our view of the world and how we act in it. Bringing mental models to awareness and re-examining them in the light of espoused beliefs brings about change.
- (4) **Team learning** is a crucial discipline for the reason that "teams, not individuals, are the fundamental learning unit in modern organisations" (Senge 1990:10). Senge argues that if teams learn they become a microcosm for learning throughout the organisation. Teams learn through an iterative process of movement between practice and performance. Most important organisational decisions are made in teams. Cooperative learning for students is encouraged but teachers are not provided with the time, structures, cultural norms nor language to promote team learning. Most staff development programs support the learning of individuals.
- (5) **Shared vision** emerges from people who truly care about their work, who possess a strong sense of personal vision and who see the collective vision as one that can encompass the personal visions of all. It aligns what we do with what we say we want. Senge calls this the rudder that can keep the organisation on course during times of stress, and stress is epidemic in most schools today.

Senge (1990:14) posits that learning organisations are characterised by valuing and developing these five disciplines and that the basic meaning of a learning organisation is one that is "continually expanding its capacity to create its future".

"Systems thinking is a discipline for seeing wholes. It is a framework for seeing interrelationships rather than things, for seeing patterns of change rather than static 'snapshots.' It is a set of general principles – distilled over the course of the twentieth century, spanning fields as diverse as the physical and social sciences, engineering, and management. It is also a set of specific tools and techniques..." (Senge 1990:68)

Senge (1990) states that shared visions, shared understandings and new capacities for co-ordinated action are features of a professional learning community. In her paper "Professional Learning Communities:

What are they and why are they important?" Shirley Hord (1997) reports on a summary of a literature review she undertook, where the literature on professional learning communities repeatedly gives attention to six attributes:

supportive and shared leadership

collective creativity

shared values and vision

supportive conditions

shared personal practice

reduction of isolation of teachers

Hord (1997) continues that as a result of these six attributes aligning within a school organisation, practitioners demonstrate the following outcomes:

increased commitment to the mission and goals of the school and increased vigour in working to strengthen the mission

shared responsibility for the total development of students and collective responsibility for students' success

powerful learning that defines good teaching and classroom practice and that creates new knowledge and beliefs about teaching and learners

increased meaning and understanding of the content that teachers teach and the roles they play in helping all students achieve expectations

higher likelihood that teachers will be well informed, professionally renewed, and inspired to inspire students

more satisfaction, higher morale, and lower rates of absenteeism

significant advances in adapting teaching to the students, accomplished more quickly than in traditional schools

commitment to making significant and lasting changes and

higher likelihood of undertaking fundamental systemic change.

Whilst the above lists results for staff who have participated in a professional learning community, another recent study into ways of building VET provider capability (Clayton, Fisher, Harris, Bateman, Brown, 2008) lists the following as key elements needing to be in effective alignment for building organisational capability: vision, strategy, people, leadership, communication, management, teamwork, collaboration and networking, efficiency, empowerment, inclusiveness, rewards and recognition and professional development.

The literature gives an insight into the key elements required for an organisation to become a learning organisation, but it also emphasises the need for these elements to be in alignment before the benefits or results of becoming a learning organisation will be demonstrated. According to the researchers on learning organisations identified in this thesis, learning organisations have a vision, engage in a reflective process, anticipate future problems by paying attention to both the internal and the external environment and continuously seek improvement through approaching problem solving on an organisation-wide basis. They reward initiative and creativity, encourage risk-taking and promote psychological safety for their members. They explore subconscious beliefs to bring about change and believe in team learning and shared vision through effective communication which can in part be achieved through developing professional learning communities. These elements need to be in effective alignment for true organisational capability building to flourish.

2.4 RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN IN VET

Throughout 2006-7, an extensive program of research was undertaken by a consortium of researchers for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). The consortium's aim was to investigate how training organisations will respond to future changes in VET provision by understanding what issues underlie provider capability and how this capability might be enhanced. In August and September 2007, NCVER ran a series of seven forums in all state capitals and in Albury/Wodonga to showcase the consortium's work and its findings.

One of the studies 'A study of difference: Structures and cultures in Australian Registered Training Organisations' (Clayton et al 2008) examined organisational culture and structure in ten Australian registered training organisations (RTOs). What the researchers discovered during these forums is that participants felt providers (including TAFE Institutes) benefit from having a clear strategic focus and a vision which is understood throughout the organisation. Providers also need effective middle and senior management and leadership, as well as human resource management which is capability-focused.

This study found that public providers had initiated extensive and often rapid change in response to external pressures to be more competitive and client-focused. For some, the amount and rapid pace of change had placed considerable strain on their organisations. For smaller private registered training organisations, on the other hand, change tended to be simpler and more incremental. (Clayton et al 2008)

TAFE Institutes (public providers) therefore had responded extensively and rapidly to external pressures to be more competitive and client-focused, often placing considerable strain on the organisation. This study was able to identify several elements which the participants articulated as essential to dealing with organisational change. These are:

Vision: developing and communicating a strong vision that people at all levels of the organisation can understand and to which they can commit (important for all the organisations).

Strategy: developing a clear, future-focused mission and a strategy based on continuous improvement that defines the key goals of the organisation within its particular context, and also aligning strategy with structure, culture and people to maximise the attainment of these goals, including a clear understanding of change management processes (important for all the organisations).

People: placing the right people in the right positions, investing in their development, removing barriers to their interactions and providing them with support (important for all sizes of organisation, but particularly for the small ones because of the fewer employee numbers involved and the consequent greater risk in not having the 'right' person in the 'right' position).

Leadership: placing an emphasis on the development of leaders at all levels of the organisation and fostering leaders who are comfortable with uncertainty, devolved decision-making, risk taking and responsibility (important for all the organisations—see the consortium's work undertaken by Callan et al. 2007, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1802.html>>).

Communication: ensuring people understand what is happening through open, transparent communication and the fostering of knowledge-sharing, both internally and externally (particularly important for the larger organisations because of their multiple layers and often dispersed physical locations).

Management: aligning people, systems and structures to break down bureaucratic process and encouraging innovative ways of managing, especially using technology (particularly important for the larger organisations, given their potential for procedures and sub-structures to become overly bureaucratic).

Teamwork: reshaping structures to minimise barriers to collaboration and fostering opportunities for integrated activities which can utilise the combined skills of disparate clusters of talented individuals (more important for larger organisations because of the multiplicity of employee groupings, since the small organisations are often able to operate as a single team).

Collaboration and networking: building relationships with key stakeholders such as industry and the community (important for all the organisations—see the consortium’s work undertaken by Mitchell et al. 2006, <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1710.html>>).

Efficiency: developing a business approach to the generation and utilisation of commercial income (important for all the organisations).

Empowerment: devolving decision-making to capitalise on the abilities of people regardless of level, while also expecting accountability (important for all the organisations).

Inclusiveness: inviting staff at all levels and categories to participate in the change process, and using the language of inclusion (‘we’ and ‘us’) to encourage pride in and commitment to the organisation (particularly important for the larger organisations because of the multiple groups of employees needing to be engaged and thus the greater likelihood of disjunctures occurring in the change process).

Rewards and recognition: openly acknowledging and celebrating success, generating pride and goodwill (important for all the organisations).

Professional development: building skills and knowledge through a variety of means such as formal programs, return to industry, communities of practice, mentoring, coaching and networking, including critical practice and effective learning through work (important for all the organisations—see the consortium’s work undertaken by Chappell and Hawke (NVCER 2008)

2.5 CONCLUSION

This Literature Review covered three areas with a distinct rationale for each.

Firstly, the history of VET puts the current VET environment into perspective, relaying to the reader its struggle for recognition and autonomy as a single sector with an important role to play in building Australia’s industry skills. It revealed a struggle for recognition as a valid sector of Australia’s education system, a struggle to gain a fair share of public funding, and a struggle to view itself as cohesive and strong.

Secondly, the literature revealed that learning organisations have a clear strategic vision, are adaptive to change, have supportive leadership and shared values and vision. Also, it is only by changing how we think as individuals can we change deeply embedded policies and practices within the organisation.

Thirdly, research undertaken in RTOs within Australia identified that public RTOs have responded extensively and rapidly to external pressures for change. The study revealed that participants were able to articulate several elements essential to organisational change.

Chapter 3 will describe the case study methodology and grounded theory approach utilised in this research. It will also explain the interview process used to gather data for these case studies and present a diagrammatical framework to provide a visual image of the research process.

Chapter 3:

RESEARCH DESIGN AND APPROACH

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This research used a case study approach to collect data relating to two TAFE Institutes. Case study research is considered useful in developing an understanding of a complex issue and can extend experience or add strength to what is already known through previous research. According to Stake (1995) case studies highlight detailed contextual analysis of a limited number of experiences, events or conditions and their relationships. Researchers have used the case study research method for many years across a variety of disciplines. Yin (1984) defines a case study as

“...an empirical enquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident, and in which multiple sources of evidence are used. It is particularly valuable in answering the who, why and how questions in management research.” (Yin, 1984: 23).

According to Soy (1997) many well-known case study researchers such as Stake (1995), Simons (1980) and Yin (1984, 1994) have written about case study research and suggested techniques for organizing and conducting successful research. Drawing on their work, the following six steps were employed in this study:

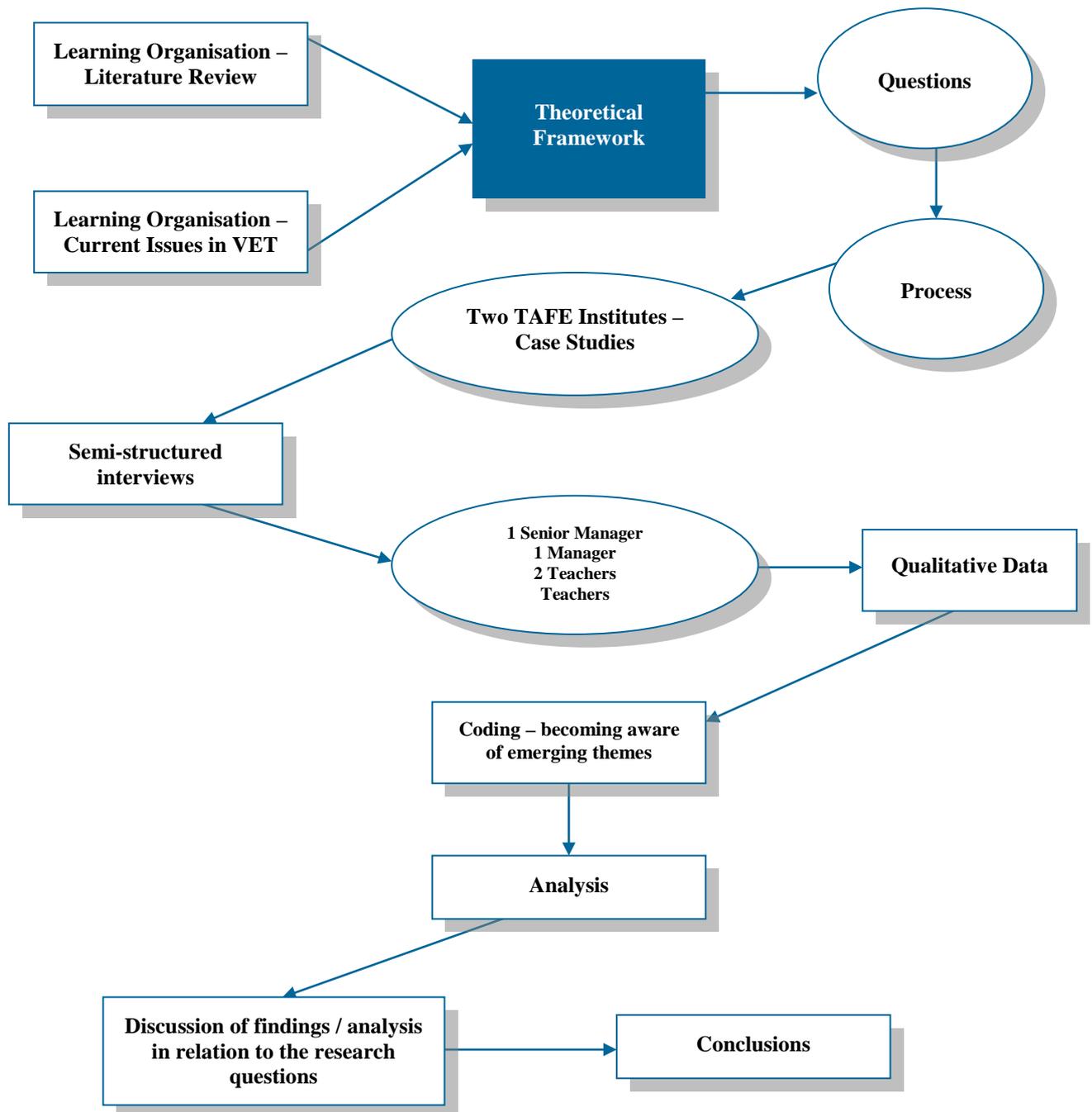
- determine and define the research questions
- select the cases and determine data gathering and analysis techniques
- prepare to collect the data
- collect data in the field
- evaluate and analyse the data
- prepare the report.

A diagrammatical framework for this research process, including undertaking a literature review to inform the framework, appears below in Diagram 1.

The research questions are outlined in Chapter 1 (1.3) and are based on my reading and background research. In the remainder of this chapter I describe my rationale for selecting the two TAFE Institutes,

the use of interviews for data collection, data management and analysis and conclude with a comment on the limitations of this study.

FIGURE 1: DIAGRAMMATICAL FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH PROCESS



3.2 DETERMINE AND DEFINE THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The first step for proceeding with this research was to determine my research topic. Determining the topic and research questions preceded the construction of the conceptual framework of my study so that I could fully understand what it was I wanted to know before selecting techniques for gathering data. My choice of topic reflects my area of expertise and interest as a VET professional involved in the ongoing professional development of VET teachers. Having determined my research topic I devised five questions to guide my collection of data through interviews. My topic and research questions then required explanation of leading terms such as learning organisation and vocational education and training.

- (a) To what extent do TAFE professionals understand the principles of a learning organisation?
- (b) How do they perceive their own organisation as a learning organisation?
- (c) How do they perceive their own practice within the context of their Institute as a learning organisation?
- (d) What are the indicators of progression towards being a learning organisation?

The five questions used to guide my data collection also required some explanation of strategic and professional issues which might impact the TAFE Institute's growth towards becoming a learning organisation. Therefore a set of strategic and professional questions was developed to draw out this data in the case study interviews.

Some strategic issues are:

1. What are the key external factors that relate to the success and/or growth of a TAFE Institute as a learning organisation?
2. What are the most important internal issues that relate to the success and/or growth of a TAFE Institute as a learning organisation?

Some professional issues are:

1. To what extent do managers and staff regard their Institute as a learning organisation?
2. To what extent are TAFE professionals aware of their own Institute's aspirations towards becoming a learning organisation and how have they gained this awareness?
3. How do TAFE professionals regard the concept of the learning organisation?
4. Do they personally support their organisation becoming more like a learning organization?
5. How do they view their own contribution?

3.3 SELECT THE CASES AND DETERMINE DATA GATHERING AND ANALYSIS TECHNIQUES

3.3.1 Selection of case study sites

According to Sarantakos (1998) one of the most significant issues a researcher has to consider when designing a project concerns the type and number of participants who will be included in the study. Two issues facing me in this research were the number of case studies (TAFE Institutes) to include and the number of participants within each TAFE Institute to be interviewed. With 18 TAFE Institutes in Victoria, 57 in Australia, the scope of this research did not allow for the number of case studies which would make this study 'representative'. Another factor for consideration was ensuring this study gained data from a range of echelons at the TAFE Institutes in order to determine the indicators of progression towards being a learning organisation. Interviewing across strata (levels of management) within the case study Institutes would achieve this. Interviewing the CEO/TAFE Director, a manager and two teachers would allow me to gather data around the flow of information and knowledge from the visionary down the line of implementers. This would therefore require four interviews from each TAFE Institute. I selected two TAFE Institutes as case studies which would involve eight interviews in total, enough according to Sarantakos as the centre of interest in grounded research is not on collecting volumes of data but organizing the variety of thoughts and experiences the researcher gathers during the analysis of data.

Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions in Victoria are independent public statutory authorities, under the Education and Training Reform Act 2006. According to the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) there are 18 TAFE Institutes in Victoria and they deliver about 80 per cent of all publicly funded VET. The councils of TAFE institutions are responsible for the good governance and policy direction of the institutions, including working to achieve the social and economic objectives of the Victorian Government. (VTA 2008).

The diversity within the network of TAFE Institutes led me to study two TAFE Institutes which operate under different criteria. I researched a metropolitan TAFE Institute which is attached to a university and which may be impacted by its close association with its higher education partner (Institute 1). This TAFE Institute operates within the dual sector (higher education and vocational education) university under a dual funding and reporting system. TAFE is funded by the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) through Skills Victoria, whilst universities (higher education) are funded through the federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. A dual sector university is governed by a Vice-Chancellor but it also has a director of TAFE (Deputy Vice-Chancellor) with reporting responsibilities external to the university (Skills Victoria). It has a strategic

plan which gives direction to the university as a whole – a shared vision for both sectors, yet the TAFE Institute is governed by a VET strategy determined through DEECD.

In contrast to a TAFE Institute operating within a dual sector university, and to understand the impact of autonomy of a single sector Institute, I have also researched a metropolitan TAFE Institute which is not attached to a higher education partner (Institute 2). Modern TAFE Institutes are multi campus and are often geographically widespread and diverse. Some of them have student numbers topping 50,000. Often metropolitan TAFE Institutes have regional campuses. Both selected Institutes cater for a diverse student population in areas of high migrant intake and run bridging courses for students who are returning to study or have English as a second language. These two Institutes have many common issues but also have many differences.

3.3.2 Recruiting participants

In investigating the current level of practice of the principles of the learning organisation in two TAFE Institutes, there was an imperative to understand the strategic issues facing staff at all levels. To achieve this understanding, I interviewed practitioners at three different levels of engagement within each Institute, namely a CEO/Director, a head of department and two teachers.

In both instances of interviewing the CEO/Director, I was warmly received and offered assistance in selecting managers and teachers to interview. This assistance was in the form of providing me the names of practitioners to contact and being assured they would be responsive to my request.

In Institute 1, I sought permission from the Head of School to attend a whole of school staff meeting. At this meeting I explained the purpose of my research and asked for volunteers to be interviewed. As a result of this, two teachers from within the one area of teaching emailed me offering to be part of my research. I interviewed these teachers on different days on separate campuses. Their Head of School was not aware of their action in volunteering to participate in this research.

In Institute 2, I was given the name of a Head of Department and on contacting him, he offered to organise two of his teachers to attend to be interviewed. These two teachers were from different areas of teaching within his management and one of these teachers travelled from another campus.

3.4 RESEARCH PROCEDURES

3.4.1 Data gathering techniques

This research, involving two Victorian TAFE Institutes as case studies, employed qualitative research methods based on the collection and utilization of data from interviews. Interviews were chosen as I felt it was important to establish a level of trust with each person involved through a one on one conversation. According to Kvale (1996) at the most basic level, interviews are conversations. Interviews as a technique for gaining the data differ in some important ways from other familiar kinds of interviews or conversations. Kvale defines qualitative research interviews as attempts to understand the world from the subjects' point of view thus hoping to unfold the meaning of peoples' experiences. Unlike conversations in daily life, which are usually reciprocal exchanges, professional interviews involve an interviewer who is in charge of structuring and directing the questioning. In my research, it was important to direct the conversation towards the manager's/teacher's experience of the institution in order to gain an insight into the interaction between the manager/teacher and the organisation. However in order to allow the teachers to express themselves in the forms in which they normally speak, think, and organise reality, I used semi-structured interviews, maintaining my focus on the teacher's perspective and experiences (Neumann 1994).

The interviews were constructed using questions based on my major research question as defined in Chapter 1 of this thesis. My major research question is to what extent do TAFE Institutes follow the principles of a learning organisation? More specifically, I seek to know:

- To what extent do TAFE professionals understand the principles of the learning organisation?
- How do they perceive their own organisation as a learning organisation?
- How do they perceive themselves as lifelong learners within that context?
- How do they perceive their own practice within the context of their Institute as a learning organisation?
- What are the indicators of progression towards being a learning organisation?

The interview questions which formed the basis for these interviews are contained in Appendix 1. The interviews were semi-structured in nature so the questions often led to discussions around issues which the respondent thought relevant to the questions. This technique was used to collect data by setting up a situation (the interview) that allowed the respondent the time and scope to talk about their opinions on a particular subject. Semi-structured interviews provide a consistent framework for the questions being

asked while still allowing the flexibility to follow particular lines of enquiry if this seems relevant or appropriate. Because of the open-ended nature of the interviews, the respondents need to be considered as informants only, providing verbal reports about their version of events. I decided the focus of the interview through the design of my questions, but my objective was to understand the respondent's point of view rather than to lead them to a particular viewpoint. I used open-ended questions to build a rapport with the respondent and this ensured each interview was more like a conversation than an examination. Many of the additional questions I asked were prompted during the course of the interview and therefore the questions were not always consistent for each respondent.

All interviewees were informed that a code would be given to identify them and the name of their TAFE Institute would not be revealed. They were also informed that the interviews had taken place on three levels: CEO, manager and teacher. They each gave their consent for their interview to be recorded for transcribing purposes. With the support of the Director/CEO of each Institute, the participants in this research were supported by management to give their time to be interviewed. Interviews took place on the campus of each interviewee except in one case in TAFE Institute 2 where I interviewed a general manager, manager/teacher and a teacher on the one campus, while the second teacher travelled from another campus to participate.

I used a digital recorder to record the interviews and each interview was planned for a length of 45 minutes. Three of the interviews went beyond the planned timeframe with the permission of the interviewees concerned. Each interviewee was asked a set of prepared questions and each interview was recorded and then personally transcribed by me. From the transcribed conversations, patterns of experiences were listed. This came from direct quotes and paraphrasing common ideas (Spradley, 1979).

I interviewed the director/CEO of each TAFE Institute to initially gain an insight into their vision as leaders. I developed a set of questions (attached as Appendix 1) which would seek to uncover the external and internal impacts on their Institutes becoming Learning Organisations. I also sought to uncover how they communicate their vision to their Heads of Department/School and the teachers and to discover how they measure whether their communication has been successful and what indicators they used to determine their success. I also questioned what support the Director/CEO gives to his staff to ensure the achievement of the vision.

. At middle management level, I sought to understand the relationship between the vision and subsequent strategic plan and the implementation of that plan at a department or school level. The teachers then provided insight into the operational practicalities of the implementation strategy. A total of eight interviews were conducted. Table 1 below explains the relationship between the three layers of data collection and also describes the coding given to each interviewee.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF INTERVIEWS

TAFE Institute 1 Dual sector metropolitan	Director of TAFE (Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor)	<i>CODE</i> 1-CEO	Head of School (TAFE Finance/Business)	<i>CODE</i> 1-MM	Two teachers (Finance/Business)	<i>CODE</i> 1-T1 1-T2
TAFE Institute 2 Single sector metropolitan	Chief Executive Officer	<i>CODE</i> 2-CEO	General Manager (Specialist trades)	<i>CODE</i> 2-MM	Manager/Teacher (Auto) Senior Educator (Furnishing)	<i>CODE</i> 2-T1 2-T2

The data gained from the interviews was used as a basis for interpretation and analysis. The case study methodology approach is about gathering data with which to develop grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967).

3.4.2 Data analysis techniques

A grounded theory approach has been used to delineate the dynamics present within the settings of the two Institutes. The data collected was analysed to identify the degrees of aspiration towards the principles of a learning organisation and the implementation of the principles behind this. The data analysed was used as an analytic framework based on definitions of a learning organisation drawn from the literature. In addition I used a grounded theory approach in order to reveal a set of categories and concepts and their interrelationships (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Glaser and Strauss suggest that data collection, analysis and theory formulation are undeniably connected in a reciprocal sense, and the grounded theory approach incorporates explicit procedures to guide this. I used an inductive approach, moving from the specific to the more general. I carefully watched and tested what emerged from the data.

Grounded theory coding is a kind of content analysis to find and conceptualise the core issues from within the huge pile of the data. Throughout the duration of each interview I became conscious that the interviewee was using words and phrases that highlighted an issue of importance or interest to my research. I noted this during the interviews. This issue may have been mentioned again in the same or similar words and was again noted in a phrase written by me. Allan (2003) describes this process as 'coding' and the short descriptor phrase is a code. According to him, coding should be performed with an open mind, without predetermined ideas. Predetermined ideas should not be forced on the data by looking for confirmation of previously established ideas. During these interviews I was conscious of my extensive experience in a TAFE Institute and how the data I was gathering might serve to confirm already held beliefs; thus this process of descriptor phrasing (coding) during the interview became vitally important to ensure I was acting on what I was hearing and not allowing pre-conceived interpretations to cloud my line of questioning.

Grounded theory is defined as the process for ‘...the discovery of theory from data systematically obtained from social research’ (Glaser and Strauss, 1967:2). Strauss and Corbin (1990) consider that paying attention to processes is vital to quality grounded theory. I have used grounded theory as a technique for analyzing the data gained from the interviews, which involved the process of constant comparison. The constant comparison process involved three types of coding.

‘Open’ coding involved assigning the data to categories easily identifiable by me. Open coding is the process of breaking down the data into separate units of meaning (Goulding, 1999). It takes place at the beginning of a study. In open coding, incidents or events are labelled and collected through constant comparison to form categories and properties (Babchuk, 1997). The main purposes of open coding are to recognise and label data. This process involved me converting the text of my interviews to tables, leaving a blank column to the right of the interview text. As I read the interview text, I highlighted emerging themes and gave the themes a notation in the right hand column. This notation of emerging themes then became the basis for developing my data analysis. I then developed a table in MSWord where I recorded themes, sub-themes and appropriate quotes from interviews for future use.

‘Axial’ or ‘theoretical’ coding involved identifying relationships between the categories. These relationships supported the identification of an overall theoretical framework. Strauss and Corbin (1998) believe that the purpose of axial coding is to reassemble data that were fractured during open coding. As each core category was identified I placed it at the centre of a circle and with arrows I then related other categories to it. I did this by using an interactive whiteboard and writing the main categories at points around the board. According to Creswell (2002:441) these categories are the "causal conditions, strategies, contextual conditions, and consequences" of the data gathered.

‘Selective’ coding involved ensuring all data was associated with an emerging category and that core categories were identified to support the conceptualization of the theoretical framework. Selective coding can be described as the process by which categories are related to the core category ultimately becoming the basis for the grounded theory (Babchuk, 1997). Strauss and Corbin (1990:116) define selective coding as "the process of selecting the central or core category, systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (as cited in Moghaddam 2006). This final stage presented the theory bringing together the concepts and integrating them into categories which have explanatory power within the context of the research. Eventually, a situation of theoretical saturation was attained where no new categories or properties emerged.

Glaser makes the point that memoing is given high priority in grounded theory. Consequently, as an idea occurred to me I would pause in what I was doing and write a memo to myself. I carried a pocket full of 125 mm x 75 mm system cards in my pocket most of the time, for jotting down memos.

Finally, in understanding how the categories which emerged influenced the ability of the TAFE Institutes to be learning organisations, I used Kurt Lewin's Force Field Analysis (Lewin 1967). In his research, Lewin looked to the nature of group task as he remained unconvinced that individual motivational concepts adequately explained group dynamics. He argued that people come to a group with very different dispositions but if they share a common objective they are likely to act together to achieve it. This forms the basis of Lewin's field theory where he describes driving and restraining forces working against each other which has the effect of hindering the achievement of organizational goals. Lewin's force field analysis technique was used to help distinguish whether factors within the case study organisations were 'driving forces' for change or 'restraining forces' that worked against desired changes.

3.5 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Consent from participants for this research was recorded on a digital recorder at the commencement of each interview. Participants were told how their identity would be protected and encouraged to speak openly in response to the questions. They were given a business card with the name, contact number and email of the researcher. Instructions for contacting the researcher and seeking to withdraw from the study were recorded. Continuing with the interview after these instructions were given implied consent.

Grounded theory is predominantly based on the researchers' interpretations, even though grounded theory is generated from data which come from participants. According to Glaser (1978):

"...included at each state of generating theory is reliance on the social psychology of the analyst; that is, his skill, fatigue, maturity, cycling of motivation, life cycle interest, insights into and ideation from the data. Generating theory is done by a human being who is at times intimately involved with and other times quite distant from the data..." (Glaser 1978:2).

In light of this, participants' identity was protected through identification coding as well as concept coding. This ensures that any ideas or theories generated through this research would be difficult to trace back to a particular individual participant. Whilst every precaution is taken to protect the identity of the two TAFE Institutes, it must be pointed out that as one of the participant Institutes is dual sector and there are only three dual sector metropolitan universities in Victoria, this does narrow down the field somewhat.

Another ethical consideration is the writer's background and experience as a teacher in a TAFE Institute. This may prejudice the evolving theory as some of the emergent concepts may be professionally close to the researcher. However every effort has been made to ensure that professional bias does not influence this research by using the participants' voices to articulate their experiences and perceptions.

3.6 CONCLUSION

Grounded theory has characteristics of its own which make it unique, although Strauss and Corbin (1990) consider that paying attention to processes is vital to quality grounded theory. The data collected from the two TAFE Institutes (case studies) have been protected from identification, coded and interpreted according to the researcher's process of analysis. The findings and recommendations are based on a sound process of interpretive analysis using grounded theory techniques. In Chapter 4 I reveal the stories told by the interviewees, not as direct translations, but rather as interpretations of the events and emotions surrounding these events. Thus begins the process of breaking down the data into separate units of meaning.

Chapter 4: DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The analysis of the data collected in this research has been approached using a grounded theory approach. Data was collected from two TAFE Institutes. Within each Institute, four interviews were conducted - one with each CEO/Director of TAFE, one at manager level, and two at teacher level.

TABLE 2: CODING FOR INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

TAFE Institute 1	CEO/Director (1-CEO)	Middle Manager (1- MM)	Teacher (1-T1)	Teacher (1-T2)
TAFE Institute 2	CEO/Director (2-CEO)	Middle Manager (2-MM)	Teacher (2-T1)	Teacher (2-T2)

Coding of interview transcripts revealed common themes in discussion but with differing interpretations of implementation within each Institute. In this chapter I will discuss the stories contained in these interviews and attempt to present a picture of the difficulties and successes as seen from the different strata within each Institute. I will outline some of the stories of enthusiasm, frustration and disillusionment and draw some conclusions about what this tells us generally about these TAFE Institutes.

The first two of the eight interviews were with the CEOs/Directors of TAFE. Both interviews took place in the office of the interviewee and both interviewees were enthusiastic participants in the process. The interviews were completed within an hour and were brought to a conclusion by me as I did not wish to impose beyond my appointment time; however I did not feel hurried by either person. In fact both participants demonstrated a genuine commitment to my research, with both volunteering suggestions for names of teachers who might be agreeable to being interviewed.

The stories which emerged from both CEOs were told with great passion and I was left without doubt about the commitment of both as leaders. In this section, I have followed each CEO story with corresponding stories from the middle manager and both teachers at that TAFE Institute. I have done this to maintain consistency for the reader in understanding when middle managers or teachers refer to their CEO.

4.2 THE STORIES

4.2.1 TAFE Institute 1 – 1-CEO

TAFE Institute 1 was situated within a dual sector university in metropolitan Melbourne. It had over 10 campuses and offered over 700 higher education and TAFE courses with more than 45,000 enrolled students. The students came from diverse backgrounds with a high number of students from first generation Australian backgrounds. This TAFE Institute offered a direct pathway for students into its higher education sector and offered teachers the opportunity to connect with their higher education colleagues with the prospect of developing communities of practice to enhance their own learning. Communication was the foremost issue discussed by 1-CEO.

The style of management at TAFE Institute 1 had developed over several years ago when it first merged with the university. According to 1-CEO, it used to operate like a stand alone TAFE Institute within the university. It had a very strong and supportive Board which developed its own vision in association with the senior TAFE management team. This vision was strongly influenced by a response to state government directions for TAFE and was aligned with the apparent needs of the region, and to a lesser extent, the needs of the client group. This vision had very little reference to the university's strategic plan. A new Vice Chancellor introduced a vision which included both sectors of the university, and a restructuring process within the TAFE sector was needed to bring it into alignment with this new vision. There was now an emphasis on research within the TAFE sector and this research was expected to inform pedagogy. 1-CEO expressed a concern that change could be driven so relentlessly that it became mechanical. He wanted to inspire staff to think about the inspiration for the change, the ideas that could emerge through the change, and then to implement them.

“I suspect if you come to TAFE as the year pans out and its being implemented you'll hear (me) encouraging people to talk about the ideas and not about the machinery. They should be trusted to do that further down” (1-CEO interview 2007).

He talked about two way trust and the importance of intellectual leadership whilst change was being implemented, also adding that change was not optional – it was part of the core responsibility of everyone in the organisation and it was a phenomenon of everyday life. He wanted his institution to be an organisation that thought about current social networking and the way young people approached learning. He also wanted an exploration of new forms of communication amongst the university's client group, such as the use of U Tube and Face Book.

A change in culture was required and 1-CEO lamented that teachers entrenched in the TAFE system did not understand that they had a commitment beyond their direct face to face teaching, preparation and assessment.

“Change is not optional. It’s part of the core responsibility of everyone in the organisation. It’s not an add on. It’s part of what we do and it’s easy for TAFE teachers to turn around and say you’re loading me with new things to do but that’s often not more things but you’re making them change (sic)”

He continued:

“...we’re dealing with fossils who think change is an option...” (1-CEO Interview 2007).

However, he juxtaposed this with a view that there has been a real improvement in staff realisation that their responsibility as an educator was a lot broader than face to face teaching. He felt this was partly a consequence of the Multi Employer Certified Agreement (MECA) but added that there were still “pockets where the battles are being fought”.

The MECA, which was their current employment award, supported change so teachers really had no option but to understand they could timetable in different ways, they could have different class sizes and different learning spaces. He stated that if teachers were not prepared to accommodate these changes then “we’ve reached a parting of the ways”. He also identified that systems needed to change and gave examples of an on-line system for planning and monitoring staff career and professional development, and mentioned systems for strategic and operational management. Leadership was also cited as a key to change. If leaders were passionate about what they did, 1-CEO believed it showed in their actions. He considered passion to be a sub-part of leadership, not part of management.

People play a role in change management, but 1-CEO also stressed that people rely on systems. When asked about the external factors influencing his vision and policy implementation, government strategic direction and peak industry partners were clearly foremost in his mind. He felt that if he was not talking directly with both then he was not doing his job.

Informal communication was seen by 1-CEO as an effective method of disseminating information within an organisation. Despite formal communication from the Vice Chancellor in the form of emails, face to face forums, on-line newsletters and weekly video broadcasts, comments from teachers in the annual staff survey indicated they felt there was insufficient communication from senior managers. 1-CEO said he spoke to teachers informally who claimed they ‘don’t get told a thing’ despite the quantity of formal communication avenues. He felt that if the content did not relate directly to their work, teachers found the intrusion of emails annoying and tended to ignore them.

“People are very bound up in their work. That’s what’s important to them so the other stuff is annoying. It’s only if it’s inside their work the other stuff is of value to them” (1-CEO interview 2007).

On the other hand, he felt conversation in the staff room where information was passed on through discussion was seen as very valuable by staff but it was not attributed to direct communication from senior management, even though that might have been its original source. He justified this attitude to formal communication:

“Formal communication...of organizational direction and how we do things is awful but it’s alright if the informal communication is fantastic” (1-CEO Interview2007).

4.2.2 TAFE Institute 1 – Middle Manager 1-MM

To gain a perspective on how the vision was communicated and implemented down the line in TAFE Institute 1, I interviewed a head of department. He was frank and unafraid to speak his mind. He started at the Institute (university) in 2001 with experience as a secondary school principal. He had also developed his own management consultancy business and so assumed his original role as program manager without prior experience in the TAFE system. He felt his experience as a management consultant had ensured his understanding of the principles of a learning organisation and he was appointed head of department a year after commencing at the Institute. In terms of viewing his own Institute as a learning organisation, he spoke of ‘being thrown in at the deep end’ when he first started and said he was given support only if he asked for it.

As there was no induction process when he commenced, 1-MM stated he learned by doing but felt there would have been greater efficiency if he had been taught about the systems in the Institute. He cited the finance and budgeting system as challenging as it took him a long period of trial and error to understand it. The student enrolment system was another example which he stated went from ‘chaotic to chaotic’ with continuing issues. He said it was only because he learned to predict the problems associated with using the system that there was any efficiency with it in his department. In addressing the question of perceiving his own Institute as a learning organisation, he felt frustrated that the system did not support the Vice-Chancellor’s vision for the university (including the TAFE Institute).

1-MM’s frustration stemmed not from the software, which he felt was only the ‘thing in the background’, but rather from the lack of business rules, the lack of flexibility and the lack of the skill of the people conducting the processes. If an enrolment was straight forward he did not encounter a problem, but stated that he spent most of his time dealing with the 10% of enrolments that were complex and ended up fighting with enrolment management personnel in the process. He often had students who were from war torn countries and who were suffering from post-traumatic stress. He lamented that these students were

not supported by the system and stressed that if the Vice-Chancellor wished to capture these cohorts then the system had to support the process for these students who often did not speak English and did not have the skills to negotiate a complex system. 1-MM also felt that staff were not supported by the enrolment system.

“We spend so much of our time fighting an administrative system that’s supposed to support us. (The people in enrolments) think they’re there to support themselves, to minimise the amount of angst and budget they have and not worry about supporting us” (1-MM interview 2007).

He also feels staff are not properly supported by the AQTF in their quest to fulfil the Vice-Chancellor’s vision. He substantiates this by stating the relationship between the staff and the students and the teachers’ ability to get their message across is not changed by compliance with the AQTF and adds that any changes in the AQTF are a positive only in that they are a reduction of what he sees as a negative in the first place. He felt the AQTF rules were directed towards institutions which did not comply in the first instance and not towards institutions like his which strive for compliance in all they do.

“A lot of the AQTF compliance issues that teachers face, although they actually work, they don’t actually change much in terms of what happens in the classroom and that’s what actually count” (1-MM interview 2007).

The student experience was paramount to him and his management approach reflected this. He stated that a good outcome for students was when they came into the courses offered through his department, studied for the two years and gained a pathway into a higher education course.

“That’s somewhere two years ago they were never going to get” (1-MM interview 2007).

In answering a question on his own practice he stressed he used his experience in studying people’s behaviour to determine what influences staff behaviour in a management context. He believed flexibility with his staff produced the best results in terms of staff delivering what’s asked of them to their students. He has been rewarded with staff loyalty and best practice in the classroom and stated his view only changed if the student experience was proven to be unsatisfactory through student evaluation. When pushed on examples of flexibility he said he did not ask staff to account for every minute of the day and gave them the flexibility to manage their time around student requirements and timetables.

“For me, if I ask a teacher to do a particular task because I think they’re the best at it, and they refuse on the grounds of lack of time, then they’re going to have an argument with me because it’s not true. It can’t be true given the way their work conditions are so I set those expectations but in terms of formalising where they are every minute of the day, why would you bother trying to do that when you’re on four campuses.” (1-MM 2007)

Expecting loyalty and receiving it was paramount to this manager's style of management. He felt reward for staff loyalty was not offered by the Institute and that it should be initiated by him in his department through compliments, celebrations and being flexible around staff needs. This resulted in greater commitment by staff.

When asked about lifelong learning he stated his professional learning has been both formal and informal. He placed enormous value on his previous experience in the management consultant role and emphasised that a weakness of the current organisation (the Institute) is that managers do not take account of who their staff are. He considered that the Institute placed an emphasis on making allowances for working mothers and people in wheelchairs but did not give its staff the skills to understand and manage people. He pointed out that staff historically have been promoted beyond their teaching role on their technical ability but in a management role find themselves not relying on their technical skills as much as their (lack of) management skills.

"I'm talking about the weaknesses of the organisation because I don't think the management structure and the people that are in these organisations are well enough trained in people management techniques." (1-MM interview 2007)

In 2001 this manager participated in the Chair Academy leadership course with his Institute and found the most powerful aspect of undertaking this professional development was networking with other TAFE managers from Institutes across Australia and overseas. When asked if this type of leadership course provides the management skills he regards as so lacking in his colleagues he felt it would not have fulfilled this need for him without his previous experience in management before entering the TAFE Institute. His Institute often runs courses on equal opportunity and discrimination and although well run they present common sense solutions rather than a deeper understanding of what motivates people. Getting the best out of people through the use of emotional intelligence was supported as a professional development by his Vice Chancellor but it was condemned by the academics attending the professional development as the questionnaire used for this purpose was regarded as not having been proven through research. He felt this was a missed opportunity for all managers to develop their skills in understanding what's behind their staff's views or actions,

"...looking at them as a person and what's behind what they're thinking and doing rather than standing there and accusing them of acting in a particular manner or demanding that they do things" (1-MM interview 2007).

This manager displayed a sensitivity to staff feeling marginalised because they may be either shy or too direct. He felt all staff should be listened to and their ideas considered rather than abandoned because of the way the ideas are delivered. He disclosed in his interview that he has felt marginalised by his line

managers for being too blunt and this has resulted in him refraining from contributing to discussion. He asserted managers should not put people in that position.

In terms of introducing change he felt staff will resist change because in a large educational institution there is a general regard that what goes on behind the classroom door is no-one else's business. Working with small teams is his approach 'because all those small teams add up in the end' (1-MM interview 2007). He contended that managers, when promoted out of the classroom, can lose perspective on the scrutiny required to bring about change in individuals and felt teachers working in teams can support each other to bring about the change required. He added that compliance with a quality structure is not the answer either and Institutes should be focusing on developing strategies where high levels of management can identify what is going on without so much 'line by line' accountability. He felt managers become accountable for producing a document rather than being accountable for producing an outcome.

"...is counter productive in terms of accountability because you end up being accountable for producing a document rather than accountable for producing an outcome" (1-MM interview 2007).

When asked if he could identify initiatives within his Institute which indicate a move towards being a learning organisation, he cited planning retreats as having become more interactive, with workshops producing tools and resources which managers could take away with them and utilise.

4.2.3 TAFE Institute 1 – Teacher 1-T1

Determining the difference in experience of the culture for both managers and teachers involved interviewing two teachers at each TAFE Institute. Both teachers at TAFE Institute 1 were managed by 1-MM. The first teacher interviewed had been with the business department for 27 years. He had witnessed the introduction of computers, the use of emails replacing mail boxes and the loss of much communication between office staff. He had witnessed so many changes of Head of Department that he could not recall them all.

His current manager had won his respect he said through considering all parties involved in any issue that arose and remaining non-aligned. He felt that the role of a manager is to be the 'coalface' between the staff, the students and management and he added that this had become a more difficult task with the increased documentation required under the AQTF. His respect for his manager's ability was summed up in the following sentence:

"He can kick heads when he needs to and he has a heart when he needs to and he can be compassionate towards the students" (1-T1 Interview 2007).

This teacher did not enjoy being over managed and preferred to work on his own although he admitted that teamwork is an important aspect of reducing the workload for individual teachers. He declared his love of teaching had kept him in the department for 27 years and that the only gratification he required to keep him there was the feedback he gained from his students. He did not wish to spend 50 hours a week working for a pay rise. He viewed seeking promotion as being associated with ego.

“I don’t have a particularly large ego that has holes that need to be filled in it. I’ve got one though, and people have reasons that they want to climb the system and I don’t have reason” (1-T1 Interview 2007).

Prior to having children, this teacher worked on various Institute committees which he felt impacted on his broader view by helping him to understand another level of operations within the Institute. He felt his reward for undertaking this extracurricular work was that he gained a different set of skills and he gained a broader perspective of ‘what’s happening in the workplace’. He stopped serving on Institute committees when his children were born as he was very aware of achieving work/life balance and felt he was too tired to work beyond his teaching duties. He continued by stating that he did not have a great deal of ambition and that his family had always been a priority for him.

“What I do outside this Institute has always been more important to me than what I do inside it” (1-T1 Interview 2007).

He felt working on committees might impact on one’s career ‘moves’ but it did not impact on his teaching or his students, and it did not add to his knowledge of the subject matter. His own view of his teaching ability was very confident and he felt it came naturally to him. He felt a teacher was an actor in the classroom and that he ‘performed’ each time he had a class.

“For me it’s 90% personality. I’m an actor in the classroom. I perform. You perform better with experience, you learn a lot of skills to perform better in the classroom so I guess the skills have improved a lot but the personality is still there. A boring personality is a boring class” (1-T1 Interview 2007).

When asked if he felt he had been encouraged to be innovative and take risks, he agreed stating there were plenty of opportunities and scope for innovation. He admitted he was a program manager for 5 years and could have been Head of Department. He did not take the opportunities, stating:

“The rewards were there – ego gratification is not what I was after. My job satisfaction came directly from my students” (1-T1 Interview 2007).

When questioned on his thoughts on the Vice-Chancellor, he admitted he thought the Vice Chancellor did not have a perceived image within the Institute although he reads the Vice Chancellor’s emails. He said he had not met the Director of TAFE and does not know much about him.

4.2.4 TAFE Institute 1 – Teacher 1-T2

Teacher 2 came to this TAFE Institute (university) 6 years ago. At the age of 40 he undertook a Graduate Diploma of Education to take up a career in teaching and has a strong background working in the accounting industry. At the time of the interview he was training a large transport industry group on their premises.

His attitude to his teaching was that what goes on in his classroom is his business and he was happy working ‘in his own pocket’. He saw quality control in the form of the AQTF as the job of his program manager, and his contribution as maintaining an attendance register. He expressed concern for his students and left no doubt that his teaching is very important to him. In an effort to impact teaching and learning at his university, he joined the Quality Teaching and Learning Committee but discovered it was ‘very procedural’ and the discussion was generally around university policy and had no impact on his teaching. He explained that in his view, no policy has a direct impact on any teacher and that it is ‘classic bureaucracy’ in action. He also felt the system within the university did not support the work of his department and said he often witnessed frustration when his program managers and head of department were ‘blocked’ by the system and unable to access the information they needed.

He continued his censure of university support (or lack of it) by adding that the professional development sessions facilitated by the Institute which he had attended were poorly run and with such high numbers of participants that the resources were inadequate. The facilities department was also mentioned. He reported water dripping from an air conditioning unit which was being captured in a bucket and it took ten days for it to be attended to.

When asked about the external factors that impact on the culture of his department he looked outside his department but he did not look beyond his own Institute. He did mention changes to TAFE but in context of how these changes were being implemented within his Institute. He said the TAFE change plan was ‘like papering cracks with wallpaper’ and had no impact on teaching in favour of teachers and students. He also felt he did not need to know about it because it did not impact on his teaching or his students.

In contrast however, he felt aligned to his own department and in particular to his head of department. He felt he had an open and honest relationship with him and being asked by him for his opinion from time to time made him feel very valued. He added that being heard was very important to him and he felt encouraged to undertake his role as a teacher role with fervour but expressed that while he felt valued by his own department he did not feel valued by the wider organisation.

“I respect the Vice-Chancellor but ... remote from what’s happening at the teacher/student level. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Pro Vice-Chancellors might as well not exist. The VC is sitting on top and down the bottom are little

teachers and students. How does the VC know what I'm teaching?" (I-T2 interview 2007).

His explanation for this was that there are too many layers at the Institute. He read the VCs emails and enjoyed the openness expressed in them but felt keenly the inability to respond to them. He had a pleasant surprise on one occasion. He emailed the VC a response he had from an industry client who had hosted four students. The client had expressed appreciation for the excellence experienced in hosting these students. The VC responded by writing directly to each of the four students congratulating them. He expressed his delight at this reaction.

Despite his views of the wider organisation, he felt that attempts within his own department to overcome the difficulties in the system through departmental modifications might have resulted from a tendency of his head of department to protect teachers from the external factors. He said he viewed the VC as 'feisty' and appreciated her efforts but felt there was no advantage to him as 'there's just this massive blob between her and what she's trying to do'. He said that teachers feel threatened by change and have a fear of expressing an opinion in case they get 'fired'. In terms of reward for innovation, he stated that creativity and initiative are recognised within the Institute and even encouraged, but definitely not rewarded. He asked the rhetorical question 'How can they reward?'

His parting comment may well be the underlying basis for feeling non-aligned to the organisation as a whole. He felt the lack of equity between TAFE and higher education staff in terms of salaries and superannuation created resentment amongst TAFE teachers.

4.2.5 TAFE Institute 2 – 2-CEO

TAFE Institute 2 was situated within metropolitan Melbourne and it was a single sector Institute offering VET courses. It had around seven campuses and had over 25,000 enrolled students. This Institute also had students from diverse backgrounds with a high number of students from first generation Australian backgrounds. I interviewed the CEO at the main campus where his office was located and one of his first questions of me was about the feeling I got as I arrived at the campus and made my way to his office. He indicated that when he was first appointed as CEO the campus was not overtly a friendly place and creating a welcoming and friendly environment was one of the important items on his agenda. Also important to him was avoiding the use of jargon.

On being asked whether the term 'learning organisation' was part of his thinking, 2-CEO made it very clear that whilst being a learning organisation was inherent in all that he did, he tried not to use the term itself.

“It means a lot to me but it’s not actually part of my vocabulary....I try not to use jargon and I don’t use learning organisation but I think it’s inherent in a lot of the stuff I do” (2-CEO Interview 2007).

Continuous improvement was a term he used, adding that analysing what the Institute was doing, measuring outcomes and seeing improvement was what learning organisations learnt from. His appointment as CEO coincided with the end of the previous strategic plan cycle so he was able to embark on a process of taking a fresh look at the needs and direction of the Institute. He engaged an external consultant to facilitate the process of developing a strategic vision which would propel the Institute in a sustainable ‘fashion’. He wanted an Institute which would be commercially sound and which valued community participation. He stressed the core business of his organisation was teaching and learning.

Having managers and assistant managers who ‘walk and talk’ the values in the strategic plan was an important attribute underpinning the teaching and learning program at this Institute.

“Now once we’ve got all our managers and assistant managers walking that talk, then I think we’ll go close to having an aligned strategy all the way across the institution” (2-CEO Interview 2007).

2-CEO emphasised that his Institute had not reached this goal yet as it was a process of constantly analysing, measuring and setting targets for improvement and it must start with the executives. Investing money in leadership development which aligned to the strategic vision was a priority for central PD funds and because people need to be given the tools to do what is being asked of them, heads of department could choose to reward staff through allocation of department PD funds according to staff needs.

He thought staff may display a tendency to approach change as a threat to job security and he did not necessarily see that as a failure because the change was around re-organising the Institute to promote better relations with industry and other enterprises. This was part of the continual improvement cycle and staff reaction recorded in satisfaction surveys often reflected this.

“...it’s almost natural that some elements of staff satisfaction may be extreme at times of change because they’re not as comfortable as they were and so I think you’ve got to read it with some sense of empathy for where people are at” (2-CEO Interview 2007).

He also did not apologise for taking staff out of their comfort zone, even if it resulted in an outcome which was not predicted.

“As an organisation we’re on a journey.... We make dreadful mistakes and we’ve got people who are disengaged but on the other hand we do fantastic work” (2-CEO Interview 2007).

In an effort to acknowledge staff contribution to the community, 2-CEO published in the annual report staff extra curricular activity which benefited the wider community. He added that in the prior year they had a publication dedicated to this. As an example he cited a teacher in automotive who shipped a container load of automotive equipment to Dili. The Institute released him to accompany the container and set up workshops in Dili to train locals. He felt this community contribution was often linked to their professional duties and should be celebrated by the Institute as a whole. He also mentioned various charities that the Institute supported through fund raising lunches. These activities were all directed towards the Institute achieving its strategic goals of supporting capable communities and individuals reaching their full potential.

2-CEO believed his Institute was inhibited in reaching these strategic goals by the remnants of a previous culture in TAFE that goes straight to its school based history and its school based industrial award. He believed school teacher based culture was about bureaucracy and about being policy driven, not about being student centred. When asked how the remnant of school based teaching manifested itself, he replied:

“Through that proportion of our staff who look backwards and use it as the rock upon which they anchor their ethics and views of what their job is all about” (2-CEO Interview 2007).

He added this has nothing to do with age. Some of the teachers who came to mind were not necessarily old, instead they were ‘sticklers’ for working to the minimum required by the award.

“We’ve got a...restrictive industrial award for TAFE teachers which bears absolutely no reality to anything other than traditional classroom teaching... Very few professionals have an award where the type of work they do is restricted to a certain number of hours. ...that to me is the antithesis of being student centred...” (2-CEO Interview 2007).

He cited a scenario where a teacher might be teaching in a VET degree course with complex groups. The face to face teaching might comprise very little of the course delivery and assessment, yet the award only counts face to face teaching. Discretionary hours needed to be acknowledged without needing to be accounted for.

He felt that the internal constraints on becoming a learning organisation were internally created, therefore “what constrains us... is our capacity to do things properly” adding that a good process only works well if it is managed well. A major external factor which may influence the Institute reaching these strategic goals is government policy, however 2-CEO indicated their goals were such that they would be reached even if government policy changed.

4.2.6 TAFE Institute 2 – Middle Manager - 2-MM

The structures within both TAFE Institutes differed greatly. The middle manager interviewed at TAFE Institute 2 (2-MM) had a broader role of responsibility than the middle manager interviewed at TAFE Institute 1 (1-MM). He had a role as manager of the technical group of teachers, but equal to this was his role as industry liaison manager. As the manager of the technical group of teachers, he had assistant managers for each of the automotive, aviation, transport, building and competitive manufacturing departments reporting to him. As industry liaison manager he was required to participate on industry boards and maintain a presence for the TAFE Institute within the relevant industry circles. He had commenced his teaching career in the secondary school system but had spent 20 years in the TAFE system, 11 of them at TAFE Institute 2.

For a number of years 2-MM was a manager in the business area of TAFE Institute 2 and in response to a question on the impact of training packages and competency based training, he made the observation that teaching in business was more curriculum based than teaching in the trades therefore making the shift to competency based training somewhat easier for trades teachers. By way of clarification, he explained that TAFE Institute 2 had 4000-5000 apprentices in its automotive area all participating in flexible delivery, often with Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3 apprentices in the one class. This required teachers to facilitate the training for each apprentice level so the teachers were already flexible in their delivery before the introduction of training packages. He was quick to add that this did not necessarily mean the transition had been fully accomplished.

Some of the teachers in automotive had been teaching for 20 years and had become accustomed to delivering content in a certain way. A new facility for teaching automotive had recently been developed by the TAFE Institute and this purpose built facility had been designed and built to reflect current industry practice. The shift to this new facility had required both a physical and intellectual repositioning. Understanding that industry's approach to panel repairs had shifted dramatically towards a much higher percentage of damaged cars being declared not worth repairing had been difficult for the teachers, especially those who had been in TAFE for many years. They had to make a shift in their own values.

“...teachers had to change from artisans to a more modern approach where they really teach what industry wants. Reflecting that in their competency and not over delivering in many of the areas I think has been a great difficulty in that transition from the old style of teaching” (2-MM interview 2008).

One way for this manager to ensure his teachers remained current in industry standards was to ensure every staff member who negotiated a training plan for an apprentice visited the employer to discuss the particular tasks being undertaken on the job by the student and to interpret how this related to their training.

“It’s more a point of us understanding what they do in industry and us as interpreters of that which then goes back into our training” (2-MM interview 2008).

Maintaining currency in industry was also achieved through teachers being actively involved with the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce and the state wide group of auto teachers. Visits to the new facility by industry groups had also been actively sought. The manager made the comment that the new facility had open work areas for competency or skill sets and had moved teachers away from the old workshop ‘four walls closed in where people could hide’ (2-MM interview 2008). Motivating teachers was achieved by teachers working in competency teams with the intent of building capability, and he gave these competency teams responsibility for equipping and fitting out their new facility. He felt institutional culture had impacted on this process.

The term ‘hierarchical and silo mentality’ was used by this manager to describe the institutional culture which impacted on the automotive department’s transition to this new facility. He described it in more detail:

“We understand that we’re over bureaucratized and that we have some difficulties with our processes, usually between departments or between functions. We’re actually starting off a new strategic plan....around teams organizing themselves and around processes and looking at value strengths so that we actually start to move away from a fair bit of management that’s about who, who did this and who did that to whom, why did they do that. We have had a long term institutional culture” (2-MM interview 2008).

This institutional culture was a remnant of the amalgamation of several institutions ten years previously into the TAFE Institute that exists today. Teachers who had been with any of the previous institutions had to undergo a culture shift to bring all the institutions together, but were now faced with a further culture shift to embrace training packages and a new delivery emphasis on outcomes for students rather than teaching content.

“What we did...was start to develop a new set of leaders and we had some discussion about moving to a business model and people were unhappy with that thinking. We developed curriculum leaders for fuels or for transmissions to pick up competency sets” (2-MM interview 2008).

Having the freedom to do this stemmed from this manager having ‘strong connections with industry’ and frequent communication with industry people who influenced government policy, which gave his CEO the confidence in him he needed to implement these changes. He felt supported during this process by both his CEO and his teachers, however there was some resistance to the change.

“As in any transition you’ve got the leaders and then you’ve got the middle ground that will move and then you’ve got some people that probably still don’t

even believe that we've moved. I think that's a journey you're always on, that discussion around change" (2-MM interview 2008).

His reassurance that he was ultimately supported came from the fact that not one staff member left during the change. They all stayed at least a year and a half after the new facility opened.

When questioned on whether he felt rewarded for innovation and excellence, his immediate reaction was to think in monetary terms and to say he understood that there were never going to be worthwhile monetary rewards in the TAFE system. He explained that his own reward came from feeling passionate about student outcomes and that he enjoyed the sense of success in seeing shifts in staff capability. In terms of rewards for his own staff, he mentioned Institute awards, movie tickets to selected staff, but concluded his remarks by emphasizing that mentoring and coaching were paramount to his relations with his teachers, using the word 'inclusiveness' to describe the environment within his Institute.

On indicators towards becoming a learning organisation, this manager stated 'inclusiveness' and 'working towards becoming a learning organisation' in his Institute were achieved through developing competency leaders (as mentioned earlier), a process which would be written into the next strategic plan and a performance management program which had been commenced to replace a previous leadership program. Developing communities of practice around competency or skill sets was in place and an emphasis was placed on return to industry programs for teachers.

4.2.7 TAFE Institute 2 – Teacher 2-T1

Interviewing Teacher 1 at TAFE Institute 2 proved to be insightful but account should be taken of the fact that he had resigned the day before the interview. Whilst this allowed him the freedom to say whatever he felt to be his truth without fear of reprisal, he expressed concerns for both himself and his colleagues and the future of the newly developed automotive centre.

Reporting directly to 2-MM, this teacher had a leadership role within TAFE Institute 2 where he commenced as a spray painting instructor 29 years previously. He described his role as 'assistant manager or operations training manager' in charge of day to day operations and the needs of both students and seventeen staff in the spray painting and panel beating area. He stated he was 'instrumental' in the development of the new automotive centre and the culture change which had accompanied its development. He explained that change came to his department in two forms. The change to the delivery of VET qualifications with the advent of training packages and a more demanding quality regime through the implementation of the AQTF, and the change to the new automotive facility and its accompanying change in delivery style.

This teacher confirmed that apprentices in automotive spray painting had different skill and maturity levels and he added that prior to the introduction of training packages, teachers had worked one on one with students. The shift to working with groups of students and working with competencies was a difficult transition for some of the older teachers.

“Where the major change was... I brought out the competency delivery from just being a stand up. The way they used to deliver was one on one whereas I brought it out so that the teachers had to become showmen and to demonstrate the skills to a greater audience, from the individual to the group and that was a big change because the staff then had to say there wasn't just one guy I was teaching, I had 15 watching me and trying to get those 15 to all achieve the same competency and where we had different maturity levels from those students, different maturity levels and ethics... So that was a big cultural change for a lot of the older staff” (2-T1 Interview 2008).

The advent of the new facility added to the notion that teachers were ‘on show’ rather than working one on one with students as they were forced to work in an open environment where they could be observed.

“The other thing we did with the cultural change was to make them transparent so when they deliver there is no walls between them and anybody that is walking through.... the full training is in view” (2-T1 Interview 2008).

He added that the use of technology threatened the older teachers who had been used to a written manual being handed out to students to read and complete. He had developed Power Point presentations for teachers and encouraged them to create class discussion around these presentations and this interaction was difficult for the older teachers to embrace. They had always been able to ‘put pen to paper’ but they felt a little ‘inferior’ using a technology they did not understand. He added that the average age of the teachers was somewhere in the 50s.

Although the aging workforce is a concern he felt his Institute was not supporting him in his endeavour to recruit younger teachers because tenure was not being offered to these new young teachers. He emphasised that these young teachers are not after higher pay but rather consistency in hours of employment. He believed the Institute was lacking vision and this reluctance to reward new younger staff with tenure was hindering any succession planning which this teacher felt was vital to the success of the new centre.

“I'm not saying younger people want more reward. They are not being offered continuation. They are being used – come in today or come in tomorrow and they have to sit by the phone. Instead of taking a punt and saying we're going to carry salaries for a couple of years to train these people ... so the succession plans aren't there for the future....I don't think the college has a vision to nurture and look at the sustainability of the future...Just because we've got a facility that's 10 years ahead, if they don't plan they are going to be 10 years behind.” (2-T1 Interview 2008).

He continued by stating that whilst money has been spent on a new facility, little or no money has been spent on forward planning to maximise the investment through recruiting younger staff.

At this point in the interview he discussed his reason for resigning. He stated he had been 'headhunted' by a multi-national company which was aware he had received a national award the previous year for TAFE teacher of the year, and this company offered him a salary package which was 'just too good to refuse'. The role he has accepted is not a teaching role. It is a role as consultant to manufacturing companies to create business solutions. When asked how he felt he had gained the skills to fulfil this role he stated that he was self-taught as he had been 'thrown in at the deep end' in his current role. This refers to the response from his Institute when he won the award a year ago.

The award he received for TAFE teacher of the year was determined, he felt, on his performance with his students and his industry partnerships. The response from his Institute was to put him 'in an office to manage staff' which resulted in his workload increasing as he juggled some teaching with his management responsibilities. He felt the point had been totally missed by his Institute.

"I didn't win the award for management skills. I won the award for innovation and development, working with students, making sure that things are right, working with industry, industry partnerships and they give me a job closed in..."
(2-T1 Interview 2008).

He said that whilst he did not like working in an office, being put in a management role was at the very least an acknowledgement of his growth as a VET professional. His pay increased by \$40 per week which he felt was inadequate and there were no other benefits forthcoming to him. The only other acknowledgement he received from his Institute was an article in the Institute newsletter. When asked what he would have liked to have happened in response he stated a personal letter to say well done from his Director, an offer to pay for his personal mobile phone which he uses for business which he 'struggles' to get recompense for and perhaps an offer of a car as he drives to meetings with industry partners a great deal. He expressed a great love for the Institute he had been attached to for 29 years and a great love for his students and staff but added that the rewards are just not there.

As an afterthought on this question of reward for innovation, he affirmed that he had been given consent and support to implement his innovative ideas and strategies but whenever he asked for the funding to do so, it was never forthcoming. He felt he was expected to innovate without funds and this placed extra strain on himself and his colleagues as they were forced to do this in their own time rather than being offered time off to do so.

His main criticism of the management of his Institute is that good work is rarely acknowledged. He felt his staff only hear from management when things are not working or to be congratulated on meeting their

budget. This remark refers to the commercial targets all TAFE Institutes must meet in order to gain government funding. When asked if he felt his Institute's Director was aware of this lack of acknowledgement he answered in the affirmative but quickly added that he does not think it comes from him directly.

By way of explanation he stated that staff had completed a management survey some weeks before our interview. The feedback for this teacher's immediate manager was poor. He knows this because his manager told him 'it doesn't look good'. His explanation of the process which follows these staff surveys was explained by him and his conclusion was that it falls back on the teachers to improve the situation.

“So (the Director) would look at this and say ok, he's got a poor reading because it's a staff survey of your manager.....If staff have done a survey about their manager there are ten questions and three or four or five come up as negatives, (2-MM) will say to (immediate manager) 'ok I want you to improve on those three points, so then we have a meeting and (immediate manager) will put it back to us, ok how are we going to fix this? Instead of (immediate manager) looking at the situation it's more work on us, so I don't understand that side of it. It's like we're being chastised for his poor performance because we then have to come up and do this or do that” (2-T1 Interview 2008).

When asked if he felt part of an innovative organisation working towards becoming a learning organisation he stated that he does not see indicators of progression. When questioned further he discussed his own imminent departure and wondered who would take up his role as innovator, adding that 'this is not about me but it's about not fostering the future'.

4.2.8 TAFE Institute 2 – Teacher 2-T2

Teacher 2-T2 had his own furniture making business when he submitted an expression of interest in teaching to TAFE Institute 2. It took a year before he received an invitation to undertake sessional teaching, and it was another year before he was put on contract. In 1999 he gained an on-going full-time position which he has held since. At the time of interview he was teaching pre-apprentices, apprentices, Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and various other VET programs at night. He held a senior educator position in the furniture making department and there were 7 full-time staff of which three were within a couple of years of retiring, two were part-time staff, about eight were sessional staff and two were technical staff who did two hours a week and 8 hours a week respectively. These technical staff taught a specific technical skill only.

When 2-T2 commenced teaching, the national furnishing curriculum was only two years old. It was replaced by a Training Package in 2004. He felt the teachers in his department had not yet made the transition to the Training Package as they still focussed on training delivery and not on competency based

training and assessment. He explained that the older teachers have not made the transition to understanding that assessment under CBT is based on competency.

“We struggle with the whole idea of assessing against an outcome rather than providing training...A lot of what we still do is provide training and assume that through providing training they will be able to demonstrate competency. In my mind they’re still looking at it from the wrong end” (2-T2 Interview 2008).

This statement led him to declare his concern about his own industry currency and that of his colleagues. The three older staff members had been teaching for most of their careers, two others had been teaching for 12-13 years, 2-T2 for nine years and the youngest for 2 years. Currency of skills was an issue coupled with the changes which have taken place in the industry over recent years.

“It’s a particular problem for us I think because the furniture industry has developed into three distinct sectors. We have people who make commercial furniture who work in what is essentially a manufacturing environment and they produce maybe 50 of something. We have the traditional furniture making who would be trades people and crafts people, and then we have joinery- kitchens and bathrooms but they also do shop fitting kind of commercial fitted furniture as well. With the exception of one of our staff all of our staff are trained in the traditional furniture sector which is kind of seen as the traditional TAFE area but then it’s also the smallest sector and the most affected by imported furniture” (2-T2 Interview 2008).

His concern was that the expertise they offered catered for the smallest industry sector with almost 90% of their students working in the commercial kitchen sector. When asked to explain how they cater for this lack of expertise he said they talk to the students as they ‘know a lot’ and admitted they did not have any structured way of gaining the expertise they required. Staff talked to the employers about their needs but he emphasised again there was no strategy for gaining this expertise. Release into industry to gain additional experience was seen as the best strategy and he said that he had ‘heard’ there may be funds for release into industry but nobody seemed to have the details to give him. This statement led me to ask a question about his immediate manager.

His immediate manager is situated in a building alongside his own. He indicated his manager only visits when something is amiss, like not meeting their enrolment targets. He stressed however that his manager was open to staff visits at any time. In terms of professional development, 2-T2 felt that teaching qualifications and e-learning were very well supported by Institute funds through his manager, but gaining industry currency or building a new facility for joinery and commercial kitchens was something the staff would have to find the funds for through applying for grants. In the past the staff has gained funding grants to purchase software programs and equipment, but 2-T2 feels a new workshop which models commercial kitchens was needed to bring their training into the 21st Century industry environment. Again he stressed that there is no strategic plan around achieving this.

This lack of planning is juxtaposed with the advantages of the autonomy 2-T2 now enjoys to implement changes within his area. Although he was a senior educator, he did not have any input into the budget for his department and he was not consulted on any decision making. What this means is that his area has to 'apply' for a budget and if that is unsuccessful they have to find alternate sources to get money. He found this very time consuming as he spent a great deal of time making cases to his manager for funding.

"Anything beyond a year is almost impossible in terms of equipment planning and anything that involves money, planning beyond the TAFE calendar year is almost impossible....It kind of stops us taking responsibility for the way we spend our money because we're not in control of our spending. We don't take any responsibility for it. If we were in charge of our budget we would do it differently" (2-T2 Interview 2008).

In contrast, he added:

"I like the situation because the budget aside, we can do pretty much whatever we like – the way we do things, the way we deliver our programs and the resources that we have. As an example, we all have an annual work plan and in theory, in that planning we have to work towards strategic goals. Last year two of the staff out of the seven completed a work plan and discussed it with our manager and that would have only happened as a once off. There's no review process" (2-T2 Interview 2008).

He added that if a work plan was to be a requirement it needed to be implemented so that it was meaningful. He stated he would like to have more effective management, explaining that he knew his area had to have a strategic plan but he had never seen it. His area was not invited to be part of the development of this plan.

"We don't have that kind of goal setting which means we just pluck along and do what we think's right, which is really good" (2-T2 Interview 2008).

In fact, his area developed their own strategic plan 'of sorts' based on the Institute plan.

"We did it at the end of last year....and we have that on the wall and we all know what's in it and we all had input into it and we'll sit down and have a look at it again shortly after this break. There's a couple of things in there that we all know are really important and that's that stuff about the changing industry and needing to view some sort of industrial agenda" (2-T2 Interview 2008).

He sent his manager the final draft of this plan and he added some things to it and sent it back to them. His feeling of isolation was apparent in his musing that he would like to work in an environment where there is a strategic plan that everyone is aware of and where there is interaction between areas. Whilst they were a close team, he felt it was to his area's detriment that they did not interact with staff from other areas. He said they have watched the building and construction team grow significantly with the demand

for training, and added that they as a team were aware that if they did not continue to have relevance within their industry and have the support of industry, there would be a good chance they'd disappear or at the very least, shrink in size. This thought made him revisit the topic of remaining industry relevant.

His team's awareness that they had a responsibility as custodians of 'cabinet making' as a trade had prompted them to make some changes to their delivery. They had reduced their teaching year from 40 to 36 weeks and the full-time staff now spent two weeks a year with the employers. He explained the aim is twofold – to discover business opportunities such as niche training required by employers, and to give staff the opportunity to work in a commercial kitchen making workshop. This would give the staff the skills to dismantle one of their existing workshops and remodel it as a kitchen making workshop. He felt it was essential for his department to have a workshop that models a manufacturing environment where:

“...quality systems are embedded in the whole thing from start to finish rather than being left to the discretion of the individual worker” (2-T2 Interview 2008).

He and his colleagues had discussed their ability to undertake more student training on the job and felt that with the support of employers they could effectively undertake 25% of the nominal hours in industry. This discussion was based on examples of TAFE Institutes in other states undertaking a similar amount of nominal hours in industry, information which was gained when several staff members attended the national furniture industry conference which is held every two years. When questioned on other professional development opportunities offered by his Institute, he re-iterated the emphasis on teaching qualifications and e-learning and not on industry skills. If they 'put a case' for an activity which will enhance their industry knowledge it will be considered and may be granted, but it's not a priority.

When asked if he felt creativity and innovation were rewarded he stated a definite no. The only reward for innovation was 'you get to keep your job'.

“There is no system for reward but before there can be a system for reward, there has to be a system to measure results so that if you implement a change you can measure somehow the benefit of that” (2-T2 Interview 2008).

When he raised this at a senior educators meeting, the response from management was that change was necessary because of changes in industry standards and the benefit is 'you get to keep your job'.

“You'll have long term viability in your professional area but the thing is that's way too distant a motivator. You need to be able to measure at the point of occurrence and reward that (You) do a good job because you want to not because you're going to be rewarded” (2-T2 Interview 2008).

He felt there was a huge reliance within the Institute on the work ethic of teachers. In regard to his Institute being a learning organisation, he felt that 'without a doubt' he believes his Institute is

progressing towards becoming a learning organisation. He includes good people, good projects, autonomy and ethical teaching as indicators, stating that it's not organisational or strategic change or rewards the Institute provides which contributes to his belief.

4.3 CONCLUSION

The stories from the eight interviewees have been presented in relation to the interview questions as outlined in Appendix 1. The interviews were semi structured, allowing the interviewees the freedom to pursue lines of thinking which illustrated their interpretation of their reality. These stories, although interpretive, give an insight into the administration and management of each Institute and reveal the actuality for VET professionals in their given roles within each Institute. The data revealed in these stories now needs to be set against the research questions to determine to what extent TAFE Institutes follow the principles of a learning organisation as determined in the literature review. This will be examined in Chapter 5.

Chapter 5:

THE DATA IN RELATION TO THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The personal stories contained in Chapter 4 from both TAFE Institute 1 and TAFE Institute 2 have given an insight into the aspirations and whether these aspirations are the reality for middle managers and teachers within these Institutes. In this chapter each of the research questions will be discussed in light of the data provided by interviewees with some analysis of the stories presented. An attempt will be made to relate the data from the eight interviewees and make sense of it in the light of each of the five research questions as set out below.

- (a) To what extent do TAFE professionals understand the principles of the learning organisation?
- (b) How do they perceive their own organisation as a learning organisation?
- (c) How do they perceive their own practice within the context of their Institute as a learning organisation?
- (d) What are the indicators of progression towards being a learning organisation?

5.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS 1 AND 2 - TO WHAT EXTENT DO TAFE PROFESSIONALS UNDERSTAND THE PRINCIPLES OF A LEARNING ORGANISATION? HOW DO THEY PERCEIVE THEIR OWN ORGANISATION AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION?

In using the data to gauge the answer to question 1 inevitably enlightenment on question 2 was an adjunct to these findings. To avoid repeating findings I have presented them together with a view to the reader understanding that in how they perceive their own organisation (as a learning organisation) the interviewees are inevitably demonstrating or not an understanding of the principles of a learning organisation. Also, for the sake of clarity of information and findings, in this section I have dealt with the data from the two case studies in a linear order to gain a hierarchical view of how the CEO, middle

manager and teachers in each study perceive their own TAFE Institute as a learning organisation. This also intensifies the understanding for the reader of the metamorphosis of the strategic vision from the highest management level to the teachers.

The principles of a learning organisation as defined through the literature review undertaken in Chapter 2 include:

- 5.2.1 Believing in team learning and shared vision through effective communication
- 5.2.2 Anticipating future problems by paying attention to both the internal and the external environment
- 5.2.3 Continuously seeking improvement through approaching problem solving on an organisation-wide basis
- 5.2.4 Bringing about the continual transformation of systems
- 5.2.5 Rewarding initiative and creativity and encouraging risk-taking in an environment of psychological safety
- 5.2.6 Engaging in a reflective process
- 5.2.7 Exploring sub-conscious beliefs to bring about change
- 5.2.8 Developing communities of practice
- 5.2.9 bringing about basic shifts in how members of an organisation think and interact

(Clayton et al 2008; Fisher and White 2000; Hayes and Hillman 1995; Kofman and Senge 1995; Senge 1990; Schon 1973)

The interview questions had been formulated with the express intent of exposing the depth of knowledge of these principles for each individual interviewed. To some extent these interview questions prompted discussion on each topic but it became evident during the interviews that some interviewees were able to comment with authority on the questions asked, whilst others digressed to explain the particular situations in which they found themselves. I sought to build a rapport with the interviewees and asked both prepared questions and questions that were inspired by conversation during the interviews. This type of interview structure allowed me to explore feelings and emotions as the conversation deepened and offered a high degree of validity as the interviewees were able to speak about themselves and their situation with little direction from me. It also allowed complex issues to be explored in depth (Kvale 1996). The data gained

from this style of interview produced diverse and insightful reflections at the three levels of echelon used in this study.

It is reasonable to anticipate that someone in a senior leadership role within an organisation would have an extensive knowledge of the principles of a learning organisation. I was not disappointed as both CEOs conveyed an ease with discussing the principles of a learning organisation and both demonstrated underpinning knowledge of the concepts in their discussion, however implementing these principles and concepts proved a challenge for both leaders. They expressed the importance of communication and both admitted that communicating a strategic vision can be a difficult task.

The two middle managers interviewed indicated an understanding of the principles of a learning organisation but offered differing views on whether these were effective within their Institutes. The four teachers interviewed spoke of practices which belie the commitment of the CEOs at both Institutes. Each principle is dealt with below in order to fully explain the apparent disparities in understanding.

5.2.1 Believing in team learning and shared vision through effective communication

Senge (1990) believes that shared vision emerges from people who truly care about their work, who possess a strong sense of personal vision and who see the collective vision as one that can encompass the personal visions of all. He states that many people still think that ‘vision’ is the top manager’s job and hastens to add that visions based on authority are not sustainable.

Buckler (1998) describes team learning as being based in dialogue and communication.

“Personal knowledge is transformed into knowledge which is valuable for the organisation as a whole through ‘dynamic interaction’ between individuals, which involves making tacit knowledge explicit – thus allowing it to transfer to others – and is fundamental to the creation of new knowledge. The ‘dynamic interaction’ is rooted in dialogue and communication...” (Buckler 1998:140)

This commentary on the TAFE Institutes’ views on team learning and shared vision through effective communication is dealt with in two parts. Firstly I looked at the CEOs’ ideas of how they communicated their vision and how this was received by the managers and teachers interviewed, and then I looked at how the teachers communicated with their line managers.

TAFE INSTITUTE 1

The CEO introduced the topic of communication at the commencement of the interview by emphasising the importance of informal communication over formal communication, giving examples such as informal discussion over lunch in the staff room. He said his view was supported by the climate surveys undertaken by staff. He believed the formal communication of organisational direction is ‘awful’ but informal communication retrieved the situation. He admitted that going online with communication

through emails and video messages did not make any difference to the effectiveness of formal communication and the Institute still relied very heavily on informal communication through staff interaction. He also relied on his associate directors and heads of department to work with their staff to embed the strategic vision in their work.

“Short of communicating with every individual and certainly I can do that by email (if they would read it) I try to work with broad groups such as associate directors and heads of department ...to make sure there is an understanding of key directions about the shared and individual parts of the organization work...”(1-CEO interview 2007).

The middle-manager joined TAFE Institute 1 in 2001. He had come from a background as a secondary school principal and had run his own business management consultancy. He displayed a strong belief in his own people management skills. In his interview, he focused on his own experience at this Institute and did not mention the CEO. His only reference to the Vice Chancellor was in the context of having attended a workshop on the power of emotional intelligence at which she presided. His belief in team learning and a shared vision was apparent in how he dealt with his own staff but the communication coming down the line was couched in terms of ‘too many emails’.

The two teachers interviewed at TAFE Institute 1 were similarly dismissive of the formal communication coming from senior management. Whilst 1-T1 read the Vice Chancellor’s emails, his pragmatism caused him to suggest the Vice Chancellor does not have a perceived image within the university. He also stated the CEO had not much impact on him and in fact he had not met the current CEO face to face. When questioned further, he said that early in his career when he participated on Institute committees he had occasion to sit at the table with the incumbent CEO but as he had not been on Institute committees for the past 8 years he felt he did not know much about the current CEO and was not sure he would even recognise him.

1-T2 had come from industry 6 years previously. He stated that he respected and liked his head of department and felt that he was ‘heard’ as a member of staff. When questioned about change within the Institute and what impact this might have had on him, he said it was like ‘papering cracks with wallpaper’ and it had no impact in favour of teachers and students. In fact he indicated that changes within the Institute had no impact on him at all.

*“I don’t need (the CEO) to tell me about TAFE re-structure because it doesn’t impact on me”
(1-T2 Interview 2007).*

He also felt remote from the CEO and the Vice Chancellor.

“I respect the VC but (VC) is remote from what’s happening at the teacher/student level. The DVC (CEO) and PVCs might as well not exist. VC

sitting on top – down the bottom are the little teachers and students. How does VC know what I'm teaching? I worked at (company)...I was only one level below manager. Communicating process was very effective. Too many layers at (TAFE Institute 1)" (1-T2 Interview 2007).

He said he read the Vice Chancellor's emails and enjoyed the openness of the communication but lamented that it would be good if he could respond to her. He said he did email the Vice Chancellor once about some of his students who had displayed excellence in their work. The Vice Chancellor responded directly to the students but the teacher received no direct feedback.

From these extracts of interview it is apparent that communication from the CEO down the management line to the teachers is lacking effectiveness. It is not about the teachers 'knowing' the CEO but it is about the vision the CEO strives to communicate not being shared with teachers through the middle managers.

TAFE INSTITUTE 2

The CEO stated that the term learning organisation meant a great deal to him and it was inherent in his leadership of the Institute but, he emphasised that it was implied not verbalised in his communication. When pushed to explain he said he hoped it was apparent in his continuous improvement program. He had hired external consultants to facilitate writing a mission statement. The plan then was to have managers and assistant managers 'walking the talk' which would move the Institute towards having an aligned strategy.

"Now once we've got all our managers and assistant managers walking that talk, then I think we'll be close to having an aligned strategy all the way across the institution" (2-CEO interview 2007).

2-MM had worked at two TAFE Institutes over the past 20 years and had spent 11 years at his current Institute. In terms of communicating with his staff, 2-MM spoke of a continual process over time of introducing change to a staff body that had mostly been at the Institute for 20 years or more. These staff members had developed an expectation of how management would react to situations based on 20 years of experience. Introducing change was a gradual process around moving into a business model and developing leaders for particular areas such as fuels or transmissions which had the effect of 'charging' enormous debate. 2-MM always felt he had the support of his CEO and was able to discuss matters with him whenever he felt it necessary. In fact he addressed the issue of communication on the basis of his 'air time' with the CEO and felt this had been generous. He said he felt supported 'both upstream and downstream', by the CEO, managers and teachers. He felt it had always been a balancing act between promoting change whilst remembering the strong community college background of the amalgamated Institutes. He strongly advocated the need to test and develop ideas before presenting them to staff as 'in trades areas it's difficult anyway to get messages through to staff' and in any transition 'you've got the

leaders and then you've got the middle ground that will move and then you've got some people that probably still don't even believe that (they've) moved' (2-MM interview 2008).

2-T1 had been at TAFE Institute 2 for 29 years and was in the role of training operations manager. He did not believe the Institute as a whole had a vision for the future. Rather than a lack of a strategic plan this belief was based on the Institute's failure to provide tenure for younger recruits thereby building a sustainable workforce. He acknowledged that the facility in which he worked was state of the art but without a vision towards nurturing new and younger staff he believed it was in danger of becoming a 'white elephant'.

"Trying to get younger staff to embrace it and keep the momentum going to go forward is what I'm looking at and it's always been a bit of a brick wall" (2-T1 Interview 2008).

2-T1 had resigned the day before I interviewed him for two reasons. One was his frustration at what he saw as a lack of forward planning in recruiting staff and the second was his frustration at not feeling rewarded for his work. This will be addressed later when discussing rewarding creativity.

2-T2 started full-time with TAFE Institute 2 in 1999 after a series of sessional teaching shifts (by the hour) and short term contracts. He could perhaps have fitted 2-T1's prescription for younger teachers as he was probably in his early thirties and had experience at running his own business; however he was not employed in the automotive area but rather in furniture building. In his area there was little adherence to the strategic plan of the Institute. He explained that the year before our interview, only two out of the seven staff had completed a work plan and discussed it with the manager and even those two were a 'once off' as there is no review process.

"At the moment it's a paper process only and it's a joke, you know. No-one will be called to account- you can write almost anything you want into your work plan and it will be approved.... I would like to have more effective management" (2-T2 Interview 2008).

He went even further in explaining the lack of communication in regard to the strategic plan.

"I know we have a strategic plan because it's a requirement for our area but I've never seen it" (2-T2 Interview 2008).

He explained that as the senior educator for his area he felt compelled to have a plan so he and his colleagues wrote one themselves without their manager based on the Institute's strategic plan. They sent it to the manager and he sent it back with some suggestions. 2-T2 spoke of feeling isolated even though he works in a close team of seven. He said that in one sense he enjoyed the freedom of not being closely managed, but in another sense he would like to work in an environment where there was a strategic plan

that they were all aware of and ‘where all the sections share a staff room’ so they can communicate and share ideas.

5.2.2 Anticipating future problems by paying attention to both the internal and the external environment

“The quality of our leadership depends on the quality of our awareness....Not only do negative visions prevent us from focusing on what we want to create, they also subtly reinforce a point of view that ‘we did not create these problems, somebody else did’. This attitude of victimization robs us of our sense of connectedness to the larger world and, regardless of our success, leaves us feeling smaller rather than larger” (Senge 2005).

In response to a question on external factors influencing strategic direction, 1-CEO said his Institute’s strategic statement was ‘our response to government directions for TAFE’ firstly but it also included a response to the needs of the region and to the needs of the client group. He added that the business development needs of the TAFE sector within the university was also a driving force. 2-CEO used a different approach stating his managers felt the Institute’s purpose was to ‘help communities grow, enterprises prosper and individuals reach their full potential’. Thus the awareness of the Institute’s impact externally was acknowledged.

TAFE INSTITUTE 1

1-MM felt his Institute had not anticipated the problems which existed, using as an example the enrolment system.

He felt that enrolling was such a complicated process that the student cohort could not access it. He referred to students from the Horn of Africa who arrived traumatised and with English as a second language.

“We’ve got a lot of people who are from Africa and who’ve spent the last six years trying to stay alive and they might get here and think they should’ve stayed home” (1-MM Interview 2008)

On the other hand 1-MM felt his Institute dealt with common sense problem solving very well, such as dealing with people in wheelchairs. In discussing the national quality system (AQTF) imposed on TAFE Institutes, 1-T1 said it had created a greater workload, ‘manuals for this and manuals for that’, but 1-T2 hardly acknowledged the AQTF stating it was not his responsibility but that of the program manager. Both teachers expressed that teaching students was their priority and felt the classroom was their domain.

TAFE INSTITUTE 2

In terms of anticipating future growth and direction, 2CEO and 2MM had demonstrated awareness of future demand by establishing the new automotive facility and encouraging long term staff to adapt to a

different way of teaching. However the two teachers interviewed at TAFE Institute 2 pointed out areas in which their Institute had not fully addressed the sustainability issues faced by their Institute in an evolving world. 2-T1 discussed employment issues in trying to secure a younger staffing profile. Whilst younger teachers were eager to be recruited, the system of recruitment did not allow departments to give new teachers tenure. Instead they were paid by the hour with no guarantee of regular work. It took 2-T2 almost two years to secure a contract when he commenced teaching nine years previously and according to 2-T1 the constraints on recruitment remain today. Equally important to these teachers was the ability to stay industry relevant. Whilst this had been achieved in the automotive department, furniture building was struggling to train students in current industry practice.

2-T2 explained that furniture building as an industry had developed into three distinct areas.

- Commercial furniture production occurred in a manufacturing environment where production of around 50 or so of a particular piece of furniture may be made
- Joinery where commercial fitted furniture for kitchens and bathrooms and shop fittings is made
- Traditional furniture making where people become craftsmen at their trade.

The issue as 2-T2 saw it was that with the exception of one of the seven staff in his department, the staff were trained in the traditional furniture sector. As traditional furniture making is the smallest furniture building area and the one most affected by imported furniture, the student profile had changed from the majority of apprentices making free standing household furniture (traditional furniture) to 90% of the students working in kitchen or commercial furniture. The expertise of the staff was not in this area so basically the staff were learning from the students and from the employers rather than the other way around. As this teacher pointed out, there is a vast difference between staff undertaking a short term industry placement in an area and actually working in the area to learn the concepts. This teacher expressed awareness that he and his colleagues must maintain industry relevance as trainers or their department will disappear. As a result their self-written work plan included dismantling one of the existing workshops and recreating it as a kitchen making workshop. As stated by 2-T2, they needed a workshop which modelled a manufacturing environment where a quality system existed at all stages of production.

This testament from 2-T2 was in contrast to the 'state of the art' facility which had been built for automotive students in the same Institute. Understanding what drives the funding for a facility in one area and yet leaves another area unprepared for the changes which have already occurred requires problem solving on an organisation wide basis. This issue will be discussed next.

5.2.3 Continuously seeking improvement through approaching problem solving on an organisation wide basis

1-CEO demonstrated his commitment to continuously seeking improvement by stating change was not an option but rather it was part of the core responsibility of everyone in the organisation. He emphasised his commitment to organisation wide problem solving by speaking of the importance of systems.

“It’s not just relying on people, it’s relying on systems...strategic and operational planning as it cascades down” (1-CEO Interview 2007).

Continuously seeking improvement was vigorously advocated by 2-CEO. His theory was that setting improvement targets comes from understanding what you have done in the past.

“That notion of analyzing what you’re doing and seeking improvement, that’s the core of it. That’s what learning organizations learn from” (2-CEO Interview 2007).

Approaching problem solving on an organisation wide basis was demonstrated through 2-CEO involving 40 of his staff in the development of the Institute’s mission statement. Funding professional development of staff was guided by the mission statement and a high degree of trust was developed in the managers to align professional development with the mission statement. Also, the Institute’s values and aims were embedded in position descriptions and performance reviews. His theory was that if each manager worked on one or two things in his/her department that were below the average for the Institute then the overall performance of the Institute would improve. 2-CEO stated he cared very deeply about staff satisfaction.

TAFE INSTITUTE 1

1-MM felt his Institute had done very little about becoming a learning organisation. He conceded that the stronger focus on compliance had improved attention to detail but he felt this did not necessarily improve student outcomes. He also stated that the management team within the university was not trained ‘well enough’ in people management skills, a problem he regarded as Institute wide.

“I’m talking about the weaknesses of the organization because I don’t think the management structure and the people that are in these organizations are well enough trained in people management techniques” (1-MM interview 2007).

He reported that an emotional intelligence (EI) workshop organised by the Vice Chancellor was strongly criticised by academic staff and he regarded this as a total rejection of EI as a tool. He also lamented an opportunity missed. He stated that when staff were promoted out of the classroom they lost the classroom perspective because of the demands of management. He particularly focussed on the area of developing commercial income. He commented on the cost to the classroom of the focus on commercial work stating that no measure had been taken of that because everyone was too busy.

Although 1-T1 in his earlier teaching career had involved himself in institution wide committees and issues, recently he had decided to concentrate on his students and his teaching, more for the sake of his personal life than any disillusionment from having experienced the wider perspective. 1-T2 seemed disinterested in organisation wide issues and preferred to concentrate on his teaching.

TAFE INSTITUTE 2

As evidenced by his strong communication with industry through membership of key industry bodies, continual improvement was at the forefront of 2-MM's discussion as he spoke of the development of the new automotive centre for learning, Whilst he indicated his TAFE Institute's success at this, the testament of 2-T2 indicated that whilst continuous improvement was happening in the furniture building department it was not because of an Institute wide approach. It was happening in this department through the determination of a group of neglected teachers who wished to stay relevant.

2-T2 similarly felt that continuous improvement was part of the culture of his department but also expressed that he was driving the change and he did not know who would take on that role after his resignation. This indicated that he felt he was the instigator and his colleagues were followers.

5.2.4 Rewarding initiative and creativity and encouraging risk-taking in an environment of psychological safety; engaging in a reflective process; exploring sub-conscious beliefs to bring about change

“Without humility we cannot discover the biases in our own thinking. Without discovering the biases in our own thinking we cannot see realities that we are unprepared for. Without seeing realities we are unprepared for, we cannot recognize when our world is changing profoundly and we must do likewise” (Senge 2005:28).

These three elements have been addressed collectively since the literature review revealed that a reflective process if undertaken successfully incorporates exploring sub-conscious beliefs - which will only be undertaken by staff if they are provided with an environment of psychological safety (Popper and Lipshitz 1999). Popper and Lipshitz (2000:140) have defined psychological safety 'as a state in which people feel safe in honestly discussing their mistakes and what they think and how they feel'. Schein (1993) noted that learning new habits and skills sometimes involves unlearning, which is emotionally difficult. It involves exploring sub-conscious beliefs to bring about change which can be confronting and can lead to feelings of incompetence. According to Buckler (1998) leaders must remove the barriers to understanding and enacting change and develop a shared vision of the 'why' of change. Allowing risk taking enables staff to enact change and reflect on what they have learned.

Psychological safety and intellectual leadership were paramount for 1-CEO who emphasised his desire for staff to 'think about the ideas that sit around' change. He added 'they should be trusted' to do that. In

contrast to this idea, the concept of reward was couched in relatively negative terms of budget allocation to encourage efficiencies.

“If you’ve been overstaffed and practices have not been good you’re going to get less money” (1-CEO interview 2007).

He stated that if staff were not prepared to ‘go along with’ changes being introduced then ‘we’ve reached a parting of the ways’. This would indicate a contrast to the theory espoused by Buckler (1998) that the role of leadership is to enable change through shared vision of why the change is needed. He states that an effective learning process requires interaction between teacher (manager) and pupil (staff) working together to develop a shared vision of what they are trying to achieve, identifying and removing barriers to learning and enabling new ideas to be tried and evaluated whilst managing the associated risks. He also states that years of conditioning by the ‘culture’ of an organisation can make it very difficult for individuals to change behaviour. Thus the ‘command and control’ style of leadership indicated by 1-CEO’s statement appears to be a barrier to learning despite his stated intention of encouraging staff to think about the ideas around change (rather than just implementing change without understanding the ‘why’). Seemingly in support of this stance by 1-CEO, 2-CEO stated that he strongly believed that 1% of people from any organisation were the “wrong people at the wrong time in the wrong place” who should leave or be asked to leave.

In his article “Missing the Boat on Leadership” Senge (2005:28) quotes one of his mentors, William J. O’Brien:

“The primary determinant of the success of an intervention is the interior state of the intervener”

Senge believes this interior state hinges on at least three interdependent factors: the source of our goals, the nature of our commitment and the quality of our awareness. 1-MM confirmed his management style displaying a high level of self-awareness and awareness of others.

“My management style assumes trust until the trust is disproven, which for people who are professional in the way they go about doing their job gives them a whole lot more freedom to be who they are as people” (1-MM Interview 2007).

He stated his view on this would only be challenged if the student experience was not good and he was forced to intervene, which he did do on one occasion resulting in the dismissal of a staff member who broke his trust. He recognised he had been criticised for giving his staff this freedom but defended his position by acknowledging the success at the end of the day for students. He relied heavily on the skills he developed when running a business as a management consultant where he used a system of identifying the way people do things. Having used a questionnaire to do this over a ten year period he had gained the strategies to use ‘in a deliberate and formal manner’ stating he used them in an informal way in managing

his own team of staff. He believed emphatically that the weakness of his Institute was that the managers had no training in people management skills. His experience had taught him that trained educators who move into managerial positions within the organisation suffered because they had no formal management training and this factor created a weakness within the organisation which was rarely acknowledged.

When asked if he felt encouraged and supported himself to continually improve, this manager answered in both the affirmative and the negative by stating he felt encouraged and supported to improve his practice as a manager but that the bureaucratic demands of the Institute were so time consuming he was afforded limited freedom to do so. He cited spending whole mornings dealing with emails produced through the bureaucratic process and expressed his exasperation that these demands diminished his time to be creative.

“..there is way too much control freak management coming from all levels and it’s dressed up as accountability” (1-MM interview 2007).

He felt the only rewards he got were the ones he created himself through dealing with his staff in an equitable manner and earning their trust. He did this by being flexible when staff required time for personal commitments and by giving compliments when deserved. He included celebrations at the end of planning sessions as a reward but stressed that being flexible with staff gained him the most reward as a manager. He did not mention reward coming from his management through to him but concentrated on the reward he gained from his staff through good student feedback. This style of management was positively supported when I interviewed the two teachers from his department.

Both teachers expressed great loyalty and spoke of appreciating 1-MM’s management style. 1-T1 said his manager can ‘kick heads’ when he needed to but had a heart when he needed to and showed compassion towards students. He indicated throughout his interview that his focus in his work at the Institute had always been his students and that his personal reward came from the positive feedback he gained from his students and stated categorically that he did not need or seek any other reward. 1-T2 said creativity and initiative were recognised and encouraged within his department but not rewarded. He also stated he felt proud to work at his Institute but that this was “heavily related” to his department, not the Institute as a whole.

Staff satisfaction was important to 2-CEO. As a result of the analysis of staff surveys undertaken in his Institute, 2-CEO had determined that the average trust of the general staff of senior management was ‘a bit below average’. He related how he had spoken to a group of Health and Community Services staff he had met on campus and he had felt their discomfit as soon as he started speaking with them. He explained his acceptance of this by stating the Institute was on a continual journey and they make dreadful mistakes which result in some staff becoming disengaged, but they also do some fantastic work which motivates some staff to continue implementing improvements. He felt it was ‘almost natural in a sense’ that some

elements of staff satisfaction may be extreme at times of change because they are not as comfortable as they were. He felt this situation needed to be 'read' with some sense of empathy 'for where people are at' thus demonstrating a state of awareness of the impact on staff whilst driving through his commitment to change.

In terms of reward, 2-CEO spoke of bonuses for staff performance linked back to the strategic aims of the Institute. Departments had specific improvement targets and if staff achieved these targets, they received a bonus. Professional development activities were encouraged and seen as a reward. He also spoke of listing publicly (in the annual report) the community contributions of staff. According to Popper and Lipshitz (2000) reward and recognition have the most influence in organisations in establishing criteria for desired behaviours. These rewards include bonuses, letters of appreciation, promotion, attractive assignments and allocation of resources. 2-CEO indicated these sorts of rewards were important to him as a manager and he felt these were regular practice within his Institute.

2-MM spoke broadly about facilitating change by moving 'horizontally rather than just the old vertical approach' by building capability through developing competency teams. He also conceded there were difficulties in communicating between departments or between 'functions' because of the old 'silo mentality'. He indicated early in his interview that motivation for his teachers came from involving them in the development of the new automotive centre.

"We try to involve them in the re-development of whatever is going on. Second stage is - now you've got this area it's up to you guys in the teams to actually fill that area with the equipment" (2-MM interview 2008).

In terms of actual reward, he conceded it was mainly in the form of personal congratulations including giving feedback and coaching his staff, a behaviour which he described as 'inclusiveness'. He sometimes sent movie tickets to a staff member's home address and he did mention the Institute awards.

It was interesting to note his feeling towards his own sense of motivation.

"If I'd wanted to be a millionaire I wouldn't have come into teaching. You do find the rewards for those who move up into management aren't overly generous in TAFE..... I'm passionate about this place (the new centre) and what it's done for staff is amazing....it is reflected in their ability and in their attitude" (2-MM interview 2008).

This form of motivation was not enough for some of the staff in his care. The year before I interviewed 2-T1 he had received a national award for his teaching. In speaking of reward from his Institute for having won this national award, he said that he was given a management role within his department which netted him an extra \$40 per fortnight and meant many more hours of work. He stated quite openly he did not win the award for his management skills. He was glad he was in a management position but this created

professional jealousy amongst his colleagues resulting in less co-operation from them and an increased workload for him. He felt his Institute gained a great deal from his winning the award in terms of advertising and kudos but apart from featuring him in the 'local college paper' he felt he received very little acknowledgement or reward from within his Institute. The reward he wanted was recognition from his colleagues - a personal letter of congratulations from the CEO, a function of some sort to celebrate and acknowledge his contribution to the Institute, perhaps the use of an Institute car or to have his mobile phone bills paid as he used his personal phone for work calls yet struggled to gain re-imburement. He stated the lack of flexibility in TAFE salary arrangements meant he did not receive the reward he felt he deserved so he had resigned after receiving an offer of employment with a private company. Included in his new salary package was an increase in pay and the use of a company car. 2-T1 also spoke of the frustrations of his colleagues who often stated that the Institute gives positive feedback at the end of the year when budgets have been met but they do not feel individually rewarded for their efforts.

2-T2 demonstrated similar sentiments in regard to reward by stating categorically there is no reward, 'you just get to keep your job'. He emphasised there is no system for reward and said he had spoken to his manager often about developing a system to measure results for change innovation so as to gauge the benefit of change. He had raised this issue at senior educator meetings and gained a consistent response each time – industry standards demanded constant change and the benefit was you get to keep your job. He stated categorically that he felt part of a creative and innovative organisation and that people were doing really good work and 'there's ethical teaching'. He concluded by stating that people get into teaching for a number of reasons but ultimately there is a commitment to the students. He felt it was this that produced great work, not organisational or strategic change or rewards the Institute provides.

Both CEOs demonstrated an awareness of the need for trust in senior management. 2-CEO said staff satisfaction was very important to him and he studied the results of staff surveys very closely. The data in this research revealed four categories of reward identified by participants as inherent in TAFE Institutes. These are explained below.

KEEPING YOUR JOB AS REWARD

1-CEO believed inspirational leadership was required to implement change and he spoke of wanting to inspire people to think about the ideas that sit around change whilst it was being implemented. He saw this as vital to demonstrating leadership adding that passion and leadership belong together. In contrast, he said change was not optional and if people resisted change they would be asked to leave the Institute (*lose* their job). Interestingly, a teacher from Institute 2 (2-T2) confirmed this as inherent in TAFE Institutes by saying that if a teacher embraced change innovation in his Institute the reward was that you got to *keep* your job. 2-CEO confirmed there were a small number of staff within his Institute who were unable to embrace change and should probably be asked to leave.

GROWTH IN STAFF CAPABILITY AS REWARD

2-MM said he gained his reward from the growth he witnessed in the ability of his staff. In fact both middle managers felt rewards came from enabling the capability of staff and being able to trust staff to deliver good student outcomes. 1-MM felt this trust of staff gained him the freedom to pursue commercial goals for the department.

BONUSES AND RECOGNITION AS REWARD

Reward was described in negative terms by 1-CEO in that a department's budget decreased if good practice was not seen to be demonstrated. 2-CEO demonstrated his Institute's rewards through examples of bonuses and public recognition. This was belied by 2-T1 who resigned after feeling poorly rewarded for excellence in his teaching practice.

STUDENT FEEDBACK AS REWARD

The two teachers in Institute 1 spoke of personal reward from within their department rather than from the Institute. One spoke of gaining reward from the positive feedback from his students and it is interesting to note he also said his manager (1-MM) was compassionate towards students indicating they shared a common goal in student centred learning. This was confirmed by 1-MM who said his reward came from great student results. 2-T2 also spoke of good ethical teaching.

5.2.5 Developing communities of practice

In her literature review on communities of practice, Shirley Hord (1997) found supportive and shared leadership, collective creativity, shared values and vision, supportive conditions, shared personal practice and reduction of isolation of teachers all contribute towards developing communities of practice. Whilst there was no specific question on communities of practice in the interviews, comments made in response to some questions gave insight into whether communities of practice were a common experience amongst VET professionals.

1-CEO emphasised the value of informal over formal communication declaring it to be more effective as evidenced from staff surveys. He gave an example of informal communication as chats in the staff room adding that formal emails are seen as annoying if they are not directly relevant to the work of staff. He also spoke of wanting to create discussion around the ideas behind change rather than just the mechanics of change, indicating a desire for a community of practice around change. His desire to create communities of practice was evident. This message was not apparent in the department where I interviewed 1-MM, 1-T1 and 1-T2 as they gave no indication of committing to shared practice beyond their own department. Whilst 1-MM indicated working in small teams can underpin change in the wider Institute "because all those small teams add up in the end" (1-MM interview 2008) his teachers indicated teamwork was important only to reduce the workload for individuals.

“You really can’t do without them (team meetings) otherwise we’d all be doing the same amount of work each you know. Teamwork is important” (1-T1 interview 2008).

There was no indication from the teachers that teamwork can enhance reflective practice to facilitate change. In fact both teachers stated they were “happy working in my own pocket” (1-T2 interview 2008) and “I like doing my own thing...I don’t want to be over managed” (1-T1 interview 2008).

2-CEO discovered in feedback from staff who attended the Chair Academy course in leadership that they benefitted from having the opportunity to relate to their colleagues in a setting of reflection. They felt they had been given the opportunity to develop deeper relationships with colleagues. 2-CEO also stated that staff survey results were closely analysed and that if each manager worked on one or two things in his/her department that were below average for the Institute “we’ll actually improve our overall performance” (2-CEO interview 2007). 2-MM stated that they were in a process of change away from the ‘silo mentality’ which had existed and that the learning research and design area of the Institute was actively working on developing communities of practice within teaching groups. Whilst this indicated a desire of management to develop communities of practice, those who were not given the opportunity to attend the Chair Academy expressed the dismal failure of this desire to promote communities of practice as evidenced in the interviews of 2-T1 and 2-T2.

2-T1 spoke of ‘professional jealousy’ following his national teaching award explaining that he felt some resentment from his colleagues at his success. The opportunity to explore with his colleagues the philosophies of learning and teaching which won him the award was lost. He also stated that following a survey of staff about their manager, the manager called in his staff and asked them to assist in ‘fixing’ the problems they had identified. An opportunity for a community of practice was presented in this action but 1-T1 spoke with resentment at having to assist his manager to ‘fix’ his problems. The manager may not have understood the opportunity the survey presented and obviously did not have the skills to follow through on this opportunity. These examples demonstrated a lack of understanding of the reflective practice process which is essential to successful communities of practice.

2-T2 was convincing in his belief of the lack of a learning community in his department. He spoke of having no structured way of learning together. He even went so far as to state the teachers learnt from the students what they brought back from industry (apprentices). He was not involved in developing the strategic plan for his area and in fact had never seen it. Feeling isolated from any planning process, he and six of his colleagues wrote their own plan in 2x2 hour sessions which they convened themselves, indicating a small and informal community of practice convened out of desperation. He and his six colleagues did not share a staff room with other departments and they suffered a feeling of isolation, but 2-T2 said this had created a bond of survival.

“We’re aware that if we don’t continue to have relevance within our industry and have the support of our industry there’s a good chance we’ll disappear” (Interview 2-T2 2008).

According to 2-T2 this bond of survival or community of practice convened out of desperation had resulted in several strategies which had inadvertently resulted in a strong community of practice which is not formally acknowledged.

5.2.6 Bringing about the continual transformation of systems

Senge (1990:231) believes failure to understand system dynamics can lead us into ‘cycles of blaming and self-defence: the enemy is always out there, and problems are always caused by someone else’. Systems thinking gives the ability to see interrelationships rather than linear cause-effect resulting in the ability to think in context and appreciate the consequences of actions on other parts of the system. The systems viewpoint is generally oriented toward the long-term view. The silo mentality and internal bureaucracy mentioned by 2-CEO and 2-MM indicated difficulties within systems in their Institute which affected ‘the other parts of the system’. In other words the manager and teachers felt the impact of these anomalies in the systems within the Institute as characterised by the following quotes from 2-CEO and 2-MM.

“One of the characteristics of this place was that it was very inward looking with a fair amount of internal competitiveness with an awful lot of doing business with ourselves and a lot of people thinking they were doing a lot of good business. They were not so much dealing with students or enterprises they were dealing with internal bureaucracy” (2-CEO Interview 2007).

“...we understand that we’re over bureaucratized and that we have some difficulties with our processes, usually between departments or between functions” (2-MM interview 2008).

2-MM added that the current CEO is working on the processes and he felt energised by the new strategic plan. He displayed a close working relationship with his CEO and felt trust had been placed in him to bring about the changes required to move the Institute towards becoming more of a learning organisation.

2-MM explained that within the merging of cultures over the years which occurred when smaller Institutes were merged to produce the current TAFE Institute, residues of separate systems were still struggling to interact with each other. Older teachers had expectations of systems that were not being met and as Senge (1995) anticipated, cycles of blaming and self-defence occurred. In another example, 2-T1 felt long term succession planning for teaching staff was being avoided on the pretext of short term savings in salaries. This reinforced his belief that the Institute does not have a long term vision to bring together the development of benchmarking facilities with younger staff that have the capability of embracing the new technology. 2-T2 acknowledged a similar difficulty in long term planning.

“Anything beyond a year is almost impossible in terms of equipment planning, and anything that involves money – planning beyond the TAFE year is impossible” (2-T2 Interview 2008).

There appeared to be disconnect in planning where investment in facilities was not matched by investment in workforce development.

‘Levers for change’ is how 1-CEO described the systems in change management in his Institute, citing strategic and operational planning, the budget allocation process and professional development planning for staff as examples of these levers for change. He explained that new facilities required ‘a new way of doing things’. Systems to alleviate the complexity of processes was how 1-MM interpreted systems planning. He felt he would have become effective as a new manager more quickly if he had been educated in the systems of his Institute. He specifically mentioned the finance system and the budgeting system. He bemoaned the enrolment system to the point of labelling it ‘chaotic’ blaming rules and the lack of skill of the service staff in student services.

“Software systems are only the things that are in the background. It’s the business rules and the lack of flexibility and lack of skill of the people that conduct the processes...” (1-MM interview 2008).

Only one of the teachers at TAFE Institute 1 mentioned systems by stating that he ‘doesn’t see the Vice Chancellor trying to introduce better systems’.

5.2.7 Bringing about basic shifts in how members of an organisation think and interact

Staff hold much of the corporate intelligence of the organisation in ways that are hard to replicate through sets of policies and procedures. Linking and integrating peoples’ skills and knowledge through their relationships and an organisation’s processes is central to building organisational capability. Capability is therefore more than just the sum of the parts; it is the value that gets added because of the qualities of the people that are there, the work processes in place, and the effectiveness of the ways they work together.(Guthrie 2008:3)

Capability as demonstrated by Guthrie (2008) acknowledges that linking people in an organisation, linking their skills and knowledge, is central to building organisational capability. There were many instances in the data where staff indicated not feeling aligned to the skills and knowledge collectively held within their Institute. 2-T2 identified the disconnect he felt from his manager and from other departments. He described having to undertake his own planning without contribution from his manager. His sense of isolation was apparent and yet he displayed enormous capability as a senior educator by motivating his colleagues to stay industry relevant or disappear as a department. 2-T1 worked in a new facility within his Institute where shifts in thinking were achieved. He felt he had contributed to the whole

department undertaking that shift but he resigned anyway stating one of the reasons as feeling his capability was inappropriately acknowledged by moving him into a management role.

“I didn’t win the (teaching) award for my management skills” (2-T2 Interview 2008).

The two teachers in TAFE Institute 1 demonstrated little desire to interact outside their own department. In fact 1-T2 even went so far as to say he did not care about quality compliance as ‘this is the program manager’s responsibility’. He emphasised his wish for isolation by stating policies do not have a direct impact on teachers. Guthrie (2008) agrees policies alone cannot contribute to an organisation’s intelligence but linking skills and building relationships can help build capability. The isolation of teachers in both TAFE Institutes is of concern if TAFE Institutes are to become learning organisations. Linking departments by developing communities of practice would contribute to reducing the isolation of teachers. 2-MM was aware of what he termed the ‘silo mentality’ and acknowledged the difficulties in shifting the culture within his Institute.

“We’ve had a bit of the old hierarchical and silo mentality that worked through and that impacted and I suppose culture isn’t just a thing that you turn overnight (2-MM Interview 2007).

5.3 HOW DO THEY PERCEIVE THEIR OWN PRACTICE WITHIN THE CONTEXT OF THEIR INSTITUTE AS A LEARNING ORGANISATION?

One characteristic of an organisation that has a very low ability to learn is that people at all levels see themselves as disempowered (Senge 1995:21).

The two teachers interviewed at TAFE Institute 1 perceived teamwork, shared vision and communication very much from the perspective of their own position within the Institute. 1-T1’s commitment to shared vision had manifested itself through his involvement for the first 20 years within the Institute on various Institute-wide committees. He felt he gained a broader perspective on the strategic direction of the Institute and through this interaction with other members of the Institute outside his own teaching department he felt he had gained a different set of skills but that the skills developed did not impact on his teaching.

“It doesn’t really affect the way you teach or the impact of the subject matter.... Well I guess it looks better on your CV. It shows that you want to go the extra mile for the uni (Institute)” (1-T1 interview 2007).

His current version of teamwork was very much based on his own department. When asked about teamwork he indicated that it is necessary in order to reduce workload for individuals within a department. In pursuing this he stated that ‘subject meetings’ and ‘course meetings’ meant that workloads

were shared. The idea of reflective practice or a collaborative review of practice undertaken with peers was not mentioned.

1-T2 isolated himself from a wider Institute community for which he had little regard. The manager of these two teachers, 1-MM, also had little regard for the processes and systems within his Institute and showed signs of struggling to acknowledge expertise in his colleagues (other managers). He pursued commercial activities on behalf of the Institute whilst relying on his teachers to provide the good teaching required for the success of students. 1-CEO expressed a vision of change and creative thinking and saw himself as implementing that vision with his managers. 1-MM displayed well developed skills in vision, trust and people management which gained him the respect and confidence of his teachers but his vision for change was tinged with disappointment with the current systems within the Institute.

2-T1 and 2-T2 both spoke with passion about their departments but expressed frustration with processes which did not support their work. 2-T1 had responded to the vision and challenge put forward by management and received a national teaching award for his efforts. This caused dissatisfaction in him and emphasised for him the limitations of the processes within his Institute in terms of employment and rewards. 2-T1, in the face of little direction from management, had developed his own way of staying relevant within his Institute by forming a 'community of survival' with his colleagues. 2-MM demonstrated capability and vision and expressed a high regard for his CEO and his colleagues. He spoke with passion about his work and perceived himself as playing a strategic role in shifting the culture of his Institute. 2-CEO did not hesitate to acknowledge the shortcomings of his processes as he described his vision. He emphasised the need to constantly reflect and improve.

5.4 WHAT ARE THE INDICATORS OF PROGRESSION TOWARDS BEING A LEARNING ORGANISATION?

The data presented in this research revealed a complexity of movement towards being a learning organisation aligned with indicators of barriers to become a learning organisation. This has been disclosed through evidence from teachers which belies the aspirations of the CEOs and managers whilst simultaneously demonstrating a sincere desire from some teachers to be part of a learning organisation. These teachers feel isolated, unrewarded, frustrated and yet they take enormous pride in their teaching and would like to work in a renewed culture, so much so that they are prepared to take responsibility for their own planning. Evidence from some other teachers indicated a desire to be good teachers within their own department without participating in an Institute wide movement to evolve.

The data revealed genuine aspirations by VET professionals to move TAFE Institutes towards becoming learning organisations. Both CEOs displayed an understanding of how learning organisations operate.

One spoke very definitely of continuous improvement through reviewing and improving while the other emphasised communicating the 'why' behind change to ensure all staff participated in change. They spoke of the importance of communicating their vision with managers and had an expectation that managers would convey this vision to teaching staff. They indicated they paid attention to both the internal and the external environment in creating their vision statements however the data revealed that their awareness of the internal environment within their Institute may not be realistic.

Whilst the managers were eager to implement the vision and discrepancies were not found in the abilities of either manager to do so, the evidence of teachers revealed that the third stage of implementation of the vision, from managers to teachers, was where systems were failing and imperatives for change faced challenges.

The manager in TAFE Institute 1 used a client-focused approach to managing his department however he revealed frustration bordering on despair in navigating some systems within his Institute which hindered this process. He indicated a practice of distancing himself from colleagues outside his department as he felt misunderstood in his communication with them. Communities of practice which might exist within his Institute were not part of the process within his department. His teachers confirmed they prefer to work on their own with minimal contact other than with unit teams within their own department. The teachers stated categorically their reward for their good teaching practice comes from student feedback.

The manager in TAFE Institute 2 also used a client-focused approach to managing his department. The development of a new teaching facility benefitted students not only through state of the art equipment and teaching space, but through up skilling teachers in current industry practice compelling them to undertake communities of practice for developing new skills. The teacher interviewed who had been involved in the new facility spoke about his work with pride and had received an award for his innovative teaching practice. His resignation however indicated a lack of alignment with the Institute as he felt he had not received due reward for his innovative practice. The teacher interviewed from the furnishing department felt isolated and under managed. His frustration arose from a lack of leadership from his manager and the lack of reward by simply getting to keep his job if he ensured the survival of his department team through up skilling in current industry practice.

The four teaching staff interviewed for this research showed either resistance to receiving the message (TAFE Institute 1) or understanding the message but feeling frustrated in implementing it (TAFE Institute 2). It could be said this is an indication of either of two things - that the message is not being communicated effectively (the 'why' behind the change) or that the systems put in place to support the implementation of the vision are not working effectively.

5.5 CONCLUSION

Communicating their vision was important to both CEOs. They expressed the best way of doing this was to work closely with their managers (getting managers to ‘walk the talk’) promoting a system of continuous improvement through analysing, measuring and seeing improvement. The manager in the dual sector Institute did not mention his CEO in his interview but rather referred to the Vice Chancellor, perhaps denoting some complexity in the way communication happens within the dual sector Institute. He saw communication coming down the line as ‘too many emails’ however he demonstrated an awareness of people management skills in his own communication with his staff. One of his teachers read the Vice Chancellors emails but stated he would not recognise the CEO if he came face to face indicating a feeling of remoteness from senior management. Another teacher also expressed remoteness by labelling himself and his colleagues as ‘little teachers down the bottom’. The other manager felt he worked closely with his CEO and seemed unaware that the teachers under him felt they did not work closely with their managers. One of his teachers described feeling like he ‘hit a brick wall’ when expressing his ideas to his managers and the other expressed feeling isolated through not being consulted especially in regard to planning.

The CEOs at both Institutes believed they had catered for both internal and external factors in developing their vision for their Institute. One manager felt problems had not been anticipated well and the systems reflected this. Both his teachers displayed a disdain for external factors and one felt it was ‘not my job’ to be aware of external factors. The other manager was proud of the establishment of a ‘state of the art’ facility for students but one of his teachers expressed concern at the aging of the teaching workforce with no apparent plan for workforce development. This was echoed by the other teacher adding that his department had not anticipated the shift in direction for furniture making and consequently his colleagues did not have current industry skills.

Continuous improvement was considered by the two CEOs to be elementary to the management of their Institutes. They both believed they approached problem solving on an organisation wide basis by communicating and planning with their management team. One manager did not believe continual improvement was successfully implemented in his Institute nor did he believe the management team was trained well enough to implement the improvement process with their teams. In contrast the other manager believed the continual improvement process was successfully being implemented in his Institute but not without some difficulties as changing the culture is a gradual process. One of his teachers felt the continual improvement cycle was being driven by management and did not necessarily engage staff. A teacher from another department believed survival as a department depended on the teachers themselves taking responsibility for change.

Both CEOs demonstrated an awareness of the need for trust in senior management and both felt there were adequate rewards for staff. The data revealed four categories of reward identified by participants as

inherent in TAFE Institutes. These were keeping your job as reward, growth in staff capability as reward, bonuses and recognition as reward and student feedback as reward.

Whilst reward was interpreted differently depending on what side of the management fence CEOs and teachers were sitting, both CEOs displayed confidence that their vision was being communicated through their managers. One manager displayed passion and felt confident he was successful in instigating change. The other manager displayed passion but felt less confident about the success of the Institute as a whole in being successful in instigating change. Rather than feeling disempowered, three of the teachers interviewed had simply embraced the situation within their department and commenced working purely on a departmental level rather than with a wider 'shared vision' outlook. The fourth teacher had experienced enough frustration to resign.

Teachers do not necessarily create their own isolation. There can often be a number of contributing factors and some of these have been discussed by teachers and managers alike. The concept proffered by one manager that managers in TAFE Institutes generally come from teacher backgrounds and they do not necessarily have management training could be a key in bringing about a shift in how teachers interact, build relationships and work together towards a shared vision. This and other indicators and inhibitors of progression towards being a learning organisation will be examined in Chapter 6 using Kurt Lewin's force field framework and recommendations will be developed to support the further transition towards TAFE Institutes being learning organisations.

Chapter 6:

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The culture of TAFE Institutes has recently been the focus of much research (Guthrie 2003, Mitchell et al 2003, Clayton et al 2008). Much of what is written indicates a vision for change and for building capability. Many of these studies have been undertaken using data from CEOs, managers and focus groups across TAFE Institutes. This study has been undertaken using a linear approach of data collection, including in-depth interviews with CEOs, managers and teachers in order to establish the success or difficulties encountered by VET professionals as they implement the strategic vision within their Institute.

The data revealed a desire by the CEOs at both Institutes to be seen as practising the principles of a learning organisation. The reality of this happening however was very different from the aspirations expressed by the CEOs. This was mainly due to a failure of the systems within each Institute to support the managers and teachers in their roles.

In one case the manager expressed feeling unsupported by the systems, citing the enrolment system as an example. In another case, a teacher expressed frustration with the lack of workforce development through not offering tenure to new teachers. In another case, a teacher expressed frustration that work plans for teachers were not mandatory, and where they did exist, they were not monitored.

Equally inhibiting was the demand placed on managers to commit time to commercial activities to create income for the Institute. Doing this meant that teachers needed to be relied upon to deliver student centred learning without extensive supervision. This may have contributed to a feeling of isolation by one teacher and a sense of wanting to be left to do their own thing by two other teachers. One teacher even expressed feeling like ‘the little teacher down the bottom’. Whilst teachers on the one hand expressed enjoyment of the flexibility this allowed them, one teacher’s feeling of isolation and sense of urgency to remain relevant to his Institute prompted him to lead his colleagues in writing their own strategic plan thereby developing a community of practice based on survival.

There are many indicators that TAFE Institutes are progressing towards being learning organisations. The principles are generally understood by all echelons and genuine attempts are being made to build staff capability, develop facilities to enhance student learning and provide systems to support both teaching staff and students. However, this study has revealed impediments to these efforts which need to be acknowledged, analysed and shifted if a true state of being a learning organisation is to be attained.

The indicators of TAFE Institutes becoming learning organisations as revealed through this study and detailed in Chapter 5 are listed below.

INDICATORS OF BECOMING A LEARNING ORGANISATION

- Aspiration of CEOs for continuous improvement and encouraging managers to think about the ‘why’ behind change.
- Development of communities of practice amongst managers
- Development of a facility which promotes student centred learning and creates a shift in culture for teachers, exposing them to different ways of working (through working in competency teams)
- Formal development of competency teams to promote sharing excellence in practice
- Informal development of community of practice (autonomously undertaken for survival of department)
- Reflective practice awareness in managers

Equally, this study has identified many impediments towards becoming a learning organisation and it is these impediments which are currently inhibiting TAFE Institutes from truly achieving their vision. These inhibitors as detailed in Chapter 5 are listed below.

INHIBITORS TO BECOMING A LEARNING ORGANISATION

- Resistance to change by teachers who believe change does not affect what is happening in the classroom
- Resistance to communities of practice amongst teachers who prefer to work on their own within their department
- Development of a facility which promotes student centred learning and creates a shift in culture for teachers without appropriate accompanying workforce development
- Systems which attempt to support student centred learning but are only partially successful
- Lack of structured reward system for innovation in teaching. Reward is ‘you get to keep your job’

- Inability of teachers to see benefit of communicating outside their own department
- Reflective practice undertaken by individual teachers alone (if at all)
- Missed opportunities for managers to build on reflective practice
- Perceived conflict by managers in balancing the requirement for achieving commercial targets with achieving good student outcomes
- Isolation of teachers in departments whose managers do not have adequate people management skills.

In determining the impact of both these indicators and inhibitors towards being a learning organisation it was useful to utilise Kurt Lewin's (1967) Force Field Framework. Lewin assumes that in any situation there are both driving and restraining forces that influence any change that may occur. Driving forces are those factors which support change and are working to push change in a particular direction. The restraining factors act to push against the driving forces and therefore act against change. The indicators of being a learning organization identified through this research can be seen as the driving forces, and the inhibitors can be seen as the restraining forces. When the restraining forces are greater they put pressure on the driving forces requiring some change to occur if the forces for change are to dominate.

In Table 3 Lewin's Force Field Framework (1967) is illustrated. This adaptation of Lewin's Framework has a score out of ten assigned to each force to indicate its impact and an arrow pushing against the equilibrium drawn in length to reflect the score and indicate the strength of the force. A shorter arrow  indicates a weaker force. A longer arrow  indicates a stronger force.

In this research the score assigned to each force has been derived through a process of tallying how many times the theme is mentioned by interviewees and to what extent this force has influenced the move or resistance towards being a learning organization. For example, reward is a theme which was strongly commented on by CEOs, managers and teachers. Whilst both CEOs felt strongly that their staff was rewarded, teachers felt reward from their institution for innovation in teaching was virtually non-existent – 'you get to keep your job' and 'my reward comes from my students'. In fact one teacher resigned over feeling inadequately rewarded. The two managers differed in their views on reward with one manager expressing his teachers felt rewarded by the expansion in their own learning through innovation whilst the other manager devised a system of trust and flexibility with his staff as reward for their loyalty. In both cases the managers had no institution process to guide them in rewarding innovation by staff. This lack of process could be seen as a strong restraining force against being a learning organization.

TABLE 3: KURT LEWIN'S FORCE FIELD FRAMEWORK – THE DRIVING AND RESTRAINING FORCES FOR TAFE INSTITUTES BEING LEARNING ORGANIZATIONS

Driving Forces	/10	Equilibrium	/10	Restraining Forces
Aspiration of CEOs for continuous improvement and encouraging managers to think about the 'why' behind change	5.5		7.5	Perceived conflict by managers in balancing the requirement for achieving commercial targets with achieving good student outcomes. Resistance to change by teachers who believe change doesn't affect what's happening in the classroom
Development of communities of practice amongst managers	3		7	Resistance to communities of practice amongst teachers who prefer to work on their own within their department
Development of a facility which promotes student centred learning and creates a shift in culture for teachers, exposing them to different ways of working (through working in competency teams)	8.5		6	Development of a facility which promotes student centred learning and creates a shift in culture for teachers without appropriate accompanying workforce development. Systems which attempt to support student centred learning but are only partially successful.
Formal development of competency teams to promote sharing excellence in practice	3		9	Lack of structured reward system for innovation in teaching. Reward is 'you get to keep your job'.
Informal development of community of practice amongst teachers (autonomously undertaken for survival of department)	3		8	Inability of teachers to see benefit of communicating outside their own department. Isolation of teachers in departments whose managers do not have adequate people management skills.
Reflective practice awareness in managers.	7		9.5	Missed opportunities for managers building on reflective practice. Reflective practice undertaken by individual teachers alone (if at all).

In his research, Kurt Lewin looked to the nature of group task in an attempt to understand the uniformity of some groups' behaviour. He argued that people may come to a group with very different dispositions, but if they share a common objective, they are likely to act together to achieve it. This takes us back to

sharing the vision and working together to implement the Institute strategic plan. In both Institutes a sense of working together at all levels towards a common goal was not evident.

This study was not intended to provide solutions for TAFE Institutes. Its general aim was to investigate the extent to which, and the ways in which, TAFE Institutes have adopted the concept of the learning organization. Some strategies for TAFE Institutes to implement in order to encourage TAFE professionals to participate in organisational learning could be developed from the force field framework presented in this chapter. However as this study has progressed I have come to understand that implementing strategies to encourage organisational learning requires careful consideration. Lewin (1967) suggests that an awareness of the interaction between the driving and restraining forces must be observed closely if progression towards a goal is to be effective. He suggests that increasing the driving forces or decreasing the restraining forces may increase or decrease other forces or may even create new ones. In support of this theory, Senge (1990) in describing systems thinking states that restraining forces should not be looked at as isolated events but as components of larger structures. He believes that dealing with one perceived problem in isolation will affect other elements of the system structure.

Accordingly my recommendation is for further research to be undertaken whilst implementing changes based on the driving and restraining forces identified in this study. I recommend using an action research cycle of planning, taking action, evaluating and then amending the plan based on the evaluation before taking the next step of action. By using this approach, changes can be implemented and evaluated at every stage of the implementation. This will allow the move towards being a learning organisation to evolve in a controlled manner and to be observed at every stage thus encouraging a whole of organisation approach to being a learning organisation. It will allow CEOs, managers and teachers alike to have a sense of working together towards a common goal and to be observed whilst doing so.

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Appendix 1: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR DIRECTORS/CEOS

Learning Organization

- ID.1 To what extent do you regard your Institute as a learning organisation?
- ID.2 To what extent are your TAFE professionals aware of their own Institute's aspirations towards becoming a learning organization and how have they gained this awareness?
- ID.3 How does your Institute encourage and support your TAFE professionals to contribute to the progression towards becoming a learning organisation?
- ID.4 Do you know how your TAFE professionals regard the concept of the learning organization and your Institute's progression towards it? If so, how do you know?
- ID.5 Do you know if they personally support their organization becoming more like a learning organization?
- ID.6 What do you see as indicators of a learning organisation in relation to TAFE Institutes?
- ID.7 What are the key external factors that relate to the success and/or growth of a TAFE Institute as a learning organization?
- ID.8 What are the most important internal issues that relate to the success and/or growth of a TAFE Institute as a learning organization?
- ID.9 In relation to becoming a learning organisation, where would you like to see your TAFE Institute situated in 5 years?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR MIDDLE MANAGERS

Learning Organization

- IHD.1 Can you tell me about your role and experience while working at this Institute?
- IHD.2 Can you tell me about the impact of the AQTF and introduction of training packages on your department?
- IHD.3 Can you tell me a little bit about the culture of your department and how you organise and motivate your teachers/trainers?
- IHD.4 How has the institutional culture impacted on your style of management?
- IHD.5 Can you describe the aspects of your Institute that have influenced you to change the way you do things?
- IHD.6 Do you feel encouraged and supported to continually improve the way your department does things?
- IHD.7 Do you feel rewarded for innovation and excellence in teaching when it happens in your department?
- IHD.8 Do you reward your teachers/trainers for innovation and excellence in teaching when it happens? How?
- IHD.9 How aware are you of the bigger picture and where you and your department fit into that?
- IHD.10 Do you feel you work in a culture of inclusion rather than exclusion?
- IHD.11 Can you name current initiatives within your TAFE Institute which are oriented towards the development of a learning organisation?

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS FOR TEACHERS

Learning Organization

- IT.1 Can you tell me about your role and experience while working at this Institute?
- IT.2 Can you describe your experience with regard to implementation of change, eg the AQTF and training packages?
- IT.3 Can you tell me a bit about the culture of your department?
- IT.4 What external factors impact on the culture of your department?
- IT.5 Do you feel your department constantly improves its performance in response to changing external factors?
- IT.6 What internal factors impact on the culture of your department?
- IT.7 Do you feel you are encouraged to experiment and take risks?
- IT.8 Do you feel your immediate manager is responsive to your suggestions for change and innovation?
- IT.9 Do you feel initiative and creativity are rewarded in your department? If so, how?
- IT.10 Do you feel you are part of a creative and innovative organisation which is progressing towards becoming a learning organization?