

# **Changes in the Working Lives of VET Practitioners in Recent Years: A Case Study**

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## **Declaration**

I, Chris Ho, declare that the EdD thesis entitled *Changes in the Working Lives of VET Practitioners in Recent Years: A Case Study* is no more than 66 000 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.

Signature:

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of the author.

Date: 17/12/2015

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This study has enabled me to develop many skills in research. I am now ready to embark on more research studies with the intention of contributing to the education system in Australia and, where needed, in other countries. All of this would not have been possible without the generosity of Victoria University in granting a scholarship, Dr Marg Malloch for inviting me to study in the doctorate program at Victoria University, Melbourne Australia, and Dr Marcelle Cacciattolo agreeing to co-supervision and providing relevant feedback throughout the research.

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I thank Dr Diane Brown for copyediting the thesis in accordance with the Australian Standards for Editing Practice (2013) and the national IPED/DDOGS guidelines for editing research theses.

Finally, I would like to add: ‘An education is important not just for now but forever; for learning should be a lifelong journey to fulfil the aspiration to become a better individual’.

## **Abstract**

The purpose of my case study, undertaken by means of interviews in the hospitality centres of two TAFE institutes in Melbourne, Victoria, Australia, was to gain an in-depth understanding of the changes which have occurred in recent years and their effects on the working lives of the VET practitioners. To achieve this I used a qualitative research method to seek answers to the research questions, by using a set of case study procedures which allowed me to systematically collect evidence, and produce findings based on the data collected.

Recent changes in the workplace for Vocational Education and Training (VET) practitioners have been occasioned by four predominant factors: changes in state and federal government policies; changes in training packages in order to make them more relevant; advancement in technology and the way it has been integrated into a blended learning approach; and adoption of a business model approach in vocational education to ensure that centres within institutions remain profitable and viable.

My findings indicate there has been a dramatic increase in the administrative workload placed on VET practitioners, caused by these changes. In particular, the pressures on VET practitioners to be more productive, and the pressure on administration staff (centre managers and above) to perform financially for their centres and their institutions and, in many cases, the lack of necessary communication and leadership skills required to build productive and enthused teams able to focus more on viability and profitability, is leaving trainers feeling confused and inadequate as they grapple with students who now must be treated as both learners and clients.

As an outcome of my study, I have proposed a transformational model – applicable at both an individual and organisational level – that will alleviate the stress and the pressure in times of change, and transform the VET practitioner's workplace into one that will be more productive.

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# **CHAPTER 1**

## **INTRODUCTION TO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

### **Introduction**

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) industry has gone through many changes in recent times: these changes do not appear to be stopping any time soon. They are largely affected by government policy changes, the constant revision of training packages to stay relevant with industry needs, and the need for training organisations and institutions to be viable and profitable. The purpose of this study is to use a qualitative research methodology, reported as a case study to draw out perceptions and misconceptions of the changes taking place in two VET institutions and to understand the effects these changes have on the everyday lives of VET practitioners. This study has also explored changes in the workplace environment of VET practitioners affiliated with both institutions.

There have been many articles and research tied to the changing role of VET practitioners, but none have gone into details as to what the changes meant and they affect the everyday life of a VET practitioner. By using the proposed framework of qualitative research in the form of a case study within two institutions, some of the effects of the changes taking place in the VET industry will be clarified. This will give in-depth insight as to how these changes are affecting the everyday working lives of VET practitioners in training institutions.

Technological advancement and immigration policies can also be seen as driving forces for these changes in Australia, and in other educational institutions around the world. The impact of technology advancement and globalisation has encouraged changes in teaching and learning to serve expected outcomes (Kaufman, 2002, 7). Australian immigration policies negatively affected the number of international students choosing Australia as a place to acquire their training, causing the number of international students to decrease. These changes are evidential in appendix 3 and 4, where the skilled occupation list in 2013 had a number of skills removed from the skilled occupation list without any additional skills added.

## **Context and rationale**

The context within which my research was carried out was based on two TAFE institutes in their respective hospitality management centres. These centres were chosen at the time because of the numerous changes they were going through, and the visible stress placed on VET practitioners in these centres. By examining the changes in the working lives of these practitioners, an in-depth analysis was carried out on the effects of these changes.

Vocational Education and Training (hereafter referred as VET) has transformed from being a well-defined group of occupations, mostly associated with the TAFE institutes (Simons, 2008), to a broader based task force which includes staff working in a variety of settings such as business enterprises, industry organisation, commercial training organisations, private registered organisations, adult and community based organisations, schools, government sectors and TAFE institutes. For the purpose of this research, staff in the same centre from both institutes will be the source for the data collected in this case study. This data will then be analyse and compared to gain in-depth understanding of the changes taking place and the impacts these changes had on the day-to-day working lives of these VET practitioners.

The notion of change, as a necessary condition for the continuous improvement of education, should not be dismissed, especially in the context of VET. Fullan (1993) has reported an anonymous first-year university student as saying, 'Everything must change at one time or another or else a static society or school will evolve'. The question in this study is not the importance of change, but the number of changes and their effects on the working lives of VET practitioners. I discuss the research focus of this change in the next section.

## **Research questions**

Arising from the foregoing context and rationale, and as previously mentioned, my research involved an investigation of the changing lives of VET practitioners in the hospitality departments of two institutes. An in-depth analysis of the effect of these changes was undertaken in order to provide answers to the following questions:

- How have the changes affected current VET practitioners in their day-to-day work routines?
- In what way have these changes affected the attitudes of the VET practitioners?
- What power relationships have emerged between administrators, staff and students?

## **General research question**

In order to guide my research, I posed a general research question:

**What are the key changes in the working lives of VET practitioners in recent years, and how have these changes affected their attitudes towards the VET industry and toward their students?**

**Specific research questions**

In order to provide a focus for answering the general research question, the following specific research questions were developed:

- 1. What changes have you noticed in the past five to ten years in the workplace?**
- 2. What driving forces have directed changes in the VET industry in recent years?**
- 3. How have changes affected day-to-day work activities of VET practitioners?**
- 4. What power relationships have emerged between administrators, staff and students?**
- 5. What leadership skills are required in this culture of change?**

These specific research questions were designed to gain an in-depth understanding of the VET Practitioners' perceptions of the changes which had taken place in recent years. They were designed to gain a holistic look at how the changes had affected the daily working lives of VET practitioners, the perceived outcomes from all these changes. The last question was designed to achieve an evaluation of what VET practitioners deemed as the skills needed to lead, when there were so many changes taking place. These questions were not designed to draw on the perception of good policy or bad policy. They were not intended to achieve an understanding for a paradigm change in the Vocational Education and Training sector, but the perception of how changes have affected VET practitioner's lives and possibly how the sector can move forward.

**Vocational education and training (VET)**

The VET sector has experienced and continues to experience significant changes and evolution processes, particularly since the 1990s. This, according to the National Skills Standards Council (2013), includes the following:



- an open and competitive vocational education and training market, which has led to significant growth and diversification in the providers of vocational education and training;
- growth in fee-for-service delivery;
- continued increase in the offshore delivery market;
- technological advances and innovation in the nature and way vocational education and training is delivered; and
- increased overlap and blurring with schools and higher education sectors, including the emergence of dual and multi sector providers.

There are nearly 5 000 registered training organisations in Australia, operating within a widely varying range of types, as follows:

- large government-owned TAFE institutes with many thousands of learners and hundreds of qualifications on scope;
- providers registered to offer both vocational education and training and higher education qualifications (approximately 90 providers);
- large private training colleges providing a broad range of training;
- very small private colleges focused on niche industry and learner needs;
- community colleges;
- not-for-profit organisations;
- enterprises delivering training and assessment to its employees; and
- secondary schools.

The training and assessment of learners is being carried out in a range of environments, from classrooms to the workplace, to simulated workplace environments and in some instances online through the use of multimedia modes. There are 1.9 million learners in the public VET system (NCVER, 2012) including 1.5 million government- funded students and an estimated 400, 000 domestic full fee paying students. Approximately 249, 400 students participated in VET in school programs, in around 18, 500 Australian high schools (NCVER, 2012). NCVER also reports that in 68 other countries, 73

000 learners were studying Australian VET qualifications offshore in 2009. There are approximately 3300 nationally recognised VET qualifications of which 59 are training packages and 1600 are accredited courses developed to address those not covered by training packages. The scope of VET is wide and diverse.

## **Importance of VET**

The skills education and training system plays a critical role in delivering sustainably higher living standards through forming one of five pillars of productivity. According to the National Panel for Economic Reform (2013), skills and education create social and economic benefits through enhancing civil society, providing greater opportunities and generally improving life outcomes.

The Commonwealth of Australia (2012) has indicated that the Australian economy is going through a period of change, driven by a number of factors including: the expansion of trade relationships with Asia; a new and rapidly emerging economy; new and emerging technologies; an ageing population and work force; and a shift to a low carbon economy. Australian workers also need the capacity to innovate and respond flexibly to the changing demands of the workplace and job market. With all these changes going on, Australian businesses will in future be embracing technological and business innovations to achieve competitive advantage in a global market. Future jobs which will be more complex and there will be a consequential increase in demand for a work force with higher level skills (Australian Work force and Productivity Agency, 2013). Unfortunately, in Australia, there is a widening gap between the expected supply of higher level skills and expected industry demand. By 2015, it is estimated that Australia will need another 2.4 million of its workers to have qualifications at the certificate III level or above to meet the projected industry demand and replacement of retiring workers (Productivity Commission, 2011). With the increased demand from the

Australian service sector, this estimated rise may come mostly from the hospitality and tourism sector.

To create a higher skilled work force requires the capability to be more readily adaptable, innovative and able to implement new ideas through the use of new technology within Australian businesses. We providers will need our VET system to create the necessary kind of skills listed above; this will only be possible if we have trainers who have these skills and capabilities.

In Australia, the blurring of the formerly distinctive divide between higher education, vocational education and schools means that vocational education trainers are now required to teach in schools at one end of the educational scale and in higher education programs at the other (Wheelahan et al., 2009). While school teachers mostly teach in schools and university lecturers mostly deliver their lectures in universities (although they may support their students in the workplace), university lecturers also deliver distance, online and mixed modes of teaching; however, the range of types of providers is much narrower than that of VET. Vocational education trainers deliver training in publically funded Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and private RTOs, which may be large or small. They may teach on or off campus or both, in many different types of workplaces: prisons and army barracks; in a range of community settings such as neighbourhood houses and refugee support centres; in private corporate organisations; and on irregular worksites such as domestic homes or on the side of a highway. Vocational trainers also engage with early school leavers both young and old, who do not particularly want to learn or who not and still do not want to learn: this latter group attend VET institutions primarily for the purpose of obtaining Centrelink payments. The learning ability and aspirations of these students are low.

The complex demand placed on vocational trainers is not one which can be simplified overnight; however, it needs to be addressed promptly if the vocational education system is to surface and flourish into the future. In particular, VET trainers will need to transform from mere trade skills and

knowledge providers, if they are to cater effectively for all the changes taking place in the vocational education sector. My research will focus on some of these changes.

## **Australian vocational education and training work force**

The Australian vocational education and training work force comprises a mix of trainers/teachers and assessors, other vocational education and training professionals and general staff across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors (Productivity Commission, 2011). Estimates of the exact size, demographics and profile of the VET work force are not available; however, it is estimated that there are about 73 000 TAFE institute employees and 150 000 employees involved in vocational education and training delivery at non-TAFE organisations (Productivity Commission, 2011). This amounts to 223 000 employees involved in vocational education: a sizeable number of people in the work force and a number which we would like to see increase, if our nation is to have a prosperous future in the changing Australian and global economy. Trainers or teachers and assessors are theoretically required to be skilled in the practices of teaching, training and assessment, to possess sound industry currency and to develop new business with industry, where and when possible. Within the profession of ‘trainers or teachers and assessors’ there are VET practitioners including training/teaching professionals, enterprise trainers and assessors, industry experts, and other vocational education and training professionals (Productivity Commission, 2011). For the purpose of this research, the term ‘Vocational Education and Training’ (VET) practitioners is used for three levels of staff that have direct contact with development, delivery, review and in most cases assessment of vocational education and training. These three levels comprise administration staff, training staff and centre administrative staff and above.

Nearly all trainers and assessors in TAFE and private RTOs hold a post-school qualification. Not all VET practitioners, however, engaging in training

and assessment activities hold a minimum qualification required for vocational education and training or teaching (i.e. the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment) or an equivalent qualification (Productivity Commission, 2011). About half of the vocational education and training work force comprises trainers or teachers and assessors who are ‘dual professionals’, having the ability and qualifications to operate in both education and industry environments. The Productivity Commission estimated that approximately 65 per cent of trainers or teachers and assessors in TAFE and community services are employed on a casual or sessional basis (Productivity Commission, 2011); some are employed on yearly contracts or contracts of a lesser timeframe and this begs the question. Can we keep the vocational education and training system sustainable and productive if the work force is made of predominantly casual employees, who may be in one institution one quarter and in another institution the next quarter?

In a work force with such a high casual rate, individual staff will need to be more proactive in order to maintain morale and their own personal development to ensure their future employment viability.

## **Changing culture**

While it is possible to conceptualise newly employed VET practitioners as having the knowledge and skills to perform the multiple tasks required in changing the VET environment, the issue of cultural change is likely to be more problematic. Many new VET practitioners working with non-standard employment status will be required to work across organisational boundaries, and be able to work productively in different organisational cultures that characterise the newly diversified VET sector. In a real sense, all registered training providers are now in the business of vocational education and training. Many VET providers also work under a common regulated framework. Consequently, they are governed by the same accreditation, articulation and other requirements of government at both state and federal

levels. All providers are now influenced by government policy and must negotiate administrative and policy demands of government.

These changes are likely to disturb the different norms, values, morale and modes of conduct which have provided public and private sector organisations with distinct and separate organisational identities. They may also disturb the distinctive organisational cultures constructed by these differences. For example, TAFE as a public sector organisation has an identity built around public service. It has therefore constructed an organisational culture that values vocational education and training built around concepts of social good (Seddon, 2000b); thus discourses of equity, impartiality and adherence to rules and regulations designed to increase public confidence and political accountability have been central to the construction of a shared organisational culture (Chappell & Johnson, 2003). With the introduction of the VET business model, this construction of a shared organisational culture has been either disturbed or to a point of being broken. The new TAFE construct norms, values, morals and modes of conduct once distinguishable are now indistinguishable from those found in the private or corporate sector.

New VET practitioners must be capable of adapting to the cultural divide which distinguishes the world of work from the world of education. They must also be able to distinguish private enterprise from the public service. This requires VET practitioners to negotiate different values, norms and modes of conduct than those currently found in either the public or private vocational education sector.

## **Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study was to gain an in-depth understanding of the changes that have affected the everyday working lives of the VET practitioners in recent years. The VET sector represents a critical and arguably unique intersection between key influences of lifelong learning,

formal learning, the workplace and broader community learning. Kearns & Papadopoulos (2000: 23) have identified four sustaining foundations of such lifelong learning practices as being:

1. 'Learn to learn skills'.
2. Motivation and desire for lifelong learning.
3. Confidence to keep learning throughout life.
4. Personal mastery (as a basis for empowerment in work and in society).

These four sustaining foundations can and should be applied to both students and trainers/teachers.

Changes will occur regardless of what the influences are, and VET practitioners must be able to cope with these changes and rise above them; in gaining an in-depth understanding of the changes and their effects, VET practitioners will be able to deal with change and become an integral part of the VET system. This will be a system which is relied upon by lifelong learners, school leavers, skills councils and non-academics who need to become a productive part of our society. As the VET sector evolves, instructors and administrators must also transform in order to contribute to the learning needs of our learners and the needs of the organisations we work for: I am personally committed to this transformation.

This case study focused on the changes in the working lives of VET practitioners in the state of Victoria, Australia, who provide training programs recognised at state and national levels within the National Training Framework. The reflections and findings bring new data to the debate or discourse and contribute to a broader discussion about trainers of VET in Australia in the future. There are several limitations to this study. The first is its scope; it is limited to a point-in-time profile of VET practitioners. The study is also limited to the context of two institutions within Victoria, and within one common centre. Since the beginning of this study, there have been many changes and with the new federal budget being introduced by the

liberal government in 2014, there may be many changes likely to occur in the very near future.

## **Thesis structure**

This case study research consists of seven chapters and includes auto-ethnographic material that has helped me to review my position as a researcher in this research. In Chapter 1 the context and rationale of the research is introduced; in Chapter 2 a literature review is presented that relates, predominantly, to recent changes that have occurred in the VET industry in Australia, generally, and in Victoria, in particular; and in Chapter 3 the methodology and methods used to gain an in-depth understanding of the changes in the working lives of VET practitioners and their effects on individuals are detailed, as well as the organisation or institution. In Chapters 4 and 5 the outcomes of the inductive data reduction analysis I undertook in order to derive two sets of emergent concepts and themes from the data collected from individual semi-structured interviews are presented. In Chapter 6 reflections and findings that highlight the changing nature of the VET industry in Victoria from 2005 to 2014 are presented.

In conclusion, in Chapter 7, a transformational model based on my research findings that will help to facilitate future change in the VET industry at state, national and international levels is presented. In particular, my model aims at:

- alleviating the discomfort felt by VET practitioners in these times of change;
- improving individuals' productivity as a result of genuine concern and support for one another; and
- ensuring team effort and networking is created, intrinsically, across all levels of VET organisations.



## **Summary**

In sum, this study is about VET practitioners, and the effects that recent changes in the VET system have had on their lives in Victoria and in Australia. VET nationally is important to the Australian economy and to the many individuals employed in this sector. The learners who have come to rely on the VET system, to provide skills and knowledge, and to get them ready for entering the work force also view VET as an important part of their lives. The VET sector has experienced significant changes in recent times and there is no end in sight. These changes are dominated by economic discourse that points to the need for VET systems to be sustainable and profitable.

In the next chapter, I will discuss recent changes that, specifically, have affected Vocational Education and Training (VET) in Victoria in the past decade: mine is a local study. I will, however, reflect on national developments that have impinged on the local scene and will, briefly, link both of these elements to recent international developments.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) industry has gone through many changes in the past decade and a half, and this does not seem to be stopping any time soon. There is a great deal of research on the changing workplace or role of VET trainers. This chapter seeks to review such research to clarify the changes that have occurred in the VET sector. Engaging in a review of the literature will also give a sense of direction as to changes that the VET industry will need to consider and embed over the next five to ten years.

In this review, I provide an historical overview by examining the resurgence and ideology of VET, finishing with more recent developments. I proceed by outlining recent changes that have affected VET and the possible causes for such changes in the context of TAFE (Technical and Further Education). Finally, I explore the possible directions offered by the research literature to assist in guiding future directions for the VET sector. This review was written based on a number of articles and researchers sourced on the topic of the changing workplace and role of VET trainers. Further, the issues raised in this research may become outdated with more changes on the way for the VET industry, as flagged above.

Articles used in this literature review have been accessed from well-respected journals such as the *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, *International Encyclopaedia for Educational Research*, and institutions such

as the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, and the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). The review has also explored similar issues in other countries to gain a better understanding of the global nature of the changing workplace/role of VET trainers. Scoping national and international literature also provides a comparison of the Australian VET system to that of other countries.

### **Note on the sources used for this review**

The databases and journals used for this review are sourced from A+ Education journals, *The Age* newspaper, Academic Search Premier Database, Australian National Training Authority, Australian Public Affairs, Australian Council for Education Research, National Centre of Vocational Education Research, Education Resources Information Centre, Organisational Vocational and Adult Learning and Organisational for Economic Co-operation and Developments.

Many of these articles were written by industry experts, most of whom are still practicing in the industry and all of whom are suitably qualified to be quoted. For example, Professor Terri Seddon was, at the time she was working in the field, Associate Dean (Research), Faculty of Education, Monash University, Melbourne; Clive Chappell was a senior research fellow with the Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training in the Faculty of Education, University of Technology Sydney; Erica Smith was a member of the academic professional development team at the University of South Australia, Adelaide and a leading academic in the field of competency based training.

### **Brief history of vocational education**

In this section, I consider the initial emergence of vocational education in Australia, discuss a major reason for its delayed development in the tertiary sector and, finally, note the emergence of the TAFE sector in the mid-1970s.

## Early history

The year 1889 could be considered a significant timeline in the development of technical education (Goozee, 1995). All the structures and frameworks for future development had been established. In Victoria, the Ballarat School of Mines (the first technical school) was established in 1870; it was followed shortly after, in 1873, by the establishment of the Bendigo School of Mines. Another fourteen technical institutions soon followed between 1870 and 1890 (Goozee, 1995). Technical education was also being developed throughout others states and territories at the same time.

There was little involvement of the Commonwealth prior to the 1940s. Earlier, in the 1930s, state governments were experiencing difficulties in financing the provision of programs designed to alleviate high levels of unemployment caused by the economic depression in 1929. David Drummond, Minister of Education for New South Wales, called for a meeting in 1936; here, he provided a lengthy statement (cited in Spaul 1987:8), in which he outlined

...the parlous state of technical education in New South Wales, how this came at a critical stage in the need for industrial revival and youth training to overcome the unemployment of the 1930s and how New South Wales and other states could not find funds from their own resources.

This argument gained considerable support from other state ministers, but the motion was rejected by the Australian Government at the Premiers' Conference in May 1936 (Goozee, 1995). It was not until the 1940s that the Commonwealth provided financial assistance to the states for technical education – a decision largely due to the need for technical education as an essential part of the Second World War effort. In 1943, the Australian Government established the Walker Committee to 'consider the general problems of the co-ordination of the various activities of the Commonwealth within the education field' (Tannock 1976:4). This committee played a very important role in Australian education, as it began the Australian Government's deliberate move into the long-established area of state

responsibility for education. The Commonwealth Office of Education was created within the framework of the Department of Post-war Reconstruction on 8 November 1945. Its function, in terms of the *Education Act 1945*, was to advise the minister on matters relating to education, including the granting of financial assistance to the states; to liaise on education matters with the states and overseas; and to undertake research and to provide statistics and information (DEET 1988:27).

### **More recent developments: 1950–1975**

Changes to the VET sector since the 1950s are best summed up by a graphical display in Appendix 1, which outlines all the major changes that took place in Australian vocational education systems. These changes were due, in part, to Australian Government funding policy changes; some were due to economic changes while others were due to societal and industrial needs.

Although technical education provided training specific to local industries and the unemployed, this sector was unable to establish its position in tertiary education prior to 1970. This was due, in part, to its lack of clear identity and charter, and its wide range of courses, awards and the diversity of structures across Australia. The inclusion of technical education within state and territory Departments of Education restricted tertiary development, as priority in funding was given to primary and secondary schools. It was not until the 1970s, when the Australian Government commenced providing designated grants to TAFE systems, that the states and territories were able to expand and upgrade their facilities for vocational education.

Regardless of the causes for change, one thing is certain: changes in the vocational education system in Australia and worldwide are necessary in order to provide the global skills and knowledge needed by all countries (including in their industries), for the purpose of advancement and improvements.

## Recent changes

Over the past three decades (1987–2014), there have been extensive changes in vocational education: in funding policies, in the work force, the nature of the work, the identity of instructors, in pedagogy and the upgrading of skills through professional development. I address each of these in the following sub-sections.

### Funding policy changes

Vocational Education and Training (VET) sectors in Australia, and therefore in Victoria, have undergone some significant changes over the past decade and a half. These changes include the amalgamation of TAFE institutes and the creation of a market for the provision of part of state-funded VET training, in which public and private providers compete for funding from the state government (Shah, 2003).

Prior to this time, TAFE served two major client groups. The first was traditional apprentices, trainees and their employers. The second group comprised young people undertaking full-time vocational training courses after finishing secondary school. The TAFE system, and the mechanism for funding, reflected these priorities. The situation changed irreversibly in the early 1990s, driven by a number of interrelated factors, including the following:

- Profound structural shifts in the labour market caused by, among other things, increasingly rapid technological change and increased globalisation of markets.
- Agreements for greater industry input into the training system through the development of a network of state and territory and national industry training advisory boards.
- The introduction of competition into the training provider market by allowing providers (other than the institutes of TAFE) to receive public funds to deliver training, often with a competitive tendering

process, and by allowing providers to deliver training in other states and territories.

- Changes to the traditional apprenticeship system, including the development of traineeships, and the implementation of the new Apprenticeship system from 1 January 1998. New apprenticeship arrangements included choice of training provider and arrangements for on-the-job delivery of the formal part of the training program.
- Government funding in the form of subsidies to employers of apprentices and trainees, growth funds to state and territory training authorities and funds for capital works, capital improvements and special projects.
- National agreements to fund and promote recognised vocational education and training in secondary schools as part of upper secondary education (Adams, 2001).

The majority of these policy changes had implications, either directly or indirectly, for the ways in which resource allocation to the public VET system was managed.

Following the release of *Skills for Australia 1987* (Dawkins & Holding, 1987), the VET sector was then subjected to a series of structural reforms. The reason for these structural reforms was to enhance the VET system's efficiency, effectiveness, flexibility and its responsiveness to the industry's changing expectations and needs. A national Competition policy was recommended in the Hilmer report (1993) and was agreed for adoption by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments (Shah, 2000).

With the agreement in place, there was a push towards creating a national market for VET where both public and private providers competed for funding from Commonwealth, state and territory governments. To promote this change in VET, these governments have:

- Encouraged the creation of a new competitive education and training market by sanctioning the establishment of private providers in Vocational Education and Training (Chappell & Johnston, 2003).

- Promoted a competitive ethos within publicly funded educational institutions and extended the public accreditation processes of education and training to industry and enterprise training (Chappell & Johnston, 2003).
- Encouraged business and industry to be more actively involved in providing training for its work force and have encouraged the establishment of private providers of Vocational Education and Training (Chappell & Johnston, 2003).

These introduced changes by the government have created a diversified VET sector, and with this diversity comes an ill-defined border that has public, private and non-government agencies limping on one leg with very little direction for future sustainability. The changes in the early 1990s driven by open competition and a number of other interrelated factors had a profound effect on the structure of the labour market and the nature of work in the VET sector.

There were numerous funding cuts to the TAFE sector from 2012 to 2013, which caused many more changes to the lives of VET practitioners. In September 2012, for example, TAFE staff in Victoria protested against a massive \$300 million funding cut to the TAFE sector (Wheelahan, 2012); New South Wales and Queensland also suffered massive cuts in their state TAFE funding budgets. These funding cuts resulted in hundreds of jobs being made redundant in Victoria, and thousands of jobs around the nation. In March 2013 the Victorian state government stated ‘they will provide two hundred million dollars for Victoria’s TAFE system’ (Vic Media release, 12 March 2013). This provision would not however reverse the effects of the cuts in 2012. This new government funding provision would be allocated over four years, and was targeted towards ‘innovation and structural reform’ (Preiss & Cook, 2013). It would only see on average 50 million dollars being put back into the TAFE system every year, over four years. This lack of funding along with re-structural reforms in the VET sector contributed to the changing work environment faced by VET practitioners.



## **Changing work force**

Changes in the nature and patterns of work were complex and they are not easily captured in a single frame of reference. There were shifts occurring in the nature of work itself and in the composition of the work force; these are discussed below.

The work force has become more ‘feminised’ through shifting patterns of participation for men and women (NCVER, 2013; Shah, 2003). This shift in gender structure parallels the shift in the industrial structure of employment, where there is a relative decline in employment in manufacturing and related industries and where men had a more prominent role. The growth in employment has been in information technology, hospitality, tourism and business, finance and community service; it has translated into a more prominent role for women in the provision of training, and hence provides a partial explanation for the increase in their employment in TAFE institutes (Shah, 2003).

Over the past decade and a half, there has been an increase in the participation of women in the VET work force; this reflects the increase in the number of part-time or sessional jobs available in the VET sector. For women, in particular, part-time work allowed them to keep a foot in paid employment as well as take on the duties of raising families (Shah, 2003). This use of part-time employment offered TAFE institutes’ management greater flexibility in resource allocation in an era of reduced, direct funding sources and rapid changes in technology training.

There are increasing numbers of workers employed under part-time and casual/sessional arrangements. A number of reviews have noted that the universality of the full-time permanent job, usually held by the male or female breadwinner of the family is a thing of the past (NCVER, 2004). In 1993, 66 per cent (or 8100) TAFE employees were full-time trainers but by 1998 this proportion had dropped by three percentage points. This declining number of full-time permanent employment was probably driven by wage/salary control. Pat Forward, the president of The Victorian teachers

union, reported that some institutes had been directing trainers to deliver a portion of the annual curriculum hours flexibly to cut trainer salary costs (Forward, 2000). There was also anecdotal evidence suggesting that sometimes employees in administrative and technical support areas had been asked to teach to fill in gaps when normal trainers were not available. In 1993, 46 per cent of all trainers were on tenure or ongoing full-time, but by 1998 this percentage was down to 37 per cent. Employment of sessional trainers in TAFE institutes had become more significant. In 1993, 26 per cent of trainers were sessional, but by 1998 this proportion had jumped to 36 per cent. Such arrangements helped in reducing salary costs for the TAFE institutes but contributed to a loss of income, for a month or more, for sessional staff who may not have had alternative work during non-teaching periods (Shah, 2003).

### **Changing nature of work**

Trainers in institutional VET settings have experienced considerable changes to their work in the past two decades. These have impacted the ways in which they understand their professional identities and their relationship with other parts of the VET sector (Chappell & Johnston, 2003; Harris, Simons & Clayton, 2005).

The roles of VET trainers/practitioners have not only expanded: they have also diversified. Quality teaching and learning practices emphasise the development of self-paced, independent learners. Many trainers now ‘facilitate learning’, rather than undertaking traditional face-to-face training. They are learning managers, requiring effective communication skills, relevant and up-to-date content knowledge, and the knowledge and skills to deliver and assess in a wide range of contexts (NCVER, 2004). Some VET practitioners are acting as ‘learner brokers’ to learners, enterprises and providers.

The drive towards improved efficiency has meant that many staff had to become multi-skilled. In turn, this has made the work more varied, more

interesting and has provided more opportunity for career development. On the other hand, it has also meant that VET trainers have had to take on wider ranges of administrative and other functions for which they are not adequately trained, and which are not properly recognised as part of their work. In addition to these changes, the administrative and compliance systems they use have been over-designed, are over-regulated and not 'user friendly' (NCVER, 2004); TAFE managers also report that full-time teaching staff are

increasingly expected to undertake administrative functions associated with maintaining and organising learning environments serviced by the comings and goings of sessional staffs and short term contract staffs. (Chappell & Johnston 2003:52)

There is evidence to suggest that this indicated 'an emerging role for the experience staff as a learning environment manager' (Chappell & Johnston, 2003).

Seddon (2009) examined the relationship between productivity and occupational expertise in education and training, and argued productivity is not just a here and now issue. It should be anchored in the traditions, relationships and cultures of Australian education.

As a consequence of shifting work roles and responsibilities, public VET providers are experiencing concerns about their work. These VET trainers felt a considerable amount of tension between their core activities of teaching and training and the pressure to become involved in other work functions such as revenue-raising activities and administrative functions. Another tension is attempting to balance flexibility alongside meeting customer/client needs. This is especially the case when VET training packages must comply with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) which has its own set of requirements that adhere to consistency in teaching and learning outcomes (NCVER, 2004).

Throughout the past decade, the composition of students in the VET sector has also changed dramatically. VET students have diversity in terms of

their age and cultural, ethnic and religious backgrounds. The changing relationship between trainers and students has also meant that students are now seen as consumers or clients. A shift in the relationship between student and trainer has meant that trainers can sometimes find it hard to meet their client's needs, with so many different cohorts of students. The consequences of not knowing what the client's needs were resulted in lack of student motivation to engage and to learn.

Research reported a decade ago by NCVER (2004) described how the Netherlands and Australia were using network learning theory as a means of further illuminating the relationship between learning and work. The report suggests that trainers have a role in creating spaces for learning. To create meaningful space trainers need to spend time and effort in understanding the culture of enterprises with which they work. They will need to develop and draw on skills and knowledge bases quantitatively different from those held by the trainer who is 'inside' the enterprise. This is a practice adapted in the Australian VET sector. Network learning theory involves the participation of individuals in community practices, and learning organisations involves work-based learning, coaching and mentoring.

Young and Guile (1997:205) have indicated that, in their new roles, VET professionals need to be able to confront a range of new demands, including:

- supporting the skill development process for an increasingly diverse population of learners;
- having the ability to work simultaneously across a number of geographical locales, usually in collaboration with other professionals;
- supporting the development of transferable skills (e.g. key competencies); and
- developing the ability to support enterprises as well as their own organisations in becoming learning organisations.

This 1997 range of demands remained current in 2008; it may even have implications for the future, where individuals will need to become learning specialists and institutions will need to become learning organisations.

The emerging demands of facilitating online learning have resulted in significant expansion in the role of work of VET practitioners. A study of eighteen practitioners (Harris, Simons & Clayton, 2005) who were involved in online delivery found that:

- the adoption of online delivery was driving a job redesign process which was not reflected in current human resource policies within organisations;
- there was a blurring of specialist functions which required practitioners to be multiskilled and prepared to take on a range of functions, some of which were previously the province of middle management;
- relationship building with both students and colleagues is a critical component of the role of an online practitioner; and
- work conditions of participants – particularly in relation to work intensification and difficulties in achieving sustainable work/family life – are impacting the realisation of this newly emerging role for VET practitioners.

These changes in the role of VET practitioners are both challenging and empowering, but they may also prove to be stressful and disempowering. Erica Smith (2010) has highlighted two important constraints in the VET sector: the VET system is tightly controlled by the interests of industry; at the same time, it is inflexible in adapting to new approaches. Both of these act to disadvantage many groups of learners. Internally, teachers and trainers do not have adequate skills to work skilfully and critically with competency based training, leading to ill identified pedagogy and a narrow focus on the assessment of individual items of performance.

Changes in vocational work, driven by the accelerating impact of emergent technologies and globalising capitalism, is at the same time

transforming both work design and conceptions of the contemporary worker (ANTA, 2003a). This has implications for vocational trainers to be learning specialists in order to keep up with the impact of technological advancement, rather than just vocational skills experts. Vocational trainers will need to be more flexible, autonomous, motivated, orientated to lifelong learning and self-regulating in order to be industry current and connected to the requirements of the industry (Chappell & Johnston 2003). With the rapidly transforming nature of vocational work (Darwin, 2004) it will become extremely challenging for vocational practitioners to create learning in a context that is relevant, current and sustainable.

### **Changing identity**

Trainers in TAFE institutes have experienced many changes brought on by government policy changes and this has impacted their everyday pedagogical practices. These changes have caused a lot of confusion, regarding TAFE trainers' identities, in this complex and sometimes contradictory VET industry.

Chappell (1999) has identified three dominant discourses within TAFE institutes that have shaped the formation of TAFE trainers' identities. The first, referred to as industrial skills development, provides the rationale for the establishment of technical education in Australia. Technical education was created specifically to service the labour market needs of industry and the economy more generally. In 2005 the Howard government pledged a large sum of \$65.4 million to establish 24 Australian Technical Colleges in regional and metropolitan locations suffering skill needs. The intention was to provide quality education and trade training for senior secondary students. This affirmed the first discourse of industrial skill development.

This discourse has constructed TAFE trainers in particular ways. They are represented, primarily, as having specialised vocational knowledge in a trade or other occupation rather than possessing any specialised educational or pedagogical knowledge. Industrial skills development presents TAFE

trainers as industry practitioners who happen to train and this position continues to be reflected in TAFE recruitment policies that continue to require trainers to have industrial expertise (Chappell, 1999). This discourse is reiterated in the current TAFE sector where full-time trainers are recommended to take time off to work, each year, in their respective industry.

This remains an important discourse that TAFE trainers use to construct their occupational identity, acting as a point of difference that distinguishes them from other trainers working in education. This discourse may have been valid in 1999, but it was no longer valid in 2008 – nor is it valid in 2014: TAFE trainers now need to be much more than just industrial trade specialists.

The second discourse of liberal education has constructed a significantly different institution from that responsible for providing industry with a suitably skilled work force. According to Chappell (1999), these discourses of liberal education and industrial skills development provided a persuasive rationale for the existence of TAFE as a liberal institution. It is my perception that this rationale continues in 2014, because of the heavy reliance from industry employers to acquire suitably competent and skilled individuals from TAFE institutes.

The third discourse is that of ‘public service’ (Chappell, 1999: 35). This discourse is in and of itself inextricably linked to the rise of liberal democratic governance. The emergence of liberal democracy is characterised by increasing involvement of the state in the social, cultural and economic life of society, largely through the construction of various state instrumentalities and bureaucracies including those of public education. Harris et al. (2005) devoted an entire publication in which they describe the extent to which training reforms are changing the organisation culture of TAFE. They argue that the changes to mindsets and work roles of VET professionals, particularly those who are employed in these institutions, have indeed changed the concept of public service.

## Changing pedagogies

The ever-changing needs of industry have led to changes in work, skills, knowledge and learning. And in turn, these have led to a renewed interest in VET pedagogies; these changes have been documented in working papers published by OVAL (Organisational, Vocational and Adult Learning). In particular, Working Paper 03-12 (OVAL, 2003) has provided evidence to suggest that both the nature of contemporary work and the changing conception of skills, knowledge and learning result in new demands being placed on workers. In suggesting there is a change in work demand, there are also suggestions by OVAL (2003) that this has presented new challenges for VET providers and practitioners, namely:

- a shift in education policy and practice from institutions to learners and from teaching to learning; and
- a greater focus on work and workplaces as significant sites for learning.

At the same time, there has been an increased emphasis on vocational outcomes that move beyond the acquisition of technical skills and competencies to outcomes that explicitly seek to change the ways in which people engage with work; as well, there has been an increased emphasis on the role of VET in developing people (OVAL, 2003).

In order to respond to these changes, there have been suggestions of new understandings of pedagogy in VET. VET teaching and learning practices should no longer be didactic and involve just the transfer of skills; this is out of touch with industry needs. Instead, VET teaching and learning practices are seen as needing to become more:

- learner centred;
- work-centred; and
- attribute focused.

These new understandings of pedagogy align themselves more with constructive rather than transmission theories of learning, particularly when



harnessed to an emerging goal of VET in terms of developing people (OVAL, 2003).

Overall, the OVAL research (2003) indicates that the emerging guiding principle of pedagogical practice is constructivism, which is the appropriateness of particular pedagogical strategies to the different purposes and settings in which contemporary vocational, workplace and organisational learning takes place. Therefore, a good practice has to take on a more pragmatic position, in which selection of strategy is determined by a number of factors including the content of delivery, necessary outcomes, the learning environment/site and the learner's preference for learning styles or goals.

There is also a greater need for integration of work and learning which requires:

- greater recognition of work and learning;
- greater recognition of the different learning practices/styles used in VET and in organisational sites;
- different pedagogical strategies in which learners take greater responsibility for determining what is to be learnt; and
- involving learners in all aspects of the learning process including negotiating content, choice of learning strategy, assessment and evaluation (OVAL, 2003).

These different practices need to be better aligned and offer complementary features of vocational and workplace learning programs.

While these changes support constructive pedagogical strategies, there are barriers to their implementation:

- Learners may not know what their style of learning is, nor would they be able to negotiate teaching content when they may not know what they need to or want to learn in the first place.
- Assessment and evaluation has, in the past, always been left to the instructors; when offered a choice, this may prove to be a hard decision for the learner.

- Any pedagogical strategy change must incorporate work as an integral feature of learning, and it must also produce outcomes that are valuable to the workplace as well as the individual learner.

### **Professional development**

To maintain creditability, vocational trainers must be exposed to advanced technology in ways consistent with its use in their occupational specialty area, as well as up-to-date techniques for using it in the delivery of instruction. The technical and teaching skills and knowledge of vocational trainers must be continually upgraded. This upgrade of knowledge and skills must be presented in the following contexts:

- The changing needs of the industry.
- The changing learner.
- The changing contexts.
- The work process knowledge.
- The concept of skill (OVAL, 2003).

Changes in the workplace require continual professional development as a means of skill upgrading, even for trainers with degrees in education. According to Brown (2000) the following are required:

- New ways of teaching and learning that need trainers to assume the roles of both coach and facilitator; to situate student learning in real-world contexts.
- New school-to-work programs that require trainers to collaborate with business representatives in the community, and to enter into partnerships with employers and other educators to develop integrated curricula.
- Trainers who are able to use new technologies, which are continually changing the ways that people live, work, learn and train.
- Trainers who are able to respond to these changing roles and responsibilities; they need an effective professional development plan

that can help them remain current and embrace new ways to improve their practice.

In conclusion, Brown (2002) has suggested that trainers should gain workplace experience, establish links with other trainers and upgrade their technology skills.

## **Possible causes for the changes**

### **Government policy changes**

In the 1990s the state government in Victoria introduced a new policy for Schools of the Future, the Australian Government intervened in the conceptualisation of education generally, and TAFE in particular, through promotion of the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) from the late 1980s. Seddon and Angus (2000) have pointed out that as part of the reforms, trainers who relatively successfully asserted progressive educational values during the 1970s and early 1980s became subject to new demands and controls. The previous policy emphasis on trainer-oriented issues of learning and curriculum had been replaced by a more indirect reform strategy in which the practices of organising educational work were being manipulated. Funding, outcome measures, policy targets, industrial relations and management had become the 'new levers of change'. These did not impinge immediately on the face-to-face work of training and learning, but they shaped the institutional context in which such work proceeds.

In the second half of the 1990s government policies increased the incorporation of the rhetoric and principles of corporate management. Schools of the Future policy (introduced by the Kennett coalition government in 1993) was interpreted and received overwhelmingly negatively by trainers in secondary colleges and TAFE institutes. For these trainers and instructors, the policy signalled a return to antagonistic dialogue between the main parties concerned with education. Twenty years later, the approach to educational governance in Victoria and elsewhere is to no longer accept as

legitimate the inputs from constituent groups. The new approach is decisional – not dialogical or participative; it emphasises management decision making. Within this approach, blueprints for education are largely designed by ‘experts’ according to economic criteria and standards of economic efficiency and effectiveness. Significantly, the trainers who once contested paternalistic bureaucracy and challenged the power of technical and political elites (in the name of educational progress and professionalism) are now likely to be excluded from educational decision making because they are regarded as vested interests (Angus & Seddon, 2000). This exclusion of dialogue and participation will ensure efficiency of decision making, from the government’s perspective.

The current changes in government policy have prompted many managers to see the entrepreneurial nature of their job. Some appear to have jumped ahead of the requirements of the government’s policy intervention. And instead they have started to put in place some of the entrepreneurial skills they saw necessary to meet their ‘accountability’, ‘outcomes’, ‘efficiency’, and ‘competitiveness’. This may explain the casualisation of the VET work force, and the diminishing number of full-time positions, because the cost of hiring and retaining full-time staff is higher than sessional staff.

### **VET trainers and lifelong learning**

Research by Darwin (2007) into the self-perceptions of VET trainers on their levels of professional preparedness indicated at least half of the respondents self-identified a need for professional development, to meet both the emerging challenges of new VET pedagogical practices and cultivating their own lifelong learning.

Perhaps strongly influencing this has been the progressive decline in VET trainer professional development provided to TAFE trainers and instructors over the last decade. In some instances, as Darwin (2007) has pointed out, the professional development offered has not been related to their field of teaching. This has led to potentially lessened capabilities of trainers to

effectively mediate the often conflicting expectations that intersect in the classroom environment and, as a consequence, forced a greater reliance on the literal and narrow use of competency based approaches to teaching and learning. In this context, Darwin (2007) has argued, it is evident there remain significant challenges in enhancing VET trainer capability and therefore the further enhancing of VET as a central springboard to the development of capable lifelong learners. Successful teacher education initiatives are likely to be fragmented in impact (given the fragmented system in which they will evolve) and will be highly dependent on improving the professional capability of VET practitioners, as Darwin (2007:71-87) points out, ‘to assimilate emerging constructivist pedagogies within the strongly articulated constraints inherent in a competency based training package framework’.

### **The constructivist framework**

The constructivist framework associated with competency based learning was designed around Biggs’ (1999) notion of constructive alignment, the related work of Ramsden (1992) on cultivating deep levels of learning and Brookfield’s (1995) framework of critical reflection (the critically reflective leader). It was envisaged it would provide a substantial framework to create a productive learning environment for vocational trainers to critically reflect on their increasingly challenging teaching realities. The emphasis was on encountering a broad prospective learning need, with design principles centred on inspiring ongoing learning beyond the program’s lifespan; the aim was to transform Kearns et al. (1999) lifelong learning foundations into practice.

In summary, these principles were conceptualised in practice by Darwin at the Canberra Institute of Technology, 2005, as follows:

- **Integration:** better understanding teaching practice by critical and ongoing analysis of theories, concepts and models.
- **Application:** ability to apply new understandings effectively to teaching practice over time and in differing environments.

- **Abstraction:** being able to apply conceptions to diverse contexts and generate innovative approaches, contentions and possibilities.

All these principles require a high level of trainer learner commitment, resource commitment from government and VET providers, and resource/time commitment from trainer education.

### **Employability skills development**

The call for the value and relevance of key skills or employability skills has been heralded by employer organisations, and by relevant government officers and civil servants in the Department of Education and Employment in the UK. The employability skill focuses on:

- effective communication including written skills and reading skills;
- application of numbers, the ability to work with numbers; and
- use of information technology.

In addition to the promotion of these three skills, British Government policy papers (e.g. the *Lifelong Learning* green paper), have stated their enthusiasm for young people and adults to develop certain skills at school, in the workplace or in life that will help individuals to develop and maintain their employability. These skills are now defined (Norman, 2002) as ‘Wider Key Skills’, namely:

- **Working with others** – how you work with others when planning and carrying out activities to get things done and achieve shared objectives.
- **Improve your own learning and performance** – how you manage your own personal learning and career development.
- **Problem solving** – about recognising problems or potential problems and doing something about them, to solve them.

This research (Turner, 2002) has identified a set of attributes, skills and behaviours that are seen as essential to the development of an entrepreneurial or ‘sustainable work force’. The list of attributes, skills and behaviours is

detailed in Table 2.1. Turner (2002) considers there is little doubt about the connection between these qualities and employability skills, especially with reference to a knowledge-based economy that demands a pro-active and enterprising work force.

In 2005, Australian training packages (see <http://training.gov.au/>) introduced ‘employability skills’; since 2006, these skills have progressively replaced key competency information in the training packages. The eight identified employability behaviours are listed in Table 2.1. Further information on this set of employability skills is contained in Appendix 3, which contains the skills shortage in Australia. The similarities between this list of employability skills and the list suggested by Turner (2002) are highly likely to be an influence on the global economy and globalisation phenomenon.

**Table 2.1 Sustainable work force skills**

Elements	Specifics
<b>Attributes</b>	• Self-confident
	• Achievement oriented
	• Versatile
	• Dynamic
	• Resourceful
<b>Skills</b>	• Problem solving
	• Creativity
	• Persuasive
	• Planning
	• Negotiating
	• Decision making
<b>Behaviours</b>	• Acting independently
	• Actively seeking to achieve goals
	• Flexibly responding to challenges
	• Coping with and enjoying uncertainty
	• Persuading others
	• Commitment to make things happen
	• Opportunity seeking
	• Solving problems/conflicts creatively

Source: Turner, 2002

### Globalisation and technical advances

Globalisation is a phenomenon that has many proponents as well as opponents; the latter includes large social movements opposed to the perceived consequences globalisation has for traditional ways of living, especially in developing countries.

The existence of both proponents and opponents, according to Cully (2006), poses distinct challenges for technical VET, in terms of adapting to:

- **economic restructuring**, as nations adjust to their areas of comparative advantage;
- **competition in education markets** as citizens seek the best educational opportunities, and foreign education providers enter the market; and



- **the entry and exit of skills** embodied in people due to migration flows.

The Australian economy is, to all intents and purposes, a highly open economy, despite it being geographically distant from countries such as the US, China, the UK and India. The opening up of the Australian economy, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon: it dates from the floating of the Australian dollar in 1983 and the gradual reduction of tariff protection. The free flow of capital and goods has allowed employers the option to switch investment from one region of the world to another in search of greater returns. In Australia this has manifested itself most recently in the closure of factories with operations relocated, typically, to China or Southeast Asia, and the establishment of call centres and back room processing for financial services in India. There is also concern for the economic viability of the Australian automotive manufacturing industry: the closure of the Mitsubishi car-manufacturing factory in South Australia in 2008 has been followed, recently, by resolutions to cease the manufacture of Ford, GMH and Toyota cars in Australia by the end of 2016.

Cully (2006) has pointed out that primary and secondary industries – agriculture, manufacturing, mining and construction – now account for under a quarter of total employment; 50 years ago, it stood at around 50 per cent. This could prove to be an interesting issue for the government to handle and plan to resolve. As in many advanced economies, there has been a prodigious growth in services, both business-to-business and personal services. The major contributor to the personal service industry is likely to be in the health and diet industry. The broad response of governments to these developments has been twofold. First, assistance is provided to firms and workers in vulnerable industries to enable them to adjust. The second, and rather more consistently adopted response by government, is the enhancement of work force skills as part of a strategy for maintaining or improving the competitiveness of Australian industries relative to those in other countries. The Australian Industry Group (AIG, 2008), for example, have argued that

only a small proportion of Australian firms were currently operating at world class level, and to reach that status required the work force to develop higher levels of skills, broader sets of skills, and to have their skills replenished more often.

For me, this poses a few interesting questions, ‘What is this world class level, who is the experts that determine what world class level, is, and how will this benefit Australia if we were to operate at a world class level?’ The answers to these questions can perhaps help our government to solve our diminishing manufacturing industry, which in turn can affect the work force of the VET sector and in a ripple effect, the pedagogical directions VET will take in the future. The contexts in which education and training take place are certain to be altered to reflect the skills required by the industries, which are operating at this ‘world class’ level.

Furthermore, Cully (2006) has predicted that the restructuring brought about by more open economies means that the introduction of new information and communication technologies will have an enormous impact on many industries in key areas. And, in particular, those associated with computer aided design, just-in-time management of inventories and a range of new and enhanced telecommunication services. This will require entirely new skill sets to be acquired by workers and bosses alike. Cully (2006) concludes that the change in discourse towards information and communication technologies will be increasingly deployed across all areas of industry.

Globalisation has also presented many opportunities, and Australia has been quick to grasp the potential for this in some key areas, nowhere more so than in the provision of education. In a report in 2011, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2011) reported that in 2009 Australia had by far the highest proportion of overseas students among its higher education intake at 18.7 per cent, well in excess of the OECD average of 7.2 per cent. The main countries from which students come to Australia are China, India, New Zealand, and South Korea. This may also be

the effect of the ease with which overseas students can obtain an Australian visa, if they were to study in Australia in the areas of skills shortage, or the third phase of the globalisation effect, which is the mobility of people. With this intake of international students each year, technical VET has implemented many resources to help these students to cope with life and education in Australia. Some TAFE institutes, for example, have built separate kitchens for international students, provided language help inside and outside of class time and general information regarding housing and travelling issues to and from their institutions. Many VET managers have seen the growth in this overseas market as a source of improved profits that will boost their overall operations' viability.

The extent to which globalisation will continue to affect the VET industry is still unknown; it is highly likely it will benefit from ongoing study. At the present it may be dependent on the relative rate at which the Australian economy is affected by globalisation and the rate at which the VET industry can adapt to the changes brought about by globalisation.

### **Vocational education in the USA**

There are policy designs in the USA which have focused on how vocational education can place a greater emphasis on labour market needs at the regional level (Lakes, 2010), and how colleges can achieve work force readiness agendas. The critics in the vocational education industry in USA are serious about raising the graduation rates and college completion percentages. This direction is reflected in the Australian Vocational Education and Training sector where the Australian Government is also focused on increasing student completion rates and getting our students ready for work.

The introduction of competency based curriculum that uses state-of-the-art equipment and small-scale learning communities with dedicated trainers and motivated students who are taught industry-specific work habits (Lakes, 2010), has been considered in Australia but, in 2014, has not been

implemented. In Australia we have demonstrated the use of state-of-the-art equipment for training through numerous purchases made for TAFE institutes. However, we do not have dedicated trainers to train students and develop training systems which will enhance student's learning, due to numerous rounds of staff reduction. The concept of training students to industry-specific work habits is something that has not been evaluated yet; this could be due to lack of research and understanding of the phrase 'industry-specific work habits'. It was beyond the scope of my research to explore in detail these aspects of training VET trainers; however, there were issues raised in my research findings that resonate with a need to consider industry-specific work habits in future VET research in Australia.

### **Change leadership**

The literature is rich in analyses of the relationship between leadership and organisational change. Recent authors in the field (see, for example, Sharif & Scandura, 2011) have found that the level of trust gained by employers when different types of organisational change have been undertaken – from low to high – is greatest when technological restructuring that is people and process orientated is undertaken. It is lowest when technological restructuring that involves downsizing with little thought being given to process and people needs.

Earlier, Sirkin, Keenan & Jackson (2005) have pointed out that 'managing change is tough – largely because there is little agreement just what factors influence effective transformation. They have highlighted four key factors that influence effective change: *duration* (long term projects that are closely monitored are more effective); *integrity* (the need to have a team that is well led, and which is cohesive); *commitment* (having support from the top); *effort* (ensuring that adequate resources are provided to ensure that morale does not fall).

Underpinning these two examples of change leadership is a sense of moral responsibility to both the people and to the organisation. There is a sense of

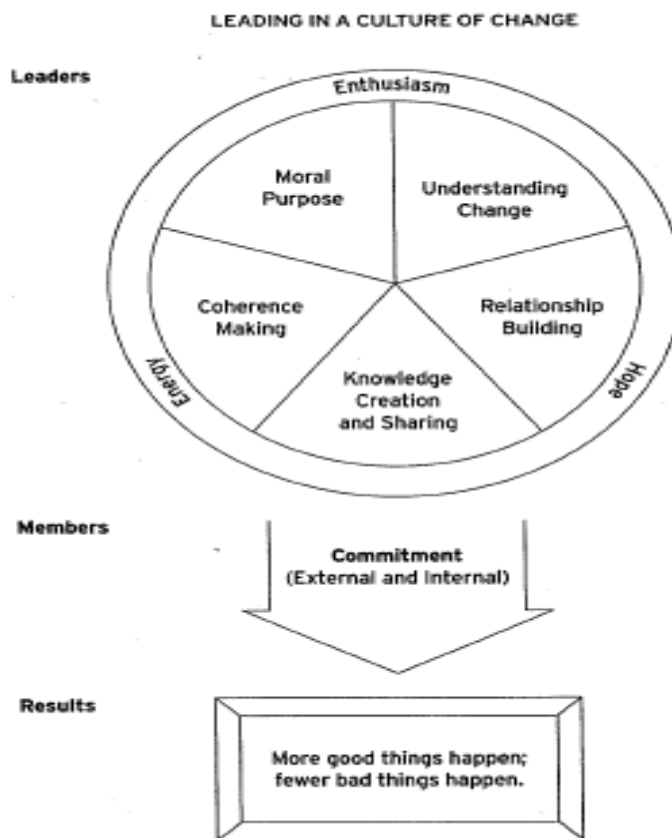
moral responsibility required on the part of the leadership team. While he was not directly involved in business leadership, Michael Fullan was particularly concerned for the welfare of school personnel in times of change. His view of leadership in times of change is that it involves moral purpose. Thus, for this research, Fullan's (2001) moral outcomes framework has been seen to offer a valuable approach to education leadership in a time of change.

### **Theoretical underpinning: 'moral purpose'**

A theoretical model proposed by Michael Fullan (Fullan, 2001:3) considers 'moral purpose' as acting with 'the intention of making a positive difference in the lives of employees, customers and society as a whole'. Fullan (2001:1) perceives change as a doubled-edged sword; its relentless pace is likely to run us off our feet, and yet when things are unsettled we can find new ways to move ahead and create breakthroughs; its success is dependent on good leadership:

On the one side, fear, anxiety, loss danger, panic; on the other, exhilaration, risk-taking, excitement, improvements, was energizing. For better or for worse, change arouses emotions, and when emotions intensify, leadership is the key.

The framework offered by Fullan (2001:5) – 'Leading in a culture of change' (see Figure 2.1) – has inspired me in my research to look at both the complexities of change and the leadership it demands.

**Figure 2.1 Framework for leadership**

Source: Fullan, 2001, 5

Fullan's theoretical framework for leadership has allowed me to gain a better understanding of the leadership required, when there is an intention to bring about change, and the impact these changes will have on the daily lives of VET practitioners.

### Possible directions for the future

The term 'globalisation' has been used in the VET sector a great deal in recent years, yet the full extent of its impact on the VET sector is still unclear. A better understanding of the impact globalisation is likely to have on the Australian market may enable us to forecast its impact on the overall educational requirements of the nation, and particularly the impact on VET

requirements. Once these requirements are understood, we can move on to look at the pedagogical changes needed to deliver the required outcome to maintain Australia's competitive advantage in the global market. VET is an integral part of the Australian market economy and therefore requires skilled trainers who understand how to engage and transform students.

At the micro level Richardson and Tan (2007) have suggested the following combination of steps to better align the VET sector and the broad structure of its offerings with the future needs of the economy:

- Use the best available model of the economy to project the expected growth or decline of occupations and the volume of replacement vacancies, at a fairly broad level.
- Check these projections against other sources of information, such as those contained in the job prospects listing compiled by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations.
- Confine these projections to the next five years and update them regularly with the latest information.

Technological advances should be constantly updated to understand how these advances will most likely affect delivery of training in the VET sector. The possibilities of providing appropriate professional development to assist with technological developments should also be looked at, so that VET trainers can stay ahead of their students when delivering training.

Another possible research direction may be towards the development of the 'self' for VET practitioners, directed by individuals and the people they work with. There are many changes going on in the VET industry and every individual is different, so only they would know what they would need most in order to cope with these changes. Colleagues may be able to help, but only if individuals themselves ask for help, so there needs to be a support mechanism in place for all practitioners to be able to ask for help.

The changes in funding have made it hard for collaboration between RTOs, because every RTO needs to find their niche in order to stay competitive for the funding allocated by the government. Funding for RTOs

is based on student numbers and number of completions. The more students attracted by the RTOs, the more funding they can achieve. This funding system has increased competition, but unfortunately has decreased collaboration between RTOs. We need to encourage collaboration to avoid duplication of innovations, and avoid the deceleration of advancement in vocational education.

## **Conclusion**

In many respects, the issues relating to the changing environment, contexts and nature of VET training and trainers, is a reflection of the old conundrum of whether a glass of water is half-empty or to the optimist half-full. Evidence from the literature suggests that the role of VET trainers is expanding, while the availability of full-time employment is diminishing. The identity of the VET trainer and trainer is changing and the future is uncertain; meanwhile, while the corporate way of managing a VET institution is a certainty. The reality is institutions, due to numerous pressures from globalisation, government policy changes, and industry expectations, are seen to be more bottom line than educationally driven.

There is little doubt that more people are now more concerned with the task of building the skills of the work force than ever before. All are subject to different contextual factors, shaping the degree to which they can go about their tasks of developing competencies in future and of the current work force. Another constraint placed on the development of these competencies is the ever changing work force within vocational education, and the diminishing roles of ongoing and full-time contract staff. Resource allocation can also be a constraint, whether it is human, financial or physical.

Each subgroup of VET trainers (be they TAFE trainers, human resource development professionals, private trainers, contractors or sessional trainers) work in environments that are shaped by a range of contextual factors, such as workplace cultures and occupational cultures (some of which can



potentially be influenced by the managers involved), which have the potential to impact their attitudes to VET reform. Regardless of how these attitudes are shaped, the VET sector should seek to teach courses that will meet future demands from employers in terms of quantity and the type of skills, knowledge and attributes required. The question is how the VET sector anticipates what these future demands might be in the context of a rapidly evolving domestic and global economy.

Another issue in question is whether the VET sector can develop VET trainers to better handle changing pedagogical practices that are slowly being introduced to the VET sector, the use of new technology, and the new phenomenon of globalisation. With ever increasing casualisation and ageing of the work force, it will make it an extremely challenging task for those involved to develop VET trainers to their fullest potential.

In the next chapter, I will: outline the methodology I employed to gather the data for my research; detail and justify the methods I employed in my research; and explain and comment on the techniques I used in analysing my data.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

#### Introduction

In this chapter I describe the research methodology used for investigating the changes in the working lives of Vocational Education and Training (VET) practitioners in recent years. The nature and purpose of qualitative research methodology and case study methods are also described. The case study method I have used for this investigation – case study selection, including data collection and analysis – is outlined and explained. The limitations and trustworthiness of the research method used are also discussed in this chapter.

My research adopts a qualitative approach using a case study method aimed at understanding changes in the working lives of VET practitioners in recent years within two VET institutions, namely:

- **Andrew Barton Institute (ABI)**
- **Matthew Nixon Institute (MNI)**<sup>1</sup>

A qualitative approach was considered to be the most appropriate method to address the research questions for this research. Qualitative data focuses on naturally occurring, ordinary events in their natural settings with the influence of the global environment and government policy changes being taken into account.

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<sup>1</sup> These names are pseudonyms.

## Qualitative research

‘Qualitative research’ is a broad term used to describe the different types of investigation that aim to provide a better understanding and explanation of a social phenomenon that may be taking place in the natural environment. Other terms used include naturalistic inquiry, interpretive research, field study, participant observation, inductive research, case study and ethnography (Merriam 1998). Denzin and Lincoln (2011:3) note that qualitative research crosses several fields, disciplines and historical movements in which the research meaning is different; they do, however, offer a generic definition:

Qualitative research is a field of inquiry in its own right. It crosscuts disciplines, field, and subject matter. A complex interconnected family of terms, concepts, and assumptions surrounds the term. These include the traditions associated with foundationalism, positivism, post-foundationalism, post-positivism, post-structuralism, postmodernism, post-humanism, and the many qualitative research perspectives and methods connected to cultural and interpretive studies.

In this research I used field notes and observations made between 2008 and 2014; my perspective was that of a frontline staff member and a member of the administrative staff employed in a VET institute. By using field notes, observations and interviews I was able to interpret the phenomena of the changes that took place in the VET industry across that period. Working in different VET institutes has given me an insight into the naturalistic world of Vocational Education and Training, and being at the core of the change that took place between 2008 and 2014 afforded a real sense of how the changes took place and what effect these had on the perspectives of office, training and administrative staff. By applying grounded theory using inductive qualitative analysis of data I was able to analyse discourses that took place and how these discourses created an environment of confusion, stress and disenchantment. I was also able to understand that the uneasy environment created was not entirely caused by external factors, but by self-determining actions of individuals.

### **Distinguishing between qualitative and quantitative research**

I am aware that there has been an ongoing debate for at least three decades about the relative merits of qualitative versus quantitative research methodologies. While this is neither the time nor the place to enter that debate, there are key differences I need to highlight in order to justify the research methods I have used in this research.

### **Key characteristics of my qualitative research**

In conducting this research, I sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the changes in the lives of Vocational Education and Training (VET) practitioners. According to Stainback and Stainback (1988), a holistic description of events, procedures and philosophies occurring in natural settings is often needed to make accurate situational decisions, or in my research situational reflections.

Merriam (1998:1) highlights five major characteristics of qualitative research:

- An interest in understanding the meaning people have constructed – how they make sense of the world.

The researcher as the primary instrument for data collection and analysis compared with using other data collection instruments.

It usually involves fieldwork in observing behaviour in a natural setting.

It primarily employs an inductive research strategy by building towards theories or hypotheses rather than testing theory, building towards theory from observations and intuitive understandings gained from the field.

The product of qualitative study is richly descriptive – words and pictures, rather than numbers, to convey what has been learned about the phenomenon.

Merriam (1998:1) also lists three associated characteristics of qualitative research:

- The design is often emergent and flexible responding to changing circumstances.

Sample selection is usually non-random, purposeful and small.

Researchers spend significant amounts of time in the natural settings of the study and often in intense contact with participants.

The complexities of a situation can be illustrated through a case study (e.g. there is more than one factor that can contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon being examined). A case study describes the influence of people (e.g. differences of opinion of those interviewed) and the influence of time on the phenomenon (e.g. the time at which the interviews are carried out can have different effects to the answers). It can also describe the influence of external factors such as government policy changes and global issues. Information about the case study is obtained from many sources (e.g. interviews, observations, publications).

### **Advantages of qualitative data**

Miles and Huberman (1994:1) have pointed out the range and usefulness of qualitative research data:

Qualitative data are sexy. They are a source of well grounded, rich description and explanations of processes in identifiable contexts. With qualitative data one can preserve chronological flow, see precisely which events led to which consequences, and derive fruitful explanations. Then, too, good qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new integrations; they help researchers to go beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks. Finally the findings from qualitative studies have a quality of ‘undeniability’ – words, meaningful flavour – that often proves far more convincing to a reader – another researcher, policymaker, a practitioner – than pages of summarised numbers.

The description of chronological order and being able to see which events led to which consequences gives essential insight to how I had to adapt my inductive data reduction process to observe how the changes in VET led to the consequences of uncertainty and confusion, stress, low morale and disenchantment.

### Case study methods

A case study method was selected for its flexibility to gain an intense, holistic and rich description and analysis of the changes taking place in the working lives of VET practitioners. The following sections will describe the case study approach, the case study method as a qualitative research outlining the different types of case study available, summarise the advantages and limitations of the approach, and justify the chosen case study approach for this research. Merriam (1998:7) categorises five common types of qualitative research: these are set out in Table 3.1; case study is the last category listed – though not the least.

**Table 3.1 Five common types of qualitative research**

Type of research	Characteristics
<b>Narrative</b>	Includes description, interpretation and understanding
	Identifies recurrent patterns in the form of themes or categories
	May delineate a process
<b>Ethnography</b>	Focuses on society and culture
	Uncovers and describes beliefs, values and attitudes that structure behaviour of a group
<b>Phenomenology</b>	Is concerned with essence or basic structure of a phenomenon
	Uses data that are the [participant's and the investigator's firsthand experience of the phenomenon
<b>Grounded Theory</b>	Is designed to inductively build a substantive theory regarding some aspects of practice
	Is 'Grounded' in the real world
<b>Case Study</b>	Is intensive, holistic description and analysis of a single unit or bounded system
	Can be combined with any of the above types

Source: Merriam, 1998:7

### Definitions of a case study

A case study is not easy to define. Several writers note its ambiguities and dilemmas. For example, Lincoln and Guba (1985:360) have commented:

While the literature is replete with references to case studies and with examples of case study reports, there seems to be little agreement about what a case study is.

It was noted by Burns (1997:364) that ‘case study’ has ‘been used as a catch all category for anything that does not fit into experimental, survey or historical methods’.

Yin (2009:52) has defined case study research *method* as

an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

There is however, according to Yin (2009:52), some confusion about how this definition may be applied, as a case study may be described as one of three approaches including:

- a process of conducting the inquiry – as case study research;
- a bounded system or unit of analysis – the case; and
- the product or end report of an investigation – the ‘end product’.

Stake (1994) focused on trying to pinpoint the unit of study – the case. For him, the case is a single unit or entity is bounded; a case could be a person, group of people, program, unit, class, community, school, or single policy. Stake called this an ‘integrated system’ (1994: p8). Miles and Huberman (1994: p4) define a case as ‘a phenomenon of some sort occurring in a bounded context.’ There is a common consensus among most academic writers of this idea regarding it as a bounded system or context. Merriam (1998) and Wolcott (1992) defined it as an end-product of field oriented research.

Case study is acknowledged as a triangulated research strategy. The process of triangulation can occur with data, investigators, theories and even methodology. Stake (1995) has stated that the protocols for the criteria of

selecting cases, data gathering, analysis and interpretation, case study research roles and triangulation and validation are used to ensure accuracy; alternative explanations are called triangulation. Triangulation arises from the ethical need to confirm the validity of the processes. In case studies, this could be done by using multiple sources of data (Yin, 1989). The issue with the case study method is it establishes meaning rather than location.

### **Case study as a method of research**

The approach of case study is commonly used both in teaching (Christensen and Hansen, 1987) and as a research methodology (Easton, 1982). Case study through the use of a wide range of traditions – including interpretive approaches such as grounded theory, dramaturgical analysis, ethno methodology and conversation analysis and political approaches such as critical discourse analysis – will improve the quality of the research outcome through a variety of methods of data analysis.

The aim of eliciting understanding and meaning through the use of inductive data analysis will endeavour to produce findings that are richly descriptive (Merriam, 1998). The researcher in using a case study method will be the primary instrument of data collection and analysis. Further the use of field work and the method of triangulation will ensure the reliability of findings from the case study.

Case study provides an in-depth study of a particular case in time. It is especially useful in gathering rich information. It acknowledges the complexities of people and organisations. By interviewing a range of individuals in different levels of an organisation, the issues, concerns and important aspects of the phenomenon can be gathered. This involves the interpretation of an individual's story/perceptions and then comparing it with other participants within the unit of analysis. The case study is best used when the research question is attempting to uncover 'how', 'what' and 'why'; it does not require control over behavioural events and focuses on contemporary events (Yin, 2009). Case studies are particularly common in



the social sciences, education, law, psychology and management. Merriam (1998:101) further expanded the case study approach as a qualitative research methodology by highlighting the following features: particularistic, descriptive and heuristic. The definitions of these features are listed below:

- **Particularistic** – meaning that case studies focus on a particular situation, event program or phenomenon. The case is important about what it reveals. It concentrates on what a particular group confront about specific problem taking a holistic view.
- **Descriptive** – meaning that the end product is rich ‘thick’ description of the phenomenon; life-like, grounded and exploratory.
- **Heuristic** – meaning it illuminates the reader’s understanding of the phenomenon; being about new learning, extending the reader’s experience or confirming what is known.

Hamel (1993) has argued that the case study method has proven to be in complete harmony with the three key words that characterise any qualitative research method: describing, understanding and explaining. Through the data I collected I was able to describe the changes that were taking place in VET, and by analysing the data I was able to gain an in-depth understanding of how practitioners felt about the changes taking place in VET. By using inductive data reduction, I was able to understand the effects of these changes and the consequences.

Case study involves a triangulated research strategy. Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg (1991) have asserted that triangulation can occur between data, investigators, theories and even methodologies.

### **Types of case study**

Various writers have described different types of case study used in the study of social science. Bassey (1999) has described these different types as: theory seeking, theory testing, storytelling, picture drawing, and evaluation. Yin (2009:18) has presented at least four applications for a case study model:

- To explain complex causal links in real-life interventions.
- To describe the real-life context in which the intervention has occurred.
- To describe the intervention itself.
- To explore those situations in which the intervention being evaluated has no clear set of outcomes.

The case study method adopted in this research essentially follows Yin's model in order to explain and understand the complexity of the links between the changes in VET to the changes in the working lives of VET practitioners.

Merriam (1998:102) identifies four *types* of case study, each of which is based on their purpose:

- **Descriptive:** a detailed account of the phenomenon under study.
- **Interpretive:** used to develop conceptual categories or to illustrate and support, to challenge theoretical assumptions held prior to the data gathering.
- **Evaluative:** involves description, explanation and judgement.
- **Theory building:** generating propositions and theories.

In my research I was able to combine these four techniques: to articulate the changes; to interpret how the changes in VET affected different staff; to identify concepts which, in turn, were clustered by a process of inductive data reduction (Ling, Heasley and Ling, 2014) into themes – using a process of analysing, evaluating and creating – that led to the generation of propositions that were presented as organising themes; and finally, developing a theoretical model to be used in organisations experiencing difficulties in adapting to changes due to both external and internal forces.

Stake (1995) makes a distinction between intrinsic and instrumental case studies. The former examines a particular situation for its own sake irrespective of outside influences. The latter researches one or two particular situations in order to understand an outside influence.

**Multiple case studies**

Multiple case studies are those in which several case studies are completed and compared, and allowed for generalisations to be made. Other terms include the following: collective, cross-case, multi-site or comparative case studies (Merriam, 1998). Multiple case designs have distinct advantages. While a single case study is the in-depth study of a particular case, a comparison of other cases can put the first case into perspective. The evidence from multiple case studies is often considered more compelling and the study more rigorous and robust. Miles and Huberman (1994:29) note, in reference to multiple case studies:

By looking at a range of similar and contrasting cases, we can understand a single-case finding, grounding it by specifying how and where and, if possible, why it carries on as it does. We can strengthen the precision, the validity and the stability of the findings.

Multiple case studies are often used as a strategy to enhance the external validity and generalisability of the findings. The disadvantage of multiple cases is that the rationale for selecting a single case design cannot always be satisfied by multiple case studies; indeed, Yin (1993) notes that unusual, rare cases or critical cases are unlikely to involve several cases.

**Advantages of a case study approach**

One of the biggest advantages of the case study approach is its potential for investigating complex social units consisting of multiple variables of likely importance, to understand the phenomenon. It can offer insights and illuminate meanings that will expand its reader's experience. The quintessential characteristics of case study are that they strive towards a holistic understanding of cultural systems of action (Feagin et al., 1990).

Gummesson (2000) has identified three *advantages* of the case study approach. Firstly, the approach provides an opportunity for a holistic view of a process. Secondly, it is able to achieve this because it provides a greater opportunity, compared with other methods, to study many different aspects,

and the ability to examine them in relation to each other, and view the process within its total environment. Finally, the process allows the researcher to utilise their capacity for understanding.

Case studies are relevant to practitioners because they provide them with recommendations that are usually understandable and able to be implemented. Case study approaches are also useful because the language used is often familiar to the readers, and the analysis has the advantage of a rich description that enables the practitioner to apply the findings to the individual circumstances. In many cases, case study methodology can offer future possible research strategies and serve as a basis for theoretical development and grounded theories.

At the outset of using case study as a research method, Yin (1984:23) defined case study as

...an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context; when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident; and in which multiple sources of evidence are used.

Thus, the robust procedures of case study provide an ideal method when a holistic, in-depth investigation involving multiple sources is required. Stake (1995) has developed similar procedures; nevertheless he recognises that whether using quantitative or qualitative measures, the data collection and analysis methods are known to hide some details. Overall, however, case studies are designed to draw out the details from the viewpoint of participants and stakeholders using multiple sources of data. Yin (1994) further pointed out that case studies support multi-perspectival analyses in which the researcher considers not just the voice and perspective of the participants, but also those of the relevant groups of participants and the interaction between them.

A need for triangulation in case studies arises from the ethical requirement to establish a level of validity of the processes used. As with other qualitative research methods, this is best achieved by using multiple sources of data that assist in establishing meaning rather than proof. In the

two case studies I undertook (i.e. Andrew Barton and Matthew Nixon Institutes), I triangulated my findings by using three sources of data, as follows:

- Semi-structured interviews, on a one-to-one basis.
- Literature reviews of publications at local and national levels.
- Personal experience and reflections.

### **Limitations of case study approach**

There are however several limitations to the case study approach, highlighted by several academic writers. Gummesson (2000:50) has noted three main criticisms for the case study method:

- Case study lacks the statistical reliability and validity of standard quantitative methods.
- There is the ability to generate hypotheses; what is more, hypotheses that are generated cannot be tested.
- It is difficult to make generalisations based on just a few studies.

Hamel (1993) has highlighted similar limitations when he drew attention to a lack of representativeness and lack of rigour in collection, construction and analysis of data. Both of these limitations represent the positivistic views of quantitative researchers and ignore the real-world needs and benefits of social science research. Further limitations, pointed out by Bassey (1999) and Merriam (1998), are the lack of time and money to conduct the research effectively, and political considerations that may reveal information that may be contrary to expected or desired outcomes. Again, these positions ignore the benefits of applying an inductive approach to real-world situations as opposed to the narrowing effect of the deductive approach, demanded by quantitative approaches that require confirmation of hypotheses via the use of inferential statistics.

## **Justification for the use of case study**

Case study was chosen as a qualitative research method to obtain in-depth understanding of the changes that occurred in the working lives of VET practitioners in recent years. This phenomenon of change is set within a complex social unit (the VET sector), consisting of multiple variables that could have potential importance.

Merriam (1998) has noted that a case study method can be justified, if the strengths of the method exceed the limitations. The case study approach thus provides an excellent medium for conducting qualitative research aimed at describing and understanding what is happening and why, with respect to the adoption of government policy changes and globalisation. This approach is suitable to uncovering the interaction of significant factors that may be highly important to understandings of what and why change occurs, in this instance, in the working lives of VET practitioners.

Yin (2009) points out that the method of case study is suited to situations in which it is impossible to separate the phenomenon's variables from its context. The hospitality departments of the ABI and MNI provided the ideal units for a case study approach. They were the most logical and appropriate units of study to exemplify the effects of government policy changes and globalisation, because the study is taking place within a bounded entity, namely the VET sector. The VET sector conforms to the idea of a bounded entity or system that helps to define a case study. Also it limits the number of people interviewed, and the observations taking place within a defined time. The case study approach is a flexible approach that allows for more than one purpose. It provides an appropriate method for description, insight, discovery and interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation. It also provides the opportunity for theory testing and theory building.

This case study does not start with a clean sheet of paper. The literature review conducted on the changes in the Australian VET sector provides essential background and theory, important to the topic at hand. Previous studies cited in the literature review (see Chapter 2) have been seen to

generate, identify and test various assumptions and theories of changes in VET. Also, a conceptual framework, which has emerged from the literature, provides a lens for guiding this case study research. The literature review and conceptual framework provide the basis for identifying or confirming some aspects of the theories arose and other empirical findings.

The case study method provides an opportunity for theory building and generation. The rich information that emerges from the case study allows for the generation of new ideas and possible recommendations for future studies. Perry (1998) argues there is an expectation for postgraduate studies or research: by using the case study method, this will generate new issues of research that can contribute to the building of new theories. The two case studies chosen for this research were included to enhance the robustness of the study and allow for comparisons. The study also included the identification of emergent themes for the purpose of in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of changes in the working lives of VET practitioners.

### **Case study design**

In my research I chose a method of case study design for the purpose of discovery, gaining insight and interpreting the phenomenon under study, rather than hypothesis testing. The theoretical framework established through the literature review process (discussed in Chapter 2), provided a foundation on which I was able to build an understanding of the changes in the VET industry. Changes in the nature and patterns of work are not easily able to be captured in a single frame of reference: there are shifts occurring in the nature of work itself and in the composition of the work force; new policies are being introduced and old policies are being phased out in order to remain relevant and current. The changes occurring during the period of this research (2005–11) included the amalgamation of TAFE institutes and the creation of a market for the provision of part of the state funding of VET, in which

public and private providers competed for funding from the state government (Shah, 2003).

In the period under consideration, teachers and trainers in institutional VET settings experienced considerable changes to their work. These changes impacted the ways in which teachers and trainers understand their professional identities and their relationship with other parts of the VET sector (Chappell & Johnson, 2003). The roles of VET teachers have not only expanded; they have also diversified.

The VET sector represents a critical and arguably unique intersection between key influences of lifelong learning, formal learning, the workplace and broader community. The actual roles of VET practitioners in this new working environment with its different expectations and emphases have been, and still are evolving (Harris, Simons & Moore, 2005). Practitioners are being asked to work in different ways and to undertake new roles and responsibilities; these are additional to the traditional 'teaching' role and are also substantially different in terms of focus, purpose and practice (Chappell & Johnston, 2003). Favero (2003) also found such issues included:

- meeting the demands of regulatory compliance;
- funding and concerns about the provision of transferable skills;
- reluctance of some employers to release trainees for training; and
- changes to the roles of TAFE institute teachers.

This shift from a teaching to consulting and facilitating focus is further elaborated by Harris, Simons, and Moore (2005), to consist of more than a simple change in emphasis in what VET teachers do. It entails a change in *who* they are and *how* they relate to their immediate environment, other stakeholders and the external environment. A common feature in commentaries on these new ways of working, being constructed for practitioners in contemporary education and training sites (see, for example, Ainley & Bailey, 1997; Chappell, 2001; Farrell, 2000; Seddon, 2000), is the impact of changing established practice that affects identity at work. Chappell and Johnston (2003:8) point out that this tends to occur when:



...education and training practitioners are asked to do things differently in their everyday practices, they are being called on to become different practitioners; to have different understandings of their role in education and training, to have different relationships with learners, to conceptualise their professional and vocational knowledge differently, to alter their relationship with their organisation, to change their understanding of who they are in the new education and training landscape. In short, to change their identity at work.

The model of the ‘new VET practitioner’ in much of the VET literature is that of the market oriented, business focused entrepreneur who is able to customise learning appropriately, and adapt to a more diverse range of clients, which includes industry, employers, and individual students (Harris, Mitchell et al., 2006; Simons et al., 2005).

### **Identifying the cases to be investigated**

#### **Selection of institutions**

Of the more than 500 contracted RTO’s in Victoria, I have chosen two – Andrew Barton Institute (ABI) and Matthew Nixon Institute (MNI) – in which to conduct my research. The selection was based on the accessibility I had to the institutes themselves (as a result of being a frontline staff member and a member of the administrative staff): to the staff, and to departmental managers at both institutes. These two institutes are among the largest in Victoria, and have a very reputable standing with respect to the training they deliver to their students. They are two of the largest and longest standing TAFE institutions in Victoria, with both a national and an international reputation for their educational products.

### **Collecting data**

#### **Sources of data**

Evidence was collected from multiple sources, including individual interviews, document searches and personal observation/recording. An important principle in the writing of case studies is the use of multiple

sources of data to validate findings, as noted by Yin (2009). Three different sources of data – new teaching staff, established teaching staff, and senior educators or managers – enabled the process of holistic reflections based on three differing perspectives from three levels of staff within the hierarchy of the organisations. This will help validate the data collected and by validating the data, we can ensure the quality of the research both internally as a researcher and externally with the issues of relevance as pointed out by Flick (2007).

### **Interviews**

The data collected from semi-structured interviews were central to this study. From each of the two institutions I chose two senior educators and/or managers, two long-term teachers who had been with their respective institutions for more than five years and two new or sessional teachers. The sample size therefore involved twelve participants. Prior to approaching the teachers, I asked the centre managers for their consent and approval to carry out interviews with these teachers. Approvals were given in writing on the understanding that interviews were confidential and the findings were to be used for my research only. The participants were randomly chosen from a staff list, dependent only on their willingness to participate and their availability to be interviewed. Once staff members had agreed to participate, I contacted each personally, to establish when they were available to be interviewed and their preferred location.

It is important to note that interview participants represented different levels of seniority, both in length of service and in organisational positions. This was deliberate to get a broader view of changes affecting practitioners in the VET industry.

### **Interview format**

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to encourage the teachers to put forward their thoughts and feelings about changes affecting

their everyday life as a VET practitioner. I was able to treat participants as colleagues rather than a subject of enquiry, and the questions were directed towards gaining an understanding of their perspectives on changes in VET and how these changes had affected their working lives. The topics for interview focused on the following themes:

- Changes that had occurred in the VET sector in recent years (five to ten years).
- The driving forces behind these changes.
- The effects on their working lives.
- Changes in power relationships that may have emerged.

The design of semi-structured interviews was flexible, allowing all participants to put forward extended and honest views; consequently, the findings from these interviews were of an emergent nature. The interviews varied in length, ranging from 30 minutes to one hour.

During interviews I briefly explained their purpose and informed each participant that the information collected would be regarded as strictly confidential and individual identities would not be revealed. They were also informed they were under no obligation to participate and could withdraw from interview at any time. All interviews were digitally audio-recorded; I undertook transcription personally in order to obtain a complete grasp of content across all interviews. Minichiello et al. (1995) has discussed the advantages and disadvantages of audio-recording interviews and I kept these in mind during my interviews, as follows:

**Advantages of audio-recording:**

- Offers a means of obtaining a full and accurate record of interviews where a more natural conversation style can be developed.
- Aids in fostering increased rapport between interviewer and interviewee.
- Allows the interviewer to listen attentively and converse with the interviewee in a way that may encourage the interviewee to be

relaxed and say what they really want to say (Minichiello et al, 1999:408).

**Disadvantages of audio-recording:**

- Some interviewees may find this process inhibiting because they are not comfortable about being recorded.
- A lack of recording of the non-verbal data, such as body language and facial expression (Minichiello et al, 1999:408).

Non-verbal data such as field notes and observations of interactions within the institutions were also used to provide broader and more in-depth understanding of the changes that took place and the effects they had on the practitioners within the institution.

The use of self-reflection and my experience were brought together in this research to provide readers with an understanding of how the data was interpreted. This was important to the research because the strength of the data analysis depended on my background, regardless of whether or not my perceptions agreed with those of the respondents involved in this research.

**Content analysis**

Reviewing the literature written by many scholars helped me to identify a conceptual framework within which this case study would take place. The most significant of these was that of Miles & Huberman (1994:245) who indicated an inductive approach, such as that which I used in my data analysis, involves

...the researchers “immersing” themselves in the documents (i.e., the various messages) in order to identify the dimensions or *themes* that seem meaningful to the producers of each message.

In this sense, the method I used differed markedly from that of a deductive process in which a conceptual framework is presumed from the outset; the data collected is then analysed in the light of this conceptual framework. Miles & Huberman (1994:246) highlighted that ‘a greater reliance upon induction is

necessary' in order to 'present the perceptions of others in the most forthright manner'.

It was my intention to present 'the perceptions' of participants in my study as completely as I could, and so I used a process of inductive data reduction (Ling, 2014) in which I identified inductive themes and 'linked or ground these categories to the data from which they derive' (Miles & Huberman, 1994:246) in order to 'ground these themes' in the 'personal experiences, scholarly experience (having read about it), or...research undertaken to examine the matter'. At the same time, Miles & Huberman (1994:246) suggest that

researchers, similarly, draw on these experiences in order to propose tentative comparisons that assist in creating various deductions. Experience thus underpins both inductive and deductive reasoning.

It was from this interplay of experience, induction, and deduction, that Glaser & Strauss (1967: 2-3) formulated their description of 'grounded theory':

To generate theory...we suggest as the best approach an initial, systematic discovery of the theory from the data of social research. Then one can be relatively sure that the theory will fit the work. And since categories are discovered by examination of the data, laymen involved in the area to which the theory applies will usually be able to understand it, while sociologists who work in other areas will recognize an understandable theory linked with the data of a given area.

My study focused on the phenomenon of changes in the working lives of VET practitioners in recent years. By using grounded theory I hoped to gain an explicit and distinct insight into the changes affecting the lives of VET practitioners. To achieve this, I was encouraged to use a process of inductive analysis in the initial stages of data analysis from the data I gathered from semi-structured interviews.

### Origins of inductive data reduction

The IDR approach that I used in my data analysis has been developed at Victoria University over that past five years by adjunct professor Dr Ian Ling in order to provide an effective method of taking a manageable inductive approach to small scale qualitative research. IDR has its origins in the work of sociologist Claude Levi-Strauss (1966) developed the metaphor of meaning-making bricoleurs that resulted in the grounded theory of qualitative research of Strauss. Strauss (1987, 22-3) shifted the focus to ‘an emphasis on the generation of theory and the data in which that theory is grounded’ by,

systematically analysing data, often sentence by sentence, or phrase by phrase of the field note, interview or other document; by ‘constant comparison’, data are extensively collected and coded.

...The focus of analysis is not merely on collecting or ordering ‘a mass of data, but on organizing many ideas which have emerged from analysis of the data’.

Strauss (1987, 23-39) provided a model for data collection, coding, categorising, theorising, comparing, integrating and sorting that used ten basic operations. IDR uses some of these elements in which it is possible to develop a simple, user-friendly method of inductive data reduction that retains the essential concept of grounded theory which, for Strauss & Corbin (1994, 274), is ‘interpretive’, engages in the ‘verification of hypotheses’, and has ‘conceptual density’ that is rich in ‘concept development and relationships’. Importantly, the conceptual development relies on ‘great familiarity with associated data’ and the relationships ‘are checked out systematically with the data’. Strauss & Corbin (1994, 278) spelt out their view of the constituent parts of theorising and theory which they define as ‘*plausible* relationships proposed among *concepts* and *sets of concepts*. The theory they envisaged was ‘conceptually dense’, described ‘patterns of action and interaction’ between ‘actors’, was ‘concerned with discovering *process*’ and has an element of strong predictability: if ‘approximately similar conditions obtain *then* approximately similar consequences should occur’. These elements are emphasised by Miles & Huberman (1994) and have been

a major focus for development by Denzin & Lincoln (1994, 2000, 2011). Rogers (2012, 1) has conceptualised these ideas as ‘practices of bricolage research’ that may be ‘beneficial to both novice and seasoned researchers who pursue alternative methodological approaches’. Most recently, Ling (2011, 2013), Ling, Heasley & Ling (2014) and a number of past (see, for example, Heasley, 2012; Setiawan 2014) and current doctoral students have modified and refined the IDR approach.

### **Analysing and interpreting data**

Each of the two case studies I undertook was treated independently. Analysis of interviews followed qualitative methodology espoused by Miles & Huberman (1994) incorporating ‘inductive data reduction’, ‘data display’ and ‘data triangulation’ with appropriate trustworthiness procedures built into the design.

The interactive model of data analysis as described in Miles & Huberman (1994:12) was used to examine the evidence provided to explore respective changes in the ABI and MNI, and how change has affected the working lives of VET practitioners in these institutions. The two case studies were written up in the reference of a conceptual framework, which describes the changes in VET. The themes that arose were interpreted in the inductive data reduction (IDR) process (Ling, 2014) from the data recorded.

The primary purpose of the inductive approach was to allow research findings to emerge from frequent, dominant or significant themes inherent in the raw data, without the restraints imposed by structured methodologies. The inductive data reduction approach was used in this research to:

- establish clear links between the research objectives and the summary findings derived from the raw data (Thomas, 2003);
- condense the extensive raw text data into a brief, summary form;
- develop a theory about the underlying structure of experiences evident in the raw data.

The inductive approach reflected frequently reported patterns identified in qualitative data analysis as emergent themes. This approach provides a convenient and efficient way of analysing qualitative data for multiple research purposes. Some assumptions, which may be seen as a composite of the use of inductive and deductive approaches, are described as follows:

- Data analysis was determined by both the research objectives (deductive) and multiple readings and interpretations of the raw data (inductive). Thus the findings are derived from both the research objectives outlined by the researcher(s) and findings arising directly from the analysis of the raw data (Thomas, 2003:12).
- The primary mode of analysis is the development of categories from the raw data into a framework or model that captures key themes and processes judged to be important (Thomas, 2003:12).
- The research findings resulted from multiple interpretations made by me as I coded the raw data.
- The findings were shaped: by my assumptions and by my experience as the researcher conducting the research and carrying out the data analysis; and by my experience as a teacher and manager in both institutes.
- In order for the findings to be usable, I had to make decisions about what was more or less important in the data.
- I recognised that a different researcher would be likely to produce findings that were not identical to mine, and with components that did not overlap.
- The trustworthiness of my findings might be assessed by a range of techniques such as: independent replication within a project; comparison with findings from previous research; and triangulation within a project.

Interpretative analysis used in this study involved the following stages:

- reading and re-reading the data to become very familiar with it;
- delineation of all meaning units pertaining to the phenomenon;



- Labelling the categories: word or phrases used to refer to category. The label carries inherent meanings that may not reflect the specific features of the category;
- identifying the meanings and possibly underlying meanings – from the interview reading questions and what emerged from the text;
- grouping of the meaning units into categories and emergent themes;
- reading these emergent themes in relation to the whole interview transcript and further searching of the transcript to see if new categories or themes needed to be added; and
- Incorporating the emergent themes into a model, theory or framework by using frameworks which include an open network (no hierarchy or sequence).

I considered three approaches based on Van Manen's (1990) alternatives to the analysis of phenomenological data. The first approach involved a detailed examination of every sentence or sentence cluster for clues to illuminate the phenomenon. The second approach was more selective: I chose statements & phrases I considered to be instructive about the phenomenon being investigated. The data was then reduced to create themes for the purpose of analysis. The third approach involved a holistic approach, in which I focused on the entire text and attempted to identify the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole. This process overlaps that of 'inductive data reduction' as spelt out by Ling (2014) and Ling, Heasley & Ling (2014).

The following procedures were used for the inductive data reduction of the raw qualitative data:

- Preparation of raw data files by formatting the raw data files in an excel spread sheet, clearly labelling all the different participants from their perspective institutions;

- Close reading of text that have been prepared, through detailed reading so as to get familiar with the content and to gain an understanding of the categories and emergent themes in the text;
- The identification of categories and themes through a process of analysis and evaluation;
- Continuing revision and refinement of category system (Thomas, 2003:12) that resulted in a final set of emergent themes (Ling, 2014:1);
- Within each category, search for further emergent themes;
- Synthesis of the emergent themes in order to construct a set of organising themes (Ling, Heasly & Ling, 2014:2).

### **Assessing trustworthiness**

Bassey (1999) has noted that while the concepts of reliability are vital in quantitative research, they are not so significant in case study research. As an alternative to reliability and validity, Lincoln & Guba (1985) have suggested the concepts of ‘trustworthiness’ and ‘authenticity’. These concepts, Lincoln & Guba argue, afford an effective way of enhancing the integrity of naturalistic research because:

- they replace the positivist paradigm elements of internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity;
- they substitute the naturalistic paradigm elements of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirm ability.

In outlining the parallel criteria for trustworthiness within the positivist and the naturalistic paradigm, Guba & Lincoln (1989:234-235) have posed four important questions:

How can one establish confidence in the ‘truth’ of the findings of a particular inquiry for subjects (participants) with whom and the context in which the inquiry was carried out?

#### **1. Truth value vs. internal validity/credibility.**

- a. How can one determine the extent to which the findings of a particular inquiry have applicability in other contexts or with other subjects (participants)?

**2. Applicability vs. external validity/transferability.**

- a. How can one determine whether the findings of an inquiry would be repeated if the inquiry were replicated with the same (or similar) subjects (participants) in the same (or similar) context?

**3. Consistency vs. reliability/dependability.**

- a. How can an inquirer establish the degree to which the findings of a given inquiry are determined only by subjects (participants) of the inquiry and conditions of the inquiry, and not by biases, motivations, interests, values, prejudices and/or perspectives of the inquirer?

**4. Neutrality vs. objective/confirmability.**

Guba & Lincoln (1989) make it clear that traditional criteria are unworkable for qualitative research and further argue that their criteria for the naturalistic paradigm are more appropriate. As a result, the trustworthiness criteria proposed by Guba & Lincoln (1989) is used in this study. These four notions of trustworthiness as outlined in the above questions are defined in the following sections.

**Credibility**

The focus on quantitative research moves from a presumed truth to establishing the match between the constructed truth of participants and those realities represented by the researcher/investigator. Guba & Lincoln (1989) listed several techniques for enhancing the credibility of a case study.

- **Persistent observation:** through searching to enable the researcher to identify and focus in-depth on those characteristics and features that are most relevant to the research questions. This technique was

employed throughout the research, where I was observant of the changes as I was working within these changes.

**Progressive subjectivity:** anticipated that during the investigation the researcher's views and expectations will have changed from their original construction. If the researcher(s) finds only what he or she expected to find, initially, or seems to become 'stuck' or 'frozen' on some intermediate construction, credibility suffers (Guba & Lincoln, 1989:238). This was used throughout my research to ensure credibility of the research.

**Member checking:** is taking the data, analytical categories, interpretations and constructions back to the case study participants to check their plausibility. Guba & Lincoln (1989:239) considered this as the single most crucial technique for establishing credibility.

Thomas (2003:7) states that stakeholder checks enhance the credibility of findings by allowing research participants and others (who may have a specific interest in the research) to comment on or assess the research findings, interpretations and conclusions. Such checks may be important in establishing credibility for the research findings. For example, participants in the settings studied are given a chance to comment on whether the constructions of the researcher relate to their personal experiences. Stakeholder checks may be carried out on initial documents (e.g. interview transcriptions and summaries) and on data interpretations and findings.

Stakeholder checks may also be conducted progressively throughout the research project both formally and informally. Listed below is a set of procedures that can be carried out throughout the research by:

- summarising the interview data and allowing respondents to immediately correct errors of fact or challenge interpretations;
- Asking respondents during subsequent interviews to verify interpretations and data gathered in earlier interviews; and

- providing copies of the preliminary version, or specific sections of the research report, to stakeholders or stakeholder groups and asking for written or verbal commentary on the report.

The credibility of the research was maintained through consistent reflection on ethics and research validity in the course of the research, as identified by Xi Wang (2012). This reflection process was maintained and reapplied during the writing up of the thesis.

### **Dependability and confirmability**

Dependability is concerned with stability of the data over time, and is generally referred to as the conventional criterion of reliability. Confirmability goes hand in hand with the conventional criterion of objectivity. Guba & Lincoln (1989:243) described it as

...concerned with assuring that the data, interpretations, and outcomes of inquiries are rooted in contexts and persons apart from the evaluator and are not simply figments of the evaluator's imagination.

The assessment of both dependability and confirmability involves a number of steps, and writers such as Guba & Lincoln (1989) claimed that dependability and confirmability audits should be carried out together. In their assessment of dependability, Lincoln & Guba (1985) noted that judgement is made on the adequacy of issues such as the:

- appropriateness of inquiry decisions and methodology shifts;
- extent to which all data have been accounted for and all areas reasonably explored;
- extent to which negative as well as positive data have been searched for including the possibility of influence by factors such as the Pygmalion and Hawthorne effects;
- possible intrusion of instabilities.

In their assessment of confirmability, Lincoln & Guba (1985:324) have argued that the auditor makes a judgement as to 'the extent to which the data and interpretations of the study are grounded in events rather than the

inquirer's personal constructions'. In making this judgement the auditor will proceed with the following steps:

- tracking a sampling of the findings back to the raw data;  
making judgements about whether inferences based on the data are logical;  
investigating the utility of the category structure;  
assessing the degree and incidence of inquirer bias; and  
assessing the inquirer's accommodation strategies (i.e. the efforts made by those audited during the inquiry to ensure confirmability).

This study has provided adequate amounts of material for the construction of an audit trail for this research, to allow for judgements about the dependability and confirmability to be made by others. There is also sufficient detail for researchers who may wish to use this methodology for further research; the range of material available is listed here as:

- **Raw data** – audio recordings of interviews and transcripts.
- **Documents** – past scholarly articles, state and federal government policies, vocational training packages.
- **Inductive data reduction and analysis** – summaries of interview transcripts, categorising transcripts and identifying emergent themes.
- **Data reconstruction and synthesis products** – final report including literature review.
- **Related theory** – using a conceptual framework to interpret the findings from inductive data reduction process.

In concurrence with Lincoln & Guba's (1985:329) argument that naturalistic criteria of trustworthiness 'can never be satisfied to such an extent that the trustworthiness of the inquiry could be labelled as unassailable', I am of the view that the procedures used in this study to ensure the trustworthiness of this investigation are sufficient for trustworthiness to have been established.

### **Delimitations and Limitations**

The major delimitations arise from the focused nature of the topic of study. The research is concerned with the phenomenon of changes in the working lives of VET practitioners, bounded by the time available for research and changes in the past five to ten years. Two institutions were chosen on the basis of their willingness to allow interviews to be carried out with their staff without affecting their day-to-day activities. These institutions were firm on the confidentiality of their staff identities. The inclusion of students, parents, interest groups and other stakeholders would have added a broader range of perspectives, but would have gone beyond the scope of this research. The two institutions chosen may not be typical or representative of all the vocational institutions, but based on Guba & Lincoln's (1989) rich, thick descriptions and Stake's 'naturalistic generalisation', detailed case descriptions may provide an opportunity for transferability to other institutions and private registered training organisations in Victoria and possibly applicable to Australia.

The limitations are concerned with the nature of the qualitative research and case study methodology. As previously discussed in this chapter, both the advantages and disadvantages of qualitative research have been raised. Issues regarding credibility, transferability, generalisability, dependability, and confirmability have also been discussed in relation to trustworthiness, both generally and as they relate to this study. I am confident that the issues of trustworthiness have been satisfied in my findings. The use of multiple case studies, together with my self-reflections and experience, has satisfied the requirements of reliability of findings from this research. By choosing two dominant institutions in the vocational education sector, I have been able to justify their legitimate and relevant use as representative samples.

### **Identifying the research questions**

The research questions were developed based on the literature review and for the purpose of gaining a better understanding of the VET industry and how

changes have affected the working lives of VET practitioners in recent years. The questions developed, based on this reasoning and used in my interviews, were as follows:

- What changes have you noticed in the past five to ten years in the workplace?
- What driving forces have directed changes in the VET industry in recent years?
- How have the changes affected the day-to-day activities of a VET practitioner?
- What power relationships have emerged between administrators, staff and students?
- What leadership skills are required to lead in a culture of change?

## **Conclusion**

In Chapters 4 and 5, the results of the inductive data reduction of the data collected from respective institutions in this study via semi-structured interviews will be presented in tabular form and discussed under the themes that emerged. At each stage of the analysis I provide a summary that will include my personal reflections, both as commentary and as part of an auto-ethnographic response.



## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANDREW BARTON INSTITUTE**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I introduce the process of inductive data reduction (IDR) employed in my research, and apply that process to identify themes that emerge from the first case study undertaken at the Andrew Barton Institute (ABI). Data relating to each emergent theme are summarised in a set of tables. This data is used to provide a description of emergent constructs and concepts in order to provide a coherent picture of the changes that have occurred at ABI in the past ten years.

#### **Inductive data reduction**

Using the technique of inductive data reduction (IDR), I was able to reduce the data collected from semi-formal interviews into constructs, concepts and themes. I grouped clusters of themes to form organising themes that provide an in-depth understanding of the meanings I believe have emerged out of the responses provided in semi-structured interviews. Thus, the organising themes represent a set of reconstructed themes. The reconstructed organising themes agree with my perceptions as a member of staff currently working in the VET industry: they represent the views of someone who has first-hand understanding and experience of the VET context.

## Question 1. What changes have you noticed in the past five to ten years in the workplace?

Seven emergent themes emerged from the IDR process, namely:

- Impact of compliance.
- Changes that are business directed.
- Changes in funding policies.
- Changes in management style.
- Changes in policy.
- The decline of collaboration.
- The changing student population.

### Impact of compliance

As a result of the IDR process, two themes emerged, namely:

- Meeting the demands of compliance.
- Increased amount of administrative work.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.1. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.1      Impact of compliance**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB6	There is a lot more administration work; about 50% of our time is spent on administration work and 50% on teaching and assessment.	More administration work: about half of our time is spent on this.	Greater focus on administrative tasks.	<b>Meeting the demands of compliance</b>
AB3	The increase in administration work or paperwork to be exact. This paperwork is all for compliance and not for the good of student outcomes.	Increase in administrative work is all for compliance and not for better student outcomes.	Compliance at the expense of student outcomes.	
AB2	I have to say I don't think it has improved quality in any particular way. It has just become that process of filling forms and ticking boxes.	Accountability has not improved quality; it has just become a process of filling forms and ticking boxes.	Accountability reduced to a bureaucratic process.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	When it comes to producing teaching resources, I have to balance the both and I know if it comes to resources or filling in forms then filling in forms will take priority.	I have to balance the production of resources against the filling in of forms.	Departmental compliance takes priority.	
AB2	I will always need to make sure I meet the requirements for the centre, and anything externally audited will need to be done.	I have to meet the requirements of the centre: anything externally audited will need to be done.		
AB2	Sometimes [students] just do the assignment and complete it; you might not do it fantastically but you will get it done and move onto the next process.	Do the assignment and complete it: just get it done.	Simply complete the work.	
AB2	I want to be clear I will do what is needed to be done; but I will not spend a large amount of time learning the procedures that go into paperwork that will be transitional and replaced by something else.	I am unwilling to waste time on paperwork that soon will be replaced.	New systems and training packages waste time.	<b>Increased amount of administrative work</b>
AB6	There is a new curriculum and new training package SIT 07.	New training package SIT 07.		
AB5	Modernisation of the units of study to suit Generation Y.	Modernising units of study to suit Generation Y.	Meeting the learning styles of Gen Y.	

### Meeting the demands of compliance

The necessity to comply with new training packages and auditing requirements has resulted in an explosion of bureaucratic processes, and staff bear the extra administrative work for the purpose of compliance.

There is a lot more administration work; about 50 per cent of our time is spent on administration work and 50 per cent on teaching and assessment. (AB6)

Some trainers believe that this extra administrative work has no positive impact on the learning outcomes of students; others believe it may just be a waste of time:

This paperwork is all for compliance not for the good of student outcomes. (AB3)

AB2 agrees; accountability has been reduced to a bureaucratic process.

I have to say I don't think it has improved quality in any particular way. It has just become that process of filling [in] forms and ticking boxes. (AB2)

With the sharp increase in the bureaucratic processes imposed, the priority of developing learning and teaching resources has become secondary to administrative work required for compliance. Departmental compliance takes priority over being innovative in creating teaching resources, and departmental compliance always takes precedence.

When it comes to producing teaching resources, I have to balance both and I know if it comes to resources or filling in forms then filling in forms will take priority... I will always need to make sure I meet the requirements for the centre, and anything externally audited will need to be done. (AB2)

Compliance has also affected the way in which students are being assessed. Some trainers are more focused on the number of assessments than on the quality of assessments submitted by students: this emphasis on work completion has reduced the quality of student work.

Sometimes [students] just do the assignment and complete it; you might not do it fantastically but you will get it done and move onto the next process. (AB2)

The sharp increase in administrative work is caused by the necessity to comply with internal and external auditing requirements; this is required with every change made to training packages. Some staff suggest there has been a 50 per cent increase in the changes that have been required. However, they suggest that this sharp increase in administration work has not improved the quality of learning for the students; rather it has been at the expense of student learning. Now, there is virtually no time for the development of creative teaching resources and students are now assessed for the sake of evidence of participation and not for the sake of learning and improvement. The changes required in training packages are extremely demanding, the bureaucratic requirements seem to be endless and there appears to be no end in sight.

**Increased amount of administrative work**

A large proportion of the increase in administrative work is a result of policy changes taking place at a rapid rate. New systems that replace old ones are constantly being introduced, to the extent that trainers take the view that all change is merely transitional: their view is that they will be replaced by other changes before they get use to the current ones.

I want to be clear I will do what is needed to be done; but, I will not spend a large amount of time learning the procedures that go into paperwork that will be transitional and replaced by something else. (AB2)

Other increases in administrative work, according to AB6, have been brought about due to the introduction of new curricula and training packages imposed on the institution through the external influence of industry and government. AB5 suggests that related ‘modernisation’ of units has been introduced ‘to suit Generation Y’.

With the availability of new and improved technology for our students in Australia and in the global world, trainers are now expected to modernise units of competency by creating resources that deliver blended learning where students can access learning resources online at their convenience. Departmental compliance has taken precedence over all other activities in the department – even to the point of it taking priority over being innovative in creating teaching resources. In classrooms, the emphasis placed on work completion has reduced the quality of student work: quality has been sacrificed for quantity.

The overall effect has been a reduction in teaching effectiveness. Frustration arises because old administrative systems are being constantly replaced by new systems; there appears to be much time wasted in this process. At the same time, additional administrative work must be done to the changes in training packages that are required to accommodate blended learning. At every stage, it appears that the demands of administrative work are creating a deficit of time that might better be devoted to teaching and learning activities.

## Changes that are business driven

As a result of the IDR process three themes emerged, namely:

- Focusing on profitability.
- Product diversification.
- Cost management.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.2. Each theme will then be discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.2 Business driven changes**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	The bottom line dollar has over-written quality and that has had a significant impact on staff morale.	Profit overwrites quality and staff morale.	Profits are given a higher priority over educational quality.	<b>Focusing on profit-ability</b>
AB6	The focus is now off the student's learning and on the profit and loss of the department.	The focus is now off the student's learning and shifted to profit and loss.	The focus is now on profit and loss.	
AB2	If you come out of industry now and into teaching it is frightening, it is so daunting. The way we run the education system today is so business driven. It is about the dollar bottom line.	The running of the education system is business driven. It is about the bottom line.	Education is business driven; it is about the bottom line.	
AB2	So, if you have someone who is ready to teach you, give them whatever, rather than looking at their skill sets.	Give them whatever, rather than looking at their skill sets.	Teaching schedules before teaching abilities.	
AB2	The more products we offer the less quality focused we become.	More product offerings; less focus on quality.	Quantity over quality.	<b>Product diversifi-cation</b>
AB6	We are all so busy filling in paperwork for the accountability that we haven't had the time to meet and get together. This is partly from getting bigger and more diverse.	We are all so busy filling out paperwork as a result of getting bigger and more diversified.	Increase in size and diversification of products.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	[A particular institution], for example, once did cookery and butchery, then they started to do hospitality, then they started to add in ecotourism. [Similarly] instead of focusing on one or two things, we have introduced many different things to be competitive in the market.	Instead of focusing on one thing, we have introduced many things to be competitive.	Increasing product range to stay competitive.	
AB2	It might be more expensive to match their skill sets to what needs to be taught. It is expensive to have a large team of employees; the more people you employ the more expensive it is.	It is more expensive to match their skill sets; it is expensive to have a large team of employees.	Matching skill sets with units of competency requires an expanded HR investment.	<b>Cost management</b>

### Focusing on profitability

There is a strong belief in the department that profits have been given a higher priority over educational quality. This has produced a lowering of staff morale.

The bottom line dollar has over-written quality and that has had a significant impact on staff morale. (AB2)

The focus now is on the profitability of the institution; education has become 'business driven' with a focus on the 'bottom line'.

The focus is now off the student's learning and on profit and loss of the department. (AB6)

If you come out of industry now and into teaching it is frightening, it is so daunting. The way we run the education system today is so business-driven. It is about the dollar bottom line. (AB2)

In order to maintain and increase profitability of the institution, new staff have been assigned to units that need to be filled instead of what they specialise in. Meeting the training schedule requirements comes before teaching skills and abilities of trainers: trainers can no longer anticipate they will teach in areas in which they have expertise.

So, if you have someone who is ready to teach you give them whatever, rather than looking at their skill sets. (AB2)

The focus on profitability has taken priority over maintaining staff morale: it has even superseded concerns for student learning outcomes. Real neglect of maintaining training quality is apparent; this is caused by allocating trainers according to their availability at the lowest cost, rather than matching the trainer's appropriate skill sets to the unit of studies.

### **Product diversification**

In a competitive market place, the institution appears to be most concerned with increasing its size and diversifying its products at the expense of product quality – an issue of quantity over quality.

The more products we offer the less quality focused we become. (AB2)

The increase in product diversification has produced a large increase in the administrative work required to ensure compliance:

We are all so busy filling out paperwork for accountability that we haven't had the time to meet and get together. This is partly from getting bigger and more diverse. (AB2)

Some institutes have even diversified beyond their existing product specialty: they have increased their product range in order to stay competitive.

[A particular institution], for example, once did cookery and butchery, then they started to do hospitality, then they started to add in ecotourism. ... [Similarly] instead of focusing on one or two things, we have introduced many different things to be competitive in the market. (AB2)

In the competitive environment that has been created by recent changes in funding policies, institutions have come up with their own strategies to survive. A major new strategy is 'product diversification': the more choices on offer, the more chance of an institute securing a new student or client. Implementing this new strategy has increased the administration work required for compliance. Some staff at ABI believe their institution has diversified beyond its capability to deliver.



### Cost management

In the quest to minimise running costs of a centre, centre managers find it difficult to match staff expertise to the units being delivered. This is due to the need to have a large team of employees in order to match appropriately the expertise required within the new units of study.

It might be more expensive to match their skill sets to what needs to be taught. It is expensive to have a large team of employees: the more people you employ the more expensive it is. (AB2)

Matching skill sets with units of competency requires an expanded investment in human resources. This investment is not being made.

### Changes to funding policies

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged: Competition for funds.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 4.3. The theme is then discussed in the following sub-section.

**Table 4.3 Changes to funding policies**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	The other is on a broader level of when TAFE has become more competitive in the past five to ten years.	TAFE has become more competitive in the past five to ten years.	Changes in funding policies increase the competition.	<b>Competit- ion for funds</b>
AB6	TAFEs are now competing against each other rather than working together as a collective group. Which I think is far better for the students and for the system.	TAFEs are competing against each other rather than working together.	Competition has led to decrease in collaboration.	
AB2	So under contestability essentially we will be looking for that niche market that nobody else has. The more diversified we become, the less focused we become.	So under contestability we will be looking for that niche market that nobody else has.	Niche markets for profit and survival.	

**Competition for funds**

Institutions are now more competitive in the VET sector, competing for funds with other TAFE institutes and private RTOs. This competition has minimised collaborative work carried out between institutions in recent years.

The other is on a broader level of when TAFE has become more competitive in the past five to ten years. (AB2)

TAFEs are now competing against each other rather than working together as a collective group. Which I think is far better for the students and for the system. (AB6)

As a result, changes in funding policies have led to an increase in competition; competition in the same funding pool has led to a decrease in collaboration. At the same time, institutions are looking for a niche position to gain more funding in order to make a profit and to thus ensure their survival.

So under contestability essentially we will be looking for that niche market that nobody else has. The more diversified we become, the less focused we become. (AB2)

Competing for funds by all RTOs in the same funding pool – both private and public – has minimised collaboration between institutions. Institutions are looking for their own market niche in order to attract more students and increase their chances of survival in this competitive VET sector.

**Changes in management style**

As a result of the inductive data reduction process, two themes have emerged, namely:

- Changing work environment.
- Centralisation of management activities.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.4. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.4 Changes in management style**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB6	We are now called the facilitators of learning; we are no longer teachers.	We have become 'facilitators of learning'; we are no longer teachers.	Facilitators of learning.	<b>Changing work environment</b>
AB3	There have been many changes I have experienced in VET in the last five to ten years – starting with the increase in sessional teachers.	The first change noted has been the increase in sessional teachers.	Increase in sessional staff.	
AB2	The camaraderie within the sector has changed in two fold; one is within centres there are so many people coming and going, there is a significant increase in sessionals.	Camaraderie has changed due to the significant increase in sessional staff.	Less staff interaction.	
AB4	With fewer jobs available, there is more pressure on job security and job availability. In the past, it was easy to go from sessional teaching to a full-time teaching contract. Now there are very few full-time contracts and ongoing work is no longer on offer.	There is more pressure on job security there are fewer full-time contracts and ongoing work is no longer on offer.	Job security and availability declining.	
AB3	The increased workload without an increase in salary or non-teaching time.	The increased workload without an increase in salary or non-teaching time.	Increased work; decreased rewards.	
AB6	There is a big change in the management style in our department and other departments in the industry.	Change in management style in our department and other departments ...	Change in management style.	
AB6	Titles of middle management have changed and a lot of restructuring has happened, but no one is sure what the changes are.	A lot of restructuring has happened, but no one is sure what the changes are.	Restructuring increasing uncertainty.	
AB6	Managers are now more centralised.	Managers are now more centralised.	Centralised decision-making.	<b>Centralisation of management</b>

**Changing work environment**

Some teachers are uncertain while others are dissatisfied with their new identity as ‘facilitators of learning’.

We have become ‘facilitators of learning’; we are no longer teachers. (AB6)

The work culture of some centres has changed because of the increase in sessional staff; some contract and ongoing staff argue there is less camaraderie among staff now than before.

There have been many changes I have experienced in VET in the last five to ten years – starting with the increase in sessional teachers. (AB3)

The camaraderie within the sector has changed in two fold; one is within centres there are so many people coming and going, there is a significant increase in sessionals. (AB2)

Two changes are evident: the changing role from teaching to facilitating; and the changing work culture due to increased numbers of sessional staff. A possible third change was the loss of camaraderie due to increases in sessional staff and reduced staff interaction.

The camaraderie within the sector has changed on two fold; one is within centres there are so many people coming and going, there is a significant increase in sessionals. (AB2)

With the increase in sessional teachers and decrease in contracted staff and ongoing positions, staff felt increasingly stressed about their own job security, particularly as the number of positions associated with their expertise was also decreasing.

With fewer jobs available, there is more pressure on job security and job availability. In the past, it was easy to go from sessional teaching to a full-time teaching contract. Now there are very few full-time contracts, and ongoing work is no longer on offer. (AB4).

The result is less positions available in the hospitality training sector and even less full-time jobs available; the notion of ongoing contracts are now a thing of the distant past.

More and more staff are worried about their job security. At the same time, according to AB3, there was an 'increased workload without an increase in salary or non-teaching time'. These concerns match changes in hospitality departmental management style; these changes may also exist in other departments.

There is a big change in the management style in our department and other departments in the industry. (AB6)

Titles of middle management have changed and a lot of restructuring has happened, but no one is sure what the changes are. (AB6)

The increase in management restructuring activities has resulted in an increase in feelings of uncertainty amongst staff: they are unsure as to what all these changes mean and the consequences for them.

### **Centralisation of management**

The centralisation of management activities has increased the gap between staff and management, as AB6 reports: 'Managers are now more centralised'. The result has been a decrease in the transparency of decision making in the workplace and thus former close interaction between managers and lecturers has been lost.

The trend towards a sharp increase in the number of sessional staff has continued, leading to loss of a sense of teamwork between sessionals and full-time staff. Some, if not all full-time contract staff, are becoming more stressed with the increased workload. An added stress is the lack of availability of jobs: full-time jobs are scarce and ongoing contracts are now seen as a dinosaur in the VET sector. With all these changes going on in the workplace, some staff are left unsure and even insecure. Furthermore, the close working interaction between managers and lecturers has been lost, because the former now work away from the centres where lecturers operate.

**Table 4.5**      **Changes to policy**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB4	Recently (July 2010), the government changed the skills list, and this has had a huge impact on the number of international students enrolling in TAFE to study. The number [of students] has decreased by 70 to 80 per cent.	Paying higher tuition fee from July 2010. Change in skills list had a big impact on international student numbers.	Decrease in international student numbers.	<b>The impact of policy changes</b>
AB5	There has been a huge decline in the number of international students.	Decline in the number of international students.		
AB4	The students have to pay a higher fee for their tuition.	Students have to pay a higher fee for tuition.	Changes in policy lead to higher tuition fees.	

### Changes in policy

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged, namely: The impact of policy changes.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 4.5. The theme is then discussed in the following subsection.

### The impact of policy changes

Specific policy changes in funding arrangements for local and overseas students have led to an increase in VET student tuition fees.

The government changed the skills list, and this has had a huge impact on the number of international students enrolling in TAFE to study. The number [of students] has decreased by 70 to 80 per cent. (AB4)

These changes to VET policies and to the skills list which came into effect in July 2010 have resulted in a dramatic increase in tuition fees; they are matched by an even more dramatic decrease in the number of international student:

There has been a huge decline in the number of international students. (AB5)

Specific changes in the funding arrangement in the VET sector have seen a sharp increase in tuition fees for both local and international students; AB4 reports that all students ‘have to pay a higher fee for their tuition’, both of which have contributed to an even sharper decrease in overall student numbers.

### Lack of collaboration

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged: Lack of collaboration. Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 4.6. The theme is then discussed in the following subsection.

**Table 4.6 Lack of collaboration**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	Sharing resources is now a thing of the past.	Sharing resources is now a thing of the past.	Lack of collaboration and sharing.	Lack of collaboration
	Everyone is recreating the same thing in their little boxes. It happens within TAFE, so the silos are created. I am sure they have got apprentices over there in cabinet making; they are creating systems to send out absentee notices, we are doing the same here in this centre and someone else is doing the same thing in another centre.	We are doing the same thing here in this centre and someone else is doing the same thing in another centre.	Doing the same thing in a different institute.	
AB1	The program with Deakin has been worked out together by me and Deakin for years. Without this program the numbers will have dropped down just as badly. The students are still enrolling in tourism, which shows that higher ed is the hook.	Without the Deakin program the numbers would have dropped...which shows that higher ed. is the hook.	Collaboration and further university studies.	

**Lack of collaboration**

The lack of collaboration between institutions has resulted in a duplication of teaching and learning resources under different brands.

Sharing resources is now a thing of the past...Everyone is recreating the same thing in their little boxes. It happens within TAFE, so 'silos' are created. I am sure they have got apprentices over there in cabinet making: they are creating systems to send out absentee notices, we are doing the same here in this centre and someone else is doing the same thing in another centre. (AB2)

With appropriate collaboration between institutes and university, some institutes are able to minimise their drop in student numbers by creating a pathway from a TAFE institute to further studies in universities.

The program with Deakin has been worked out together by me and Deakin for years. Without this program the numbers [of students] will have dropped down just as badly. The students are still enrolling in tourism, which shows that higher ed is "the hook". (AB1)

While the lack of collaboration has seen an increase in the duplication of work processes and systems between centres within an institution, some collaboration is necessary to minimise student dropouts from institutions by creating a path to further studies in the universities.

**Changing student population**

As a result of the IRD process four themes have emerged, namely:

1. Changes in the apprentice population.
2. Student's ability to learn.
3. Structured learning.
4. Student screening processes.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.7. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.



**Table 4.7 Changing student population**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	The biggest change is the drop in numbers and a drop in numbers is not as bad for tourism as for hospitality because there is a pathway to Deakin university.	The drop in student numbers is not as bad for tourism because of the pathway to Deakin university.	Student numbers decline without a pathway to university.	<b>Changes in the apprentice population</b>
AB2	In contrast the apprentices have also changed as the apprenticeship market has reduced. I think it is partly because international students are taking a number of the apprenticeships on offer.	Apprentices have also changed as the apprenticeship market has reduced.	Mature adults are taking up apprenticeship positions.	
AB2	If you look at the bottom level of cooking, there is only a limited number of jobs, so if you have international students doing those, then you are going to have fewer apprentices.	The limited number of jobs and international students taking these means you are going to get fewer [local] apprentices.	International students are competing for employment opportunities.	
AB2	So as the nature of employment changes, and I come from an area where you had one job for your entire life, we now have students who have gone to university and come twenty-five, they now enter an apprenticeship so it is more common.	I come from an era where you had one job for your entire life; now we have students who have gone to university who, come twenty-five, now enter an apprenticeship.	Becoming an apprentice at a later age.	
AB2	We seem to have a lot more mature-age apprentices, and students who have done other things.	More mature-age apprentices who have done other things.	Apprentices with more skill sets.	
AB1	The education ability of the students is desperately lower. In tourism the students are generally considered as educationally able, they were more capable, they were more professional; now I would have to say they can hardly write/read.	The education standard of many students is much lower than it used to be.	Students' capabilities to learn are now lower.	<b>Student's ability to learn</b>
AB1	They find it incredibly difficult to even follow the simplest training, they are almost untrainable. At this stage I have had them for almost a year; I have not seen any progress towards the application of any of the things we have talked about. I think the problem lies with this generation.	They find it incredibly difficult to follow the simplest training...there is a lack of application of learning...the problem lies with this generation.		

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	For example, I said all you have to do is to follow this sheet and produce something close to it. They will produce something without using this sheet and then they will say how come I have lost this mark, well it is on this sheet there. Where? I can't see it. It is just stuff like that.	[Students] will produce something without using this sheet and then they will say how come I have lost this mark.	Students' inability to follow instructions.	
AB1	They can't listen, they can't take in any message so there is a barrier to communication and it makes teaching extremely difficult – you have to be more disciplinary with your training. These are the type of students we are dealing with.	They can't take in any message so there is a barrier to communication and it makes teaching extremely difficult.	Students' lack of listening ability creates a barrier to communication.	
AB1	With the training package employability skills underpins everything they do. With the students' literacy skills, they don't even use a capital letter with their own name when they write, but worse than that, they don't understand sentence structure.	They lack essential literacy skills: they don't even use a capital letter with their own name; they don't understand sentence structure.	Students' lack of literacy skills impacts on their ability to learn.	
AB1	A lot of the students put down ABI without really knowing what they have put down until they get to AB.	Students put down ABI without knowing what to expect.	Students are making uninformed choices.	
AB1	The hospitality students know that they are in a restaurant and there is a practical component. For the tourism students there is no practical components for the tourism students, because they might be going into a travel agent or a tourism information night, or we are going to an actual venue, the umbrella (context) is too big.	At least the hospitality students know they are going to work in a restaurant. For tourism students there are no related practical components.	Need for more structured learning.	Structured learning
AB2	These students would often have low study scores, sometimes they have study scores that would be considered as a fail, so therefore academic quality has reduced.	They have entrance scores that previously would be considered a 'fail'; therefore, the academic quality has been lowered.	Students are accepted even if their enter scores are low.	Student screening process
AB2	The quality of the students has changed. We used to interview thousands of students for two classes. The students used to have reasonable academic performance.	Students used to have reasonable academic performance; this is no longer the case.	Students' of lower academic ability are now being accepted.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	The new apprentices are different from the hospitality students and they are different to the tourism students.	The new apprentices are different from the hospitality and tourism students.	Trade apprentices differ from academic students.	

### Changes in the apprentice population

There are fewer students taking on apprenticeships, particularly when there is no pathway to university studies.

The biggest change is the drop in [student] numbers and a drop in numbers is not as bad for tourism as for hospitality because there is a pathway to Deakin University.  
(AB1)

The drop in student numbers at ABI is not as bad for tourism because of the availability of a pathway to Deakin University. The availability of apprenticeships – the ‘apprenticeship market’ – has decreased, which is partly due to an increase in international students applying for the same positions.

In contrast the apprentices have also changed as the apprenticeship market has reduced. I think it is partly because the international students take a number of apprenticeships on offer. (AB2)

At the same time the apprenticeship market has decreased:

If you look at the bottom level of cooking, there are only a limited number of jobs so if you have international students doing those, then you are going to have fewer apprentices. (AB2).

This means there will less local apprentices in the future; school leavers are unable to be placed. There is also a trend towards enrolling more mature-aged apprentices; some of these apprentices have a larger number of skill sets compared to younger apprentices.

So as the nature of employment changes...we now have students who have gone to university and come twenty-five they now enter an apprenticeship so this is more

common...we seem to have a lot more mature-age apprentices, and students who have done other things. (AB2)

Becoming an apprentice at a later age due to changing job security and availability is 'changing the face' of the TAFE classroom. With fewer apprenticeships available and greater competition for them from international and mature-age students with more extensive life skills seeking placement, there have been significant changes in the apprentice population in the past ten years that take up apprenticeship positions. As a consequence, there are now fewer opportunities for local, younger applicants who were once the mainstay of apprenticeships and traineeships.

### **Student's ability to learn**

Some staff believe there has been a significant lowering of students' capabilities to learn, and this can be attributed to lack of reading and writing skills. Some students find it hard to follow simple instructions when it comes to class activities or reading and following instructions from a written assessment tool.

The educational ability of the students is desperately lower. In tourism the students are generally considered as educationally able; they were more capable they were more professional, now I would have to say they can hardly write/read. (AB1)

AB1 has also noticed that the current generation's lack of learning and application skills:

They find it incredibly difficult to even follow the simplest training, they are almost untrainable. At this stage I have had them for almost a year; I have not seen any progress towards the application of any of the things we have talked about. I think the problem lies with this generation. (AB1)

According to AB1, students will produce work without fully understanding the requirements of assessment, and when marks are lost they challenge the trainer as to why those marks were deducted.

For example, I said all you have to do is to follow this sheet and produce something close to it. They will produce something without using this sheet and then they will

say how come I have lost this mark, well it is on this sheet there. Where? I can't see it. It is just stuff like that. (AB1)

A common problem being pointed out by trainer AB1 is the students' inability to listen to instructions and communicate clearly. This in turn creates a barrier to communication in class.

They can't listen, they can't take in any message so there is a barrier to communication and it makes teaching extremely difficult – you have to be more disciplinary with your training. These are the type of students we are dealing with. (AB1)

The overall effect is that teaching under these circumstances has become extremely difficult. This disenchanted instructor sees this issue as a failure of the current education system and blames the current generation of school leavers for being unwilling to engage fully in applied learning. What is more, AB1 believes that many students are making uninformed choices in the selection of institution and courses:

A lot of the students put down ABI without really knowing what they have put down until they get to AB. (AB1)

A more balanced view is that VET students seem to have a real and genuine problem with learning, and following written and verbal instructions; which is partly caused by the low level of literacy skills, their inability to read and understand written instructions and lack of interest in learning. Despite this issue, some institutions are willing to accept these students to increase their revenue through tuition fees.

### **Structured learning**

There is an inequality with training delivery for hospitality students and tourism students: the former have adequate access to practical training on campus and the latter need to rely on external industry placements which are not readily available.

The hospitality students know that they are in a restaurant and there is a practical component. For the tourism students there is no practical components for the

tourism students, because they might be going into a travel agents or a tourism information night, or we are going to an actual venue, the umbrella (context) is too big. (AB1).

A solution might be to include structure learning in simulated workplaces to ensure that an appropriate level of authentic training experiences is attained. Institutions are likely to offer more authentic courses when centres are purposely built or adapted to capture different student markets as needs and demands change.

### **Student screening process**

With the new funding system and the need to stay competitive in the VET sector, educational institutions are accepting most if not all students who apply to study with them regardless of their ability to potentially succeed in the course. Currently, students are accepted even if their ENTER scores are low:

These students would often have low study scores, sometimes they have study scores that would be considered as a fail, so therefore academic quality has reduced. (AB2)

Some staff argue that student screening is actually a thing of the past, and if students are willing to come and pay for the tuition fees, that will do.

The quality of the students has changed. We used to interview thousands of students for two classes. The students used to have reasonable academic performance. (AB2)

It is the opinion of many established TAFE staff that students are being accepted without any real consideration of their academic ability.

A final observation from AB2 recognises the combined effect of changes in the student population and in the screening processes applied to them: that ‘trade apprentices’ are different from ‘academic students’. (i.e., those associated with universities):

The new apprentices are different from the hospitality students and they are different to the tourism students. (AB2)

Institutions are now more relaxed with their screening process when accepting students into the institution than they were ten years ago. This may be due to the need to increase student numbers in order to increase institutional revenue.

## **Synthesis**

The biggest changes experienced in recent years are due to the process of compliance, where staff are required to perform more administrative tasks in order to prove compliance with both internal and external audits. These extra administrative tasks have caused an imbalance in the time spent creating teaching and learning resources, teaching and reflecting and improving. Some staff argue that 50 per cent of their time is now spent on administrative work. Numerous changes to different training packages and to compliance requirements also contribute to the increased administrative workload.

With new funding policies opening up, a competitive VET market in which private and government RTOs are competing for the same pool of potential students. Educational institutions are more focused on enrolling students and putting them through courses at minimal cost to the institution, by decreasing the number of ongoing staff and contract staff, and increasing the use of sessional staff. Some staff are being allocated classes because of their lower labour cost and availability, but not on their subject expertise. Product diversification is a strategy used by the institutions and private RTOs to stay competitive, which has contributed to a further decrease in subject matter expertise. All these changes are aimed at increasing revenue, minimising cost and maximising profitability.

There is a big change in student profiles, which can be attributed to an increase in the age of apprentices and ever increasing tuition fees. Of concern are low literacy and numeracy skills demonstrated by many students, to the extent that it affects their ability to learn and to communicate in class. This has a knock-on effect regarding the quality and effectiveness of training in- and out-of-class: many of these students do not have the ability to follow

written instructions and to understand what is required of them when it comes to assessment.

Centre managers have a big influence in the work environment and culture of their perspective centres, and this is largely due to the increase in their responsibility for performance of their centres. With this increased responsibility, staff sense that the decision-making process is becoming centralised. Some would now argue there is a remote decision-making process with minimal communication between managers and staff.

## Question 2: What driving forces have directed changes in the VET industry in recent years

Three emergent themes were identified in the IDR process, namely:

- Federal government policies.
- Management changes.
- Student interactions.

### Federal government policies

As a result of the IDR process three themes have emerged, as follows:

- Funding policies.
- Effects of policy changes.
- Compliance.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.8. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.8 Federal government policies**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	It is madness if you look at the running of a business because, if you start with a group of twenty-five students – we know there will be a withdrawal rate.	It is madness if you start with a group of twenty-five students – we know there will be withdrawal rate.	Withdrawal of students unpredictable.	<b>Funding policies</b>



Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	So essentially you will only get money for the student who will get to the end of the course.	You will get money for the students who will get to the end of the course.	Funding and passing of students linked.	
AB6	Then when you structure your business around twenty-five [students] and you only get payment for fifteen.	Structure your business and you only get payment for fifteen [students].	Funding does not allow for start-up cost.	
AB2	Policy changes do have an impact; contestability will have an impact; contestability means that essentially under the new state government; whatever places are needed there will be money for them; the way they create is to make sure they are getting good value for the money they have already put into the system.	Contestability will have an impact – whatever places are needed there will be money for them.	Funding to fill skills shortage gap.	
AB6	There is a need for survival as a department and an institution; there is competition between all organisations for funding.	Survival as a department and institution, competition against other organisation for funding.	Funding policies have increased competition.	
AB2	The private RTOs have been doing it for years, we only get pay for the ones who passed; therefore we are going to tick and flick them. They are going to pass them whether the students have done enough or not.	We only get pay for the ones we passed. They are going to pass them whether the students have done enough or not.	Passing students to obtain funding.	<b>Effects of policy changes</b>
AB4	The changes in government policies have been one of the driving forces for these changes, [particularly] the increases in student fees.	Government policies driving forces increased in fees for students.	New policy has increased tuition fees.	
AB3	Contestability does not take into account the different types of students we have; often we end up with just fifteen [students].	Contestability does not take into account the different types of students.	Policy changes impact on student intakes.	
AB2	We have always had the swing between liberal and labour governments. Policy changes are like fashion: everything gets recycled.	Policy changes are like fashion: everything gets recycled.	Policy changes are cyclical.	
AB6	One of the major driving forces behind the changes is the changes in the policies from the federal government, [especially] the changes in the skills list.	Federal government changes to skill requirements as a major driving force.	Policy changes affect programs.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB4	Students are now looking towards higher education: a major driving force for the changes.	Students are aspiring towards higher education.	Higher education preferred.	
AB5	Compliance – ‘dotting the i's and crossing the t's’ so that we will comply with the requirements of the new training packages – is a major change.	Compliance with the requirements of new training packages.	Administrative workload has increased.	<b>Compliance</b>

### Funding policies

One of the major driving forces of change in recent years is the changes in funding policy. RTOs are funded based on the end result of how many students have passed regardless of how well they passed. So if RTOs start with twenty-five students and end up with twenty students passing, they would only receive funding for the number of students passed. As BH2 points out:

It is madness if you look at the running of a business because, if you start with a group of twenty-five students – we know there will be a withdrawal rate. (AB2)

He continues:

So essentially you will only get money for the student who will get to the end of the course. (AB2)

Institutions and private RTOs have a lot of difficulties in structuring their business to cater for the retraction rate, because the cost of operating a classroom would be the same for twenty-five students as it is for fifteen students. Forecasting and budgeting would also become an issue, if RTOs only received funding for those students who passed. AB6 notes:

Then when you structure your business around twenty-five [students] and you only get payment for fifteen. (AB6)

Under the contestability funding system, the state government will only provide funding for student places if there is a need for skills. RTOs have to constantly learn about what places or skills are needed by the state and offer

training programs in those skills in order to access funding. AB2 recognises the importance of contestability:

Policy changes do have an impact; contestability will have an impact; contestability means that essentially under the new state government; whatever places are needed there will be money for them; the way they create is to make sure they are getting good value for the money they have already put into the system. (AB2)

Now that funding is accessible to all RTOs (public and private) based on the same policy, there is an increase in competition for survival both at the departmental and institutional level.

There is a need for survival as a department and an institution; there is competition between all organisations for funding. (AB6)

Clearly, funding policy changes have increased competition between VET organisations.

Institutions are funded based on the student retention rate regardless of how many students started in the course: this policy has created many operating difficulties. The contestability funding rule has contributed to the minimisation of courses which the institutions can offer, because courses are funded based on skills shortages. With the funding being open to all RTOs regardless of whether they are private or government funded, there is a large increase in competition for the same amount of funding available.

### **Effects of policy changes**

Some staff are aware that private RTOs have been passing students ('ticking and flicking') for competencies they might otherwise not have achieved, in order to access funding from government. AB2 comments:

The private RTOs have been doing it for years, we only get pay for the ones who passed, therefore we are going to tick and flick them. They are going to pass them whether the students have done enough or not. (AB2)

The ethics of such behaviour raise serious questions. At another level, the changes in government funding policy have also pushed tuition fees up for

our local and international students, and this could explain the decrease in student numbers enrolling in vocational studies. AB4 comments:

The changes in government policies have been one of the driving forces for these changes, [particularly] the increases in student fees. (AB4)

Under the contestability funding policy, some students may be disadvantaged because of the lack of consideration given to the number of different students enrolling in vocational education. AB3 observes:

Contestability does not take into account the different types of students we have; often we end up with just fifteen [students]. (AB3)

With numerous changes in government policy, some staff have argued that it is like changes in fashion where everything gets recycled. AB2 notes that policy changes are cyclical.

We have always had the swing between liberal and labour governments. Policy changes are like fashion: everything gets recycled. (AB2)

Changes to the skills list is one change that has happened again and again, and these changes can have a big impact on product offerings from the RTOs. AB6 comments:

One of the major driving forces behind the changes is the changes in the policies from the federal government, [especially] the changes in the skills list. (AB6)

Some students are seeking entry to universities where the fees are the same, but the outcome is a higher qualification. AB3 observes:

Students are now looking towards higher education: a major driving force for the changes. (AB4)

The federal government funding policy has changed the ways in which TAFE institutes operate, and TAFE can no longer offer courses that are not in demand. It has become imperative that all TAFE institutions increase enrolment numbers and maintain a low retraction rate, in order to capture the maximum amount of funding possible for the institution. Some courses in TAFE have increased tuition fees dramatically; which is partly due to the contestability rule and changes to the skills list; and regardless as to the

reasons for these changes students prefer to study at university if the tuition fees at TAFE are the same.

### Compliance

Some staff view compliance as a waste of time, where all they do is ‘dot the i’s and cross the t’s’. AB5 notes that compliance has increased the administrative workload.

Compliance – ‘dotting the i’s and crossing the t’s’ so that we will comply with the requirements of the new training packages – is a major change. (AB5)

With all the changes created by funding policy, some trainers believe that compliance is simply a waste of time.

### Management changes

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Changes in student/trainer relationships.
- Profitability as the first priority.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.9. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.9 Management changes**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB3	I think the model has changed from a community model to a business model, but this started more than five years ago obviously. It is very much business driven.	Change from a community model to a business model.	Business model now operates.	Changes in student/teacher relationship
AB1	Students are not our customers; [nevertheless] the department is talking about treating them like our customers because we need to reduce our withdrawal rate.	Students as customers in order to reduce the withdrawal rate.	Need to reduce withdrawal rate.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	How this will work is still something that needs to be discussed. I am told that we need to treat our students as potential employees, and we need to treat the classroom as the workplace .	We need to treat our students as potential employees, and the classroom as the workplace.	Changed relationship between teachers and students affects training.	
AB1	Training packages need to be changed because the whole thing is written for the workplace and we are simulating the workplace in our classrooms. So there is some sort of clash between treating the students as customers and simulating the workplace.	Training packages need to be changed in order to accommodate treating the students as customers in a simulated workplace.	Major changes to training approaches and packages are required.	
AB2	Look at this centre, we have had three heads of centre, and then they decided to have one. So then we had one, but then it was too much work for one, and then we created mini-heads of centres called senior educators and we had one of those. Then there was too much work for that one, so we decided to have more than one and relabelled them. It is just a different label on the same thing.	Three heads of centre, and then...one. Then we created little mini heads. It is just a different label for the same thing.	Restructuring creates unnecessary confusion and discomfort.	Profitability as a first priority
AB2	I think money is a big one; we have seen a decrease in budgets. I also think there is a strong link between the number of training institutes and RTOs, private and public. Therefore we are constantly trying to compete.	Surviving in this highly competitive market has become a major focus.	Increased competition, ongoing cost cutting.	
AB2	Those colleges just grew out of nowhere because there was a buck to be made. We at ABI have always done that as well; now you look at nursing there is money in that, nursing is new to TAFE, we have got money in animal research that is also something new to TAFE. We had money for IT. It is about making a buck.	Colleges grow out of nowhere because there was a buck to be made. ABI have always done that as well; now you look at nursing and there is money in it. It is about making a profit.	Course offerings based on profitability.	
AB2	Now hospitality is not growing in relation to population growth, but it is in relation to making a buck.	Hospitality remains viable because it continues to make a profit.		

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	We will still be the ones known for providing quality, but we will not fit within the TAFE system; and the sad thing about the TAFE system is that the quality teachers will be out there working as consultants because they can; and the TAFE sector is going to lose them, and I think this is a very frightening thing because it is happening right now.	While still providing quality, ABI will not fit within the TAFE system and quality teachers will be lost.	A focus on profit results in a loss of quality instructors.	
AB6	The style of management is another driving force of the changes, where the manager is now more focused on profit than student outcomes.	The manager is now more focused on profit than student outcomes.	Managers are now more focused on profits.	
AB2	It won't affect my teaching, because I will not teach like that, but it may affect my job, because teachers like me will get pushed out of the system, because we are not providing the income the centre needs.	Teachers like me will get pushed out of the system because we are not providing the income the centre needs.	Teachers' positions are based on their productivity.	

### Changes in student/trainer relationships

Over the past five years (2007–11), VET institutions have changed their operational approach, from that of a community service model to a business driven model, as AB3 explains:

I think the model has changed from a community model to a business model, but this started more than five years ago obviously. It is very much business driven.  
(AB3)

Vocational education is much more focused on being a business operation than an educational training institution. As a consequence, VET institutions are focusing much more on lowering the student withdrawal rate: students are being treated more as customers, as AB1 argues:

Students are not our customers; [nevertheless] the department is talking about treating them like our customers because we need to reduce our withdrawal rate.  
(AB1)

There are trainers who would reserve their judgements on how well the new relationship – treating the students as potential employees and the classroom as a workplace – will work out in the classroom and how well it will contribute to helping students to become work ready. AB1 believes that this needs extensive discussion.

How this will work is still something that needs to be discussed. I am told that we need to treat our students as potential employees, and we need to treat the classroom as the workplace. (AB1)

AB1 recognises that major changes to training approaches and packages are needed to reflect this new client–service provider relationship – where students are to be treated not as customers, but as client workers.

Training packages need to be changed because the whole thing is written for the workplace and we are simulating the workplace in our classrooms. So there is some sort of clash between treating the students as customers and simulating the workplace. (AB1)

The change from a community service model to a business driven one has created a new relationship between trainers and students. Students are now treated as clients, the institution is a service provider, and trainers are there to minimise the withdrawal rate of students.

### **Profitability as a first priority**

The reduction of staff without understanding the ramifications can cause confusion, and in the end will not achieve any positive outcomes. There have been numerous changes to the centre's hierarchical structure to reduce cost, but in the end they have just become a renaming process rather than a real structural change. AB2 explains that such restructuring creates unnecessary confusion and discomfort amongst instructors.

Look at this centre, we have had three heads of centre, and then they decided to have one... but then it was too much work for one, and ... we created mini-heads of centres called senior educators and we had one of those. Then there was too much work for that one, so we decided to have more than one and relabelled them. It is just a different label on the same thing. (AB2)



The vocational education sector has gone through numerous reductions in its budget allocation; when combined with the increase in RTO numbers, surviving in this highly competitive VET sector has become a major focus.

I think money is a big one; we have seen a decrease in budgets. I also think there is strong link between the number of training institutes and RTOs, private and public. Therefore we are constantly trying to compete. (AB2)

Increased competition and ongoing cost cutting has shifted priority in the VET sector towards profitability: courses are offered, based on their profitability. The number of RTOs grew in the belief that vocational education is, and will remain, a profitable business; RTOs offer training products based on how profitable they can be, regardless of demand relative to supply.

Those colleges just grew out of nowhere because there was a buck to be made. We at ABI have always done that as well, now you look at nursing and there is money in that, nursing is new to TAFE, and we have got money in animal research that is also something new to TAFE. We had money for IT. It is about making a buck. (AB2)

Courses, however, can be profitable without growth in the number of enrolments. Hospitality at ABI is a case in point, as AB2 points out:

Now hospitality is not growing in relation to population growth, but it is in relation to making a buck. (AB2)

A focus on profit before training will, however, result in a loss of both quality instructors and training course options.

We [AB] will still be the ones known for providing quality, but we will not fit within the TAFE system, and the sad thing about the TAFE system is that the quality teachers will be out there working as consultants because they can, and the TAFE sector is going to lose them. I think this is a very frightening thing that is happening right now. (AB2)

While still providing quality courses, ABI will not fit within the TAFE system and quality teachers will be lost. Centre managers are now more focused on profitability than learning outcomes for students.

The style of management is another driving force of the changes, where the manager is now more focused on profit than student outcomes. (AB6)

Ultimately, this could well be a contributing factor to a lessening of training quality, overall, in VET. Some teachers fear if they don't conform to the focus on operational profitability – maintaining instead a focus on training quality – they well may be pushed out of the VET system.

It won't affect my teaching, because I will not teach like that, but it may affect my job, because teachers like me will get pushed out of the system because we are not providing the income the centre needs. (AB2)

Numerous RTOs have emerged from private providers because there is a belief that RTOs are profitable ventures; new courses are being offered based on their profitability and demand. With this increase in RTOs and new courses for profitability, there is a sense of training quality being on the decline. Trainers who are passionate about a good educational quality outcome feel a sense of being misfits in this system, because operational profitability is taking priority over training quality.

### **Student interactions**

As a result of the IDR process four themes have emerged, namely:

- Balancing act.
- Catering for student diversity.
- Online social network.
- Student distractions.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.9. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.9 Student interactions**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	Although my job is a lot harder, it doesn't mean I am doing anything differently. It doesn't mean I am not getting the results; it doesn't mean I don't get the respect; it doesn't mean I don't get the students really appreciating what I do.	It doesn't mean I am doing anything differently, it doesn't mean I am not getting results. It doesn't mean I don't get the respect ...	Students need structured and discipline-based teaching.	<b>Balancing act</b>
AB1	I still maintain structure is important, I still maintain students respond to discipline.	Structure is important students respond to discipline.		
AB1	This is a social question. I have a twenty-six-year-old son, I have to say after observing him, it is the now generation; they don't think of tomorrow, they only think of this minute.	It is the now generation, they don't think of tomorrow, they only think of this minute.	The now [Y] generation only think of the now.	
AB3	This is really big issue when you are talking about Gen Y, because this is very typical of what happens to them.	This is very typical of what happens to Gen Y.	Back-to-basics approach.	
AB1	What I am saying is I have to accept the fact that they don't listen to me, and I am going back to primary school teaching methods.	I am going back to primary school teaching methods.		
AB3	There are new approaches, new courses and new demands like nursing and technician VET programs.	New courses and new demands like nursing and technicians.	New courses introduced due to demand.	<b>Catering for student diversity</b>
AB2	You know there used to be seven institutes that taught hospitality and there was never any problem: if you lived in Mildura you went to Mildura, if you lived in Bendigo you went to that one, etc.	If you lived in Mildura you went to Mildura.		
AB5	Training plans are tailored towards individual needs. The international student's attitudes are changing and they require more of the human touch from us. They also need mentoring, coaching and other personal needs.	International students' attitudes and needs differ from and are more complex than those of local students.	International students' needs are different and more complex.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB3	Changes in the student demographic are another driving force. In the past TAFE was for local students and now it is more for international students. There are a lot more students with different cultural backgrounds, so things like language classes and cultural classes have been introduced.	Changes in the student demographic are another driving force; now TAFE is more for international students.	TAFE caters more for international students who are the main income generators.	
AB1	So contextually when you talk about things like where they want to be, what they want to do, those messages just bounced straight off him. They only want to think about right now, and are they making their friends happy, are their friends making them happy? What is happening socially: is anyone messaging me?	When you talk about things messages just bounced straight off him. They only want to think about what is happening socially.	Social media focus.	Online social network
AB1	This also affects their motivation, they expect the person is trying to give them something, some future, some help. You are not important to them, you are completely irrelevant, they don't need you. They have everything they need.	You are not important to them, they have everything they need.		
AB1	They get to their Facebook [page] immediately. I would say this is having a detrimental effect on the ability of any of our generation, whatever they are now, to see what they are doing. They just can't see or think about tomorrow.	This is having a detrimental effect on their ability to see beyond what they are doing now...	Gen Y has difficulty in seeing beyond the 'now'.	
AB1	You can say that we want to provide the best service for every student, but you are still going to get students who will lose their way because of drugs, because of overseas travel, because of family issues, because they don't like the career they got into the first place.	Students who will lose their way because of drugs, because they don't like the career they got into the first place.	Students losing focus in classrooms due to reasons beyond the classroom.	Student distractions
AB1	I never wanted to be a teacher. I am an industry person, but I am teaching children now instead of adults. So that is what I am doing.	I am teaching children now instead of adults.	Students' immaturity.	

**Balancing act**

To some trainers maintaining structured training delivery is important if there are to be positive learning outcomes; however, there is a belief that there must be a balancing of disciplinary training with established learning outcomes. AB1 sees this as a delicate balancing act:

Although my job is a lot harder, it doesn't mean I am doing anything differently: it doesn't mean I am not getting the results; it doesn't mean I don't get the respect; it doesn't mean I don't get the students really appreciating what I do. (AB1)

AB1 believes that students need structure and discipline-based teaching:

I still maintain structure is important, I still maintain students respond to discipline. (AB1)

This, according to AB1, is related to the social question of dealing with the 'now' [Y] generation.

This is a social question. I have a twenty-six-year-old son, I have to say after observing him, it is the now generation; they don't think of tomorrow, they only think of this minute. (AB1)

AB3 concurs: Gen Y students can lose focus easily on their studies:

This is really big issue when you are talking about Gen Y, because this is very typical of what happens to Gen Y. (AB3)

AB1 believes that, in order to match these characteristics, it is necessary to resort to basic educational principles – some of which are based on primary school teaching methods.

What I am saying is I have to accept the fact that they don't listen to me, and I am going back to primary school teaching method. (AB1)

This is a very different prospect from the principles to be applied in work-based learning: it implies concrete learning, drills, careful pacing of activities.

Maintaining a strong relationship between the trainers' and funding bodies' expectations, and students' individual needs, and ensuring positive learning outcomes is no simple matter. It will sometimes mean that trainers

will need to deliver their training differently in order to achieve a quality educational outcome.

### **Catering for student diversity**

The changing needs and demands from different professions have contributed to the increase of new courses on offer through RTOs. AB3 points to new courses for nurses and technicians:

There are new approaches, new courses and new demands like nursing and technician VET programs. (AB3)

Students' choice of where to study no longer depends on RTOs subject expertise, but on their location.

You know there used to be seven institutes that taught hospitality and there was never any problem: if you lived in Mildura you went to Mildura, if you lived in Bendigo you went to that one, etc. (AB2)

Then, training was localised; now it is centralised and students have to move to the location where specific courses are offered.

The increase in international student numbers has contributed to the re-focusing of institute resources towards international students. International students' needs and attitudes are different and more complex; this requires a shift in understanding the client–service provider relationship.

Training plans are tailored towards individual needs. The international student's attitudes are changing and they require more of the human touch from us. They also need mentoring, coaching and other personal needs. (AB3)

International students' attitudes are changing and they require more of the human touch. (AB5)

AB3 notes there has been a shift to cater more for international students, pointing out that, as the main income generators, their additional needs – cultural, linguistic and social – need to be accommodated:

Changes in the student demographic are another driving force. In the past TAFE was for local students and now it is more for international students. There are a lot

more students with different cultural backgrounds, so things like language classes and cultural classes have been introduced. (AB3)

New courses are offered based on student demand. The needs of international students are changing, which in turn has changed the services offered by institutions. At the same time, students may choose not to go to the local TAFE but one that has subject expertise, because students want a better educational learning outcome. The student body has become much more diverse.

### **Online social network**

The social network, based on the internet, has a dominant impact on Gen Y TAFE students; social networking is a major pre-occupation and their social lives take precedence over all other conversations. AB1, speaking from TAFE and home experience, suggests that the question, ‘What is happening socially?’ is predominant:

So contextually when you talk about things like where they want to be, what they want to do, those messages just bounce straight off them. They only want to think about right now, and [whether they] are they making their friends happy, [or] are their friends making them happy? What is happening socially, is anyone messaging me? (AB1)

Trainers are experiencing stiff competition in gaining and maintaining attention and in motivating students (and their children, it would seem).

This also affects their motivation...You are not important to them, you are completely irrelevant to them, they don’t need you. They have everything they need. (AB1)

AB1 laments the failure of Gen Y to anticipate the future; they are the ‘now’ generation.

They get to their Facebook [page] immediately; I would say that is having a detrimental effect on the ability of any of our generation, whatever they are now, to see what they are doing. They just can’t see or think about tomorrow. (AB1)

The advancement in technology has created an online social environment that may be separating students from their learning and, to some extent, their families as well. The speed with which current students can communicate online may contribute to their lack of planning for tomorrow. For the older, less experienced generation, social networking presents dilemmas and distractions in understanding motivations and future intentions of the current generation. Perhaps adaptation and adjustment is required at both levels.

### **Student distractions**

Some students will lose their way because they may be affected by drug and alcohol use, overseas travel, family issues or they may not like the career they are currently in. AB1, once again, is quick to lay blame on students for losing focus in class due to distractions beyond the classroom:

You can say that we want to provide the best service for every student, but you are still going to get students who will lose their way because of drugs, because of overseas travel, because of family issues, because they don't like the career they got into in the first place. (AB1)

AB1 goes on to condemn the current generation of students for not being sufficiently mature; instead they remain 'children' who need 'teaching':

I never wanted to be a teacher, I am an industry person, but I am teaching children now instead of adults. So this is what I am doing. (AB1)

Students will be distracted for many reasons, and trainers will need to develop new techniques and approaches to overcome these distractions in order to deliver a good educational outcome. Perhaps trainers need to become more 'child-like' in these changing times.

### **Synthesis**

The three driving forces for changes in VET are policy changes, management and student interaction. With any policy change there is a requirement for development of new teaching and learning resources and associated administrative requirements: all these changes contribute greatly to the



increased time needed in order to ensure compliance. The change in funding policies have contributed to a new competitive environment, where every RTO regardless of whether it is public and private is competing for the same funding allocated to vocational education.

This new competitive environment has, in turn, contributed to changes in management styles: for example, centre managers now, more than ever, have the responsibility of ensuring the survival of their own centres; and to remain competitive and make a profit, managers have shifted their focus to operational efficiency and profitability. And in the process they have lost sight of quality issues in training and learning. Some staff would argue that management decision-making processes are centralised to the point where they are no longer transparent. It could be argued that a better balance between profit and quality is required.

The changes in student demand and diversity have posted many challenges at an institutional level and classroom level. New courses are being offered based on their potential to be profitable, and students are choosing institutions or private RTOs based on subject expertise rather than location. In class, students may be more interested in social networking on their smart phones than being a client gaining experience: who is at fault here?

### **Question 3: How have changes affected the day-to-day activities of VET practitioners?**

Three emergent themes were identified by the IDR process, namely:

- Increase in compliance work.
- Increased stress.
- Students.

### Increase in compliance work

As a result of the inductive data reduction process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Compliance before creativity
- Increase in Routine Administrative work

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.10; each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.10 Increased compliance work**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	AQTF is the biggest driver of changes of quality, so we are spending about umm, I would love to put a percentage on it, but I don't think I can, but it would be very high.	AQTF is the biggest driver of changes of quality: it would be very high in percentage terms.	Increase in compliance work.	Compliance before creativity
AB1	I don't have the time to do that anymore. This is because we are trying to comply instead of being creative.	I don't have the time to do that anymore because we are trying to comply instead of being creative.	Compliance before creativity.	
AB1	So if they try to tell me I need to be much more creative, then they will need to tell me what not to do...that's what the non-attending time used to do, to look for great ideas, to be creative.	To be much more creative was what the non-attendance time used to do: to look for great ideas, to be creative.		
AB3	So you need to continuously learn, not only do you need to have a good understanding of what you are teaching, you also need to have a good understanding of the diverse cultural groups you teach.	You need to continuously learn; you need to have a good understanding of who you are teaching.	Focus on learning and good understanding.	
AB2	It is a mindset having to balance those things, I could say it is a whole lot more paperwork but I won't say that because I won't allow it to be that way. It is finding the balance and [facing] the day-to-day frustrations of having to do that, rather than the organisation being balanced in its approach.	It is a mindset having to balance paperwork and being innovative rather than the organisation being balanced in its approach.	Compliance and being innovative is the balance required.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	A percentage watching out for headers and footers, a percentage watching our training templates, everything to do with quality is now taking up the time; it used to take time for me to plan fabulous and exciting, interesting lessons.	I don't have time to do that anymore... because we are trying to comply instead of being creative.	Increased administration work; less developmental work.	<b>Increase in routine admin. work</b>
AB5	As teachers, we are doing more and more paperwork, which is biting into our resource development time and assessment time.	Paperwork is biting into our resource development and assessment time.		
AB6	Day-to-day work has become more hectic, trying to find time to counsel students, do assessments, do administration work, such as ringing the students who did not attend school, or ringing up employers to find out why the student did not come to class.	More time is now spent on counselling and assessment work as more time is spent accounting for the absence of students with their employers.		
AB4	There is more work needed to be done in order to comply with the AQTF.	More time is needed in order to comply with the AQTF.		

### Compliance before creativity

The Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) is one of the biggest drivers of change in day-to-day activities; some staff cannot even measure their increased workload because it is so high.

AQTF is the biggest driver of change in quality, so we are spending about... I would love to put a percentage on it, but I don't think I can, but it would be very high. (AB1)

With the increase in compliance work, trainers are now finding less time is spent on creating new training ideas and more time on compliance. Others have noted that they have been asked to use their non-attendance time to perform compliance work tasks.

I don't have the time to do that anymore. This is because we are trying to comply instead of being creative... So if they try to tell me I need to be much more creative,

then they will need to tell me what not to do... that's what the non-attending time used to do, to look for great ideas, to be creative. (AB1)

The outcome, as AB1 stresses, is that dealing with compliance elements takes priority over being creative in the sense of developing new teaching materials.

Changes in training packages mean that trainers are required to continuously engage in developing new learning and understanding in order to comply with the AQTF.

So you need to continuously learn, not only do you need to have a good understanding of what you are teaching, but also to have a good understanding of the diverse cultural groups you teach. (AB3)

For seasoned trainers, the change in work requirements requires them to strike a balance between compliance and innovation.

It is a mindset having to balance those things. I could say it is a whole lot more paperwork but I won't say that because I won't allow it to be that way. It is finding the balance and [facing] the day-to-day frustrations of having to do that, rather than the organisation being balanced in its approach. (AB2)

The view here is that a disproportionate emphasis is placed on compliance requirements at the expense of good instruction.

The changes in compliance requirements have created an increase in staff workloads; in turn, this has resulted in a diminished effort towards creating teaching and learning resources. Some would argue that compliance has taken precedence over creativity. There have also been changes in training packages, which meant staff would need to re-familiarise themselves with the new training package in order to deliver the required outcome for all units of competency.

**Increase in routine administrative work**

There is a perception that aspects of work done in the name of ‘quality’ in order to satisfy administrative demands have severely encroached on time that could be devoted to developmental work.

[There is] a percentage [of time spent] watching out for headers and footers, a percentage watching our training templates; everything to do with quality is now taking up time – time I used [previously] to plan fabulous and exciting interesting lessons. (AB1)

AB5 supports this position.

As teachers, we are doing more and more paperwork, which is biting into our resource development time and assessment time. (AB5)

AB6 draws attention to the increase in administrative duties – counselling, assessment and student attendance issues – time that previously was able to be devoted to teaching preparation.

Day-to-day work has become more hectic trying to find time to counsel students, do assessments, do administration work such as ringing the students who did not attend school or ringing up employers to find out why the student did not come to class. (AB6)

The outcome is that more time is needed in order to comply with the AQTF.

There is more work needed to be done in order to comply with the AQTF. (AB4)

The amount of administrative work that has accompanied changes in compliance requirements and training packages has increased for all staff. An increased level of AQTF compliance has meant more time is spent on editing documents and in following up on absent students. The introduction of new training packages has meant that all relevant resources have had to be re-developed and matched with appropriate unit codes and names. New units have had to be generated from existing resources.

## Increased stress

As a result of the IDR process four themes have emerged, namely:

- General pressure leading to stress.
- Need to diversify skills
- Change and uncertainty
- Job protection

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.11. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.11 Increased stress**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	It starts up here and we just keep pushing down. And good managers push back – there are few of them. The good managers will say ‘No sorry, it’s just rubbish: you can’t make my staff do that’.	There are insufficient middle managers who will push back and say ‘No, sorry...’	Lack of support from middle management.	General pressure leading to stress
AB2	If, at that level, [pressure] is not balanced, you are pushing the creation down to the individual level.	If at that level, there is top heavy pressure, individuals [rather than groups] bear the brunt.		
AB2	So we have all these support mechanisms that have to be in place because we are pushing more onto staff.	Support mechanisms are required for stressed staff.		
AB4	This in return reduces the motivation to work and to contribute to students' learning.	Stress at work is leading to loss of staff motivation that has a flow-on effect.		
AB2	Staff are trying to balance their family life and work life. Then you are going to get the issues you see that TAFE does recognise, because we now have an organisation you can turn to, if you are feeling stressed.	TAFE is recognising the need to provide support for those staff who are feeling stressed.	Some managers are creating a balanced work approach.	
AB2	These managers are usually the most respected. They are balance, and are pushing back.			

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB3	There is more pressure being put on me...; you have to become more multiskilled, more diverse in your skill sets. If you practice one profession only I think your life in the VET industry will be minimised.	There is more pressure to become more multiskilled; if you practice one profession only, your life in the VET industry will be minimised.	Multiskilling is a necessity for job longevity.	Need to diversify skills
AB3	If you are a chef, you will need to use your management experience to teach management subjects. It is even better if you can go to university to get a management degree, a management qualification.	Management experience is required in order to teach management subjects; it is even better if you can go to university to get a management degree.	Pressure to acquire more skills and qualifications.	
AB3	You need to be multiskilled and you need to have the right qualifications with those skills. You can't say you are a chef and tomorrow you teach management; you have to experience management before you can teach it.	You need to have the right qualifications with those skills; you are a chef and tomorrow you teach management.		
AB2	Is a significant one; I think it impacts at a mental health level, a physical health stress. I think the most significant impact is on the management structure, and I am not just talking about AB; I am talking about TAFE, I am talking about the new government focus.	Changes in government focus resulting in changed TAFE management structures have impacted on mental and physical health of staff.	Stress created by changing government policy focus.	Change and uncertainty
AB6	There is little or no time for resource development, and we seem to be using resources that were developed a few years or more ago.	Little or no time for resource development, despite having to use resources developed many years ago.		
AB5	We now also need to do more counselling of local and international students, who seem to have more demand for our time.	The need for more counselling of all students places greater demands on our time.		
AB6	The department manager is also busier – we do not really see her anymore; she is always stuck in her office.	..., she is always stuck in her office.	Decreased interactions create uncertainty.	
AB4	Everyone, including myself, is afraid of losing their jobs.	Everyone is afraid of losing their jobs.	Stress related to staying employed.	Job protection
AB2	Everyone is looking after their own interest.	Everyone is looking after their own interest.		

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	'You want something today, I am very happy to do that for you but you will have to wait until next week. I have student assessments I need to attend to first and I will get it done for you next week'. So I get labelled as the troublemaker, and that puts pressure on me to constantly having to tell myself no, you are not a troublemaker.	Placing students' needs first puts pressure on staff and results in them being labelled as a troublemaker.	Friction between meeting students' needs and management demands.	

### General pressure leading to stress

There will always be top-down pressure for staff to be more productive, regardless of the practicality of the situation. What is needed is middle management support for their staff, which seems to be missing in day-to-day activities; as a consequence, a number of respondents reported stress resulting from a lack of support from middle management.

It starts up here and we just keep pushing down. And good managers push back – there are few of them. The good managers will say “No sorry, it’s just rubbish: you can’t make my staff do that. (AB2)

If the pressure is top heavy, individuals must bear the brunt.

If, at that level, [pressure] is not balanced, you are pushing the creation down to the individual level. (AB2)

The outcome, according to AB2, is a loss of staff motivation that has a flow-on effect:

So we have all these support mechanisms that have to be in place because we are pushing more onto staff. (AB2)

AB4 points out that there is a net negative effect: the loss of staff motivation at the lower level affects staff contribution to students’ learning outcomes.

This in return reduces motivation to work and to contribute to the students' learning. (AB4)



AB2 acknowledges that TAFE is recognising the need to support those staff who are stressed; the managers who engage in this way are the ones who are most respected.

Staff are trying to balance their family life and work life. Then you are going to get the issues you see that TAFE does recognise, because we now have an organisation you can turn to, if you are feeling stressed. (AB2)

With the increased pressure to be more and more productive, middle management may find it hard to balance the demands coming from top management and the capabilities of their staff. If staff cannot produce what is required, they lack motivation and their level of stress increases. This is one of the many reasons why structures have been set up in TAFE to deal with staff work stress. Work/ life balance is important for all staff and should be highly respected.

### **Need to diversify skills**

There is more pressure for trainers to diversify their skill sets in order to ensure ongoing job security; AB3 observes that there is more pressure being exerted for staff to become multiskilled.

There is more pressure being put on me...; you have to become more multiskilled, more diverse in your skill sets, if you practice one profession only I think your life in the VET industry will be minimised. (AB3)

As a consequence, there is growing pressure to acquire more skills and qualifications that will support product diversification.

For example, if you are a chef you will need to use your management experience to teach management subjects. It is even better if you can go to university to get a management degree, a management qualification. (AB3)

The need for institutions to increase their product range has also contributed to the unrealistic pressure for trainers to be multi-skilled. Qualifications and skills must match, as AB3 points out.

You need to be multiskilled and you need to have the right qualifications with those skills. You can't say you are a chef and tomorrow you teach management; you have to experience management before you can teach it. (AB3)

In order to increase the education product in the centre, some staff have been feeling the pressure to diversify their skill sets and, to some extent, to increase their levels of education preferably at university degree levels.

### **Change and uncertainty**

Much of the stress created in recent years has arisen from the changes in government policy focus that has changed TAFE management structures; AB2 reports that these changes have had a significant effect on the mental and physical health of instructors:

...I think it impacts at a mental health level, a physical health stress. I think the most significant impact is on the management structure, and I am not just talking about AB; I am talking about TAFE, I am talking about the new government focus. (AB2)

There is pressure to utilise old and sometimes outdated learning resources due to the lack of time available to develop and implement new ones.

There is little or no time for resource development, and we seem to be using resources that were developed a few years or more ago. (AB6)

The need to provide more counselling sessions – for both local and international students – is also creating more demand on staff workloads, as reported by AB5:

We now also need to do more counselling of local and international students, who seem to have made more demand for our time. (AB5)

Departmental managers are busier managing numerous changes, and some may even be stuck to the office in these times of change.

The department manager is also busier – we do not really see her anymore; she is always stuck in her office. (AB6).

The resultant decrease in direct interaction with management has created uncertainty about the future for many staff.

The different changes in student demands, and government policy changes, which to a large degree have resulted in changes at the centre level, have all contributed to an increase in mental and physical stress for staff in their respective centres.

### **Job protection**

In these times of uncertainty and change, everyone is afraid of losing their job.

Everyone, including myself, is afraid of losing their jobs. (AB4)

This, according to AB2, means that ‘everyone is looking after their own interest’: there is a mood of self-protectionism evident. With employment instability comes self-protectionism, and less teamwork.

At the same time, meeting student’s needs before management creates friction.

You want something today, I am very happy to do that for you but you will have to wait until next week. I have student assessments I need to attend to first and I will get it done for you next week. So I get labelled as the troublemaker, and that puts pressure on me to constantly having to tell myself no, you are not a troublemaker. (AB2)

Job security in the VET industry is a thing of the past, and this is quite evidential in this particular centre, because there is always talk of someone losing their job; current job protection has become paramount.

### **Students**

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Student diversity.Lack of technological investment.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.12. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.12 Students**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB3	We have students who have different academic abilities, some are very clever learners, some are strugglers and multicultural. Like my class today; I have students who are Muslims, I have Anglo-Saxons, I have Buddhists, so while religions do not come up in finance units you need to be aware of them.	Different academic abilities and multicultural ... you need to be aware of them.	There are now significant cultural and intellectual differences amongst students.	<b>Student diversity</b>
AB3	The diversity of students has put pressure on our teaching. If I go back to my country it will be easy, I am from Malta and I would have mainly Maltese students. Now I have less than half Australian students in my class.	The diversity of the students has put pressure on our teaching...I have less than half Australian students in my class.	Student diversity due to increase in international student intake.	
AB1	I have identified I am working a lot harder in the classrooms; it's much more draining, the performance level is a lot higher trying to keep their interests.	The performance level is a lot higher trying to keep their interests.	Students' lack of interests has meant that teachers now have to work harder.	
AB1	Technology is a big change and it would help if ABI was able to invest in it.	Technology is a big change. ABI needs to invest in it more.	Need to invest in current technology.	<b>Lack of technological investment</b>

### Student diversity

There are now significant cultural and intellectual differences amongst students that instructors need to be aware of, as AB3 reports.

We have students who have different academic abilities, some are very clever learners, some are strugglers and multicultural. Like my class today; I have students who are Muslims, I have Anglo-Saxons, I have Buddhists, so while religions do not come up in finance units you need to be aware of them. (AB3)

Teachers have to be aware of a much more diverse multicultural student population including learning abilities and interests; they must also need to develop skills to cope with these students' demands.

**Lack of technological investment**

Students lack exposure to the technology of the twenty-first century, due to the lack of funding available for technology investment at the institute level. There is a need to invest in more current technology.

Technology is a big change and it would help if ABI was able to invest in it. (AB1)

Keeping up with the latest technology available in the industry and in VET has not occurred. Reversal of this situation involves a serious institutional investment decision.

**Synthesis**

Changes made as a result of new government policies, the implementation of the AQTF, internal management restructuring and growth of a more multicultural student body have all contributed to an increase in the workloads of VET practitioners. Issues arising from compliance needs are most prominent amongst their day-to-day activities; these needs are a direct result of senior management responses related to training packages that flow, via middle management, to frontline classroom staff.

Compliance has affected the development of new and innovative teaching and learning resources. Additional administrative activities are required to ensure that teaching and learning resources are identified accordingly, with the acquisition of new resource packages. Thus monitoring the learning journey in VET has increased the amount of administrative work required. This has created an imbalance in time allocation for activities: teachers argue they put more work into compliance than resource development.

Staff are feeling very nervous about their employment status; this is a direct result of pressure being placed on them to be more productive. There is more pressure for staff to be multi-skilled, to gain tertiary qualifications, to understand the different changes in training packages and to deal with increasing diversity in students. All of these pressures have created a new level of physical and mental stress for staff. In particular, a shift in student

culture together with changes in student attitudes and capacities, regarding learning and teaching, have negatively impacted staff performance and productivity. The result, according to some staff, has been a loss of student motivation and interest in learning. This, together with a suggested decline in academic ability, has result in lowered learning outcomes for students.

The compounded effect has been a lowering of staff morale, a raised sense of dissatisfaction with their role, and an enhanced sense of job insecurity.

#### **Question 4: What power relationships have emerged between administrators, staff and students?**

Four emergent themes were identified in the IDR process, namely:

- Corporatisation.
- Policy.
- Management.
- Culture change.

#### **Corporatisation**

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Corporatisation of education.
- You get what you pay for.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.13 Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.13 Corporatisation**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
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Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	I think because there is [a] real push, the squeezing of the budget means that we do not do things well, and if things are not done well, in respect to the teachers, I don't want to be held accountable for that.	A budget squeeze means we do not do things well ... I don't want to be held accountable for that.	Corporate responsibility is adding pressure.	<b>Corporatisation of education</b>
AB3	So economic measures have advantages and disadvantages, my personal view: it has no place in a democratic society. Is my personal view. It has no place in the educational society.	Economic measures have no place in educational society.	Economic measures versus social responsibility.	
AB2	I have never expressed it that way but, I am feeling a bit disenfranchised by the sector, not by the organisation, because of the way the sector is managed.	I am feeling a bit disenfranchised by the sector ... because of the way it is managed.	Lack of motivation in the VET sector.	
AB2	It attacks my professionalism; I wouldn't deal with things that way. I partly understand that, if you are not going to pay good money, you will not get good admin staff. If you are not going to train them properly, you won't get a good system.	If you are not going to pay good money, you will not get good admin staff. If you are not going to train them properly, you won't get a good system.	Cost cutting affects quality of management and operations.	<b>You get what you pay for</b>
AB2	If you are not working innovatively, you are not going to improve those systems, and this comes about from the problem at the top, not paying enough.	You are not working innovatively; this comes about from the problem of not paying enough.	Loss of innovative thinkers in the system.	

### Corporatisation of education

There is a real sense of the educational budget shrinking each year, and some staff are not happy with the decrease in quality of education, to the point that they do not want to be accountable for this minimisation of educational quality.

Squeezing of the budget means we do not do things well ... I don't want to be held accountable for that. (AB2)

Corporate responsibility is putting pressure on individual's work responsibilities. Staff can understand the importance of organisations being

profitable, but they do not believe the business model has a place in educational society:

Economic measures have ... no place in the educational society. (AB3)

The problem is that economics cannot measure the social responsibilities of education staff.

The feeling of being disenfranchised is now expressed openly among staff; AB2 believes that the current business management model is having a negative effect on the educational outcomes:

I am feeling a bit disenfranchised by the sector, because of the way it is managed.  
(AB2)

The corporatisation of education and training delivery as a product for profitability is have a demotivating effect on many staff, many of whom argue that this new business model has no place in the education system.

### **You get what you pay for**

The lack of content with management can be partly explained by the lack of budget to recruit suitable professionals in management positions, which has contributed to a poorly developed and managed educational system.

If you are not going to pay good money, you will not get good admin staff. If you are not going to train them properly, you won't get a good system. (AB2)

Some staff would suggest that this lack of creativity and innovation starts from the top level of management.

You are not working innovatively ... this comes about from the problem of not paying enough. (AB2)

Cost cutting is negatively impacting quality management and operating systems in the organisation. At the same time, there is a need to attract and develop staff with the appropriate skills necessary to promote efficiency in productivity, innovation and creativity at management level.



## Policy

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Education versus skills.Policymakers in VET.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.14. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.14 Policy**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	The plumbers will keep doing the same old, same old. They are not the engineers that will create the new fittings and the new ways of doing things. If we keep producing the [same] plumbers our country will stay stagnant. We can have them all working, we can have low employment but are we educating our nation?	If we keep producing the [same] plumbers our country will stagnate. We can have them all working ... but are we educating our nation?	A broad education is required for future development.	<b>Education versus skills</b>
AB2	But I could be wrong. If we do not consider the term education to be the primary purpose, and I can see where it comes from, you know do we want everyone to have a job; do we want them to be employed? It's very important.	If we do not consider the term education to be the primary purpose ... do we want to have a job, or do we want them to be employed?		
AB2	Last month the Southern Cross Station was shut down for four hours; something went wrong at Flinders Station and it shut down the whole network. You know what my theory is on that; my Dad used to fix things and if he didn't have the tools to fix things he would make the tools to fix them. Now we don't have thinkers, we have people just regurgitating things.	If he didn't have the tools to fix things he would make the tools to fix them. Now we don't have thinkers, we have people just regurgitating things.		

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	I mean the leadership will be liberal oriented and business oriented. We tend to get socialists under a social structure. So when we say the government sanctions, that means that puts that person in place, and that gives them a certain power to do certain things and that feeds down the system.	The present government is liberal and business oriented, people are put in place to ensure this ideology carried out.	The influence from policymakers is dynamic but often one-sided.	<b>Policymakers in VET</b>
AB2	The government wants certain things to happen, our CEOs are not employed by the government but they are sanctioned by the government, I mean if you have a liberal government you will always find a liberal voting CEO.	Our CEO is not employed by the government but is sanctioned by the government ... if you have a liberal government you will always find a liberal voting CEO.	Governments influence the choosing of staff...	
AB2	So I think there is a control right from the very top, unless you get somebody, there was an article in the age today that said very clearly, the biggest mistake Julia Gillard made in my eyes, is that there is no one minister with the term education in their portfolio. Simon Crean heads the work skill portfolio and education falls under that folio.	The biggest mistake Julia Gillard made in my opinion is that there is no one minister with the term education in their portfolio.	Policymakers do not value education.	
AB3	But this is not the fault of the managers; this is how the system works. I respect my managers and if I was in their position I would have to do the same thing.	But this is not the fault of the managers; this is how the system works. In their position I would have done the same thing.	The system dominates management decision making.	
AB2	But people being educated will get jobs, people who have jobs are not necessarily educated. Being trained in skills does not lead to an educated person, and an educated person is to me a big responsibility of the country. Otherwise what have you got?	People who have jobs are not necessarily educated. Being trained in skills does not lead to an educated person, a big responsibility of the country.	A clear vision for the future generation is required.	
AB2	Trades people in Australia get paid more than an educated person. Work skills are above education. But do we really want to progress Australia in a global market?	Trades people in Australia get paid more than an educated person. Work skills are favoured above education.	Work skills are more important than being able to innovate.	

**Education versus skills**

There is a need to develop skilled trades people who can think and resolve problems. There is a sense that we need to do more than just skill our youth, we need to educate them.

If we keep producing the [same] plumbers our country will stay stagnant. We can have them all working ... but are we educating our nation? (AB2)

Vocational education should not be just about skilling, it should also be about the creation of careers, not just jobs.

If we do not consider the term education to be the primary purpose ... do we want to have a job, or do we want them to be employed? (AB2)

Many vocational students come out with a set of practical skills, but most have not been taught to develop a set of thinking skills that should come with practical skills.

If he didn't have the tools to fix things he will make the tools to fix them. Now we don't have thinkers, we have people just regurgitating things. (AB2)

Some trainers believe we can no longer focus on training our students in trade skills; we must also educate our students for the future. There is a need for policymakers to address the broader issues of education – the system needs to produce 'thinkers for the future' as well as 'doers of today'.

**Policymakers in VET**

Educational systems are influenced by political parties and their policymakers at the top level and this influence is dependent on the ruling party's ideals and vision; AB2 is a political realist:

The present government is liberal and business oriented; the government sanctions actions that support this and places people in the position to make things happen; this feeds down the system. (AB2)

Policymakers in organisations have an agenda (sanctioned by government) that they will want to implement; this agenda will be actioned by heads of

school that are expected to believe in and be passionate about the same agenda. AB2 believes this is inevitable.

Our CEO is not employed by the government but they are sanctioned by the government ... if you have a liberal government you will always find a liberal voting CEO. (AB2)

Control of the educational system comes from the very top level of politics, and this is evidenced in the titles politicians are given. If they do not have education as the focus of their portfolios, then education will not be the main driver of any political reform; AB2 believes that this weakened the educational policy of the former Labour government led by Julia Gillard.

The biggest mistake Julia Gillard made in my opinion is that there is no one minister with the term education in their portfolio. (AB2)

AB3 believes that any mistakes made in educational decision making do not lie with the actions of centre managers; they are just following the system set up by policymakers:

But this is not the fault of the managers; this is how the system works. In their position I would have done the same thing. (AB3)

AB2 sees educating the nation as being the responsibility of all governments; it is not just creating jobs and developing skills – the focus of VET's work skills program.

People who have jobs are not necessarily educated. Being trained in skills does not lead to an educated person, a big responsibility of the country. (AB2)

While skilled trades people now receive better wages than educated people, 'work skills' are more emphasised than 'education'. Some staff are wondering if this trend is really the way we want Australia to progress in a global market.

People who have jobs are not necessarily educated. Being trained in skills does not lead to an educated person, a big responsibility of the country. (AB2)

It is hard, if not impossible, to get the right balance by VET industry policymakers to deliver programs that not only provide work skills for

graduates, but also lead to them being educated for the future. Meeting the current skills shortage is important and a big responsibility for VET policymakers; government influence is strong and has greatly impacted the VET system and policymakers.

## Management

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Autocratic management style.
- Changing to a corporate environment.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.15. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.15 Management**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB4	There is a distance created between management and staff because of the pressures being placed on managers to increase savings, and reduce staff numbers.	Pressure is being placed on managers to increase savings, and reduce staff numbers.	Increase profitability and reduce costs.	<b>Autocratic management style</b>
AB1	The management power change has definitely been much more autocratic, it's much more removed, more removed in the sense the communication is, the gap has widened, as far as what I can witness and observe, communication is appalling.	Management is currently much more autocratic and more removed; the communication gap has widened.	More centralised and less transparent management.	
AB6	The manager seems to have all the decision-making power when it comes to hiring and firing of staff and their decision is not always transparent or made in the interest of student learning.	The managers have all the decision-making power when it comes to hiring and firing of staff; decisions are not made in the interest of student learning.	Centralised human resource management power.	
AB6	There is an enormous amount of pressure placed on teachers nowadays.	An enormous amount of pressure is now placed on teachers.	Pressure on teachers to perform.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	But isn't it interesting. It comes down to technology and communication.	Management comes down to technology and communication.	Technology reduces face-to-face interactions	
AB3	So to me the relationship between me and my students has not changed; however the relationship between management has changed.	The relationship between trainers and students is the same; relationships between trainers and management are different.	Weaker work relationship between staff and management.	<b>Changing to a corporate environment</b>
AB3	And managers are more, um, there is a subtle difference between an educational administrator and a business driven manager, so it has become corporatised.	There is a subtle difference between being an educational administrator and a corporatised business driven manager ...	Managers corporatised and business driven.	
AB3	This started with VET changes in the late 1990s and the government. So there is a relationship and there are advantages and disadvantages; but I would prefer to see managers as educational administrator rather than a business manager.	Changes in the late 1990s led to changes in management. I would prefer to see managers as educational administrators rather than business managers.	Educational administrators replaced by business managers.	

### Autocratic management style

Centre managers have a huge responsibility to ensure their respective centres are making profits and reducing costs; this pressure has in turn created distance between centre managers and the staff they manage.

Pressure is being placed on managers to increase savings and reduce staff numbers.  
(AB4)

Communication between staff and management is lacking and management has become more autocratic.

Management is currently much more autocratic and more removed; the communication gap has widened. (AB1)

There seems to be a centralisation of decision making when it comes to hiring and firing of staff, and these decisions are sometimes made not in the interests of student learning outcomes.

The managers have all the decision-making power when it comes to hiring and firing of staff; decisions are not made in the interest of student learning. (AB6)

There is an enormous amount of pressure being placed on teachers to be more and more productive.

An enormous amount of pressure is now placed on teachers. (AB6)

Some staff have attributed this lack of communication between staff and management to changes in and advancement of technology.

Management comes down to technology and communication. (AB1)

There appears to be a trend towards centralisation of decision-making responsibility towards centre managers with the emphasis on increased profitability and reduced costs; management is less transparent than in the past and human resource management has been centralised. With increased responsibilities some managers are finding it easier to communicate via email instead of verbal communication; overall, there is increased pressure on teachers to perform according to this more impersonal, centralised system.

### **Changing to a corporate environment**

There is also a sense of changing relationships between staff and managers, as AB3 observes:

The relationship between trainers and students is the same; relationships between trainers and management are different. (AB3)

Managers are becoming more business driven, and the educational management style has become more corporate.

There is a subtle difference between being an educational administrator and a corporatised business driven manager. (AB3)

Some staff, including AB3, believed this change to a more corporate management style began in the late 1990s.

Changes in the late 1900s led to changes in management. I would prefer to see managers as educational administrators rather than as business managers. (AB3)

There is now a weaker working relationship between staff and management; managers in the VET system are now corporatised and business driven; the replacement of educational administrators by business managers has resulted in a shift in focus away from education and training.

### Culture change

As a result of the IDR process three themes have emerged, namely:

- Role change.
- Power shift.
- Self-preservation.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.16. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.16 Role change**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	These are two different things, one is business driven and the other is social in my view.	There are two different roles: one is business driven and the other is social.	Business driven shift to meeting a social role.	<b>Role change</b>
AB2	And so, where do I shift that when it comes to students, in the past I was the organisation, I was the administrator, I was the face, I was the marketer, I was the teacher. In my mind everything that happens to a student that walked through the door, I felt I had some input.	In the past I was the organisation: everything that happened to a student that walked through the door, I felt I had some input.	Loss of influence on overall student wellbeing.	
AB5	Teachers are performing more of a mentoring role to the students, and they take on the power of a parent more than a teacher.	Teachers are performing more of a mentoring and parental role rather than being a teacher.	Shift to a mentoring and pastoral role.	



Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	Now as far as the students and the teachers are concerned, there certainly has been a power shift. Walking into the room as a teacher does not give you the right to be heard, or have any respect. To get a good morning out of them is a bonus, um one student may acknowledge you when you get into the room and the rest will just ignore you.	There has been a power shift between the students and teachers. Individual students may acknowledge you but the rest will just ignore you.	Teachers have lost the respect of students.	
AB6	Teachers are stuck between the students/clients and the managers/boss and are sometimes confused as to who they should service in order to keep their job.	Teachers are caught between serving the students as clients and the managers as bosses; thus they are confused as to whom they should service in order to keep their jobs.	Service ambiguity between 'clients' and 'bosses'.	
AB2	Now I see students having very frustrating times, and I don't want to be held accountable for that. So I push straight back, you know this is your process and who to contact. And so that creates a dichotomy between me and the organisation.	Students are facing accountability frustrations that create tensions between them, the teachers and the organisation.	Accountability tensions arise as teachers take on a more systemic role.	
AB1	the most graphic change, and it is just a social change which is now happening in our classrooms. I don't see a correlation between AB's management relating to its staff and its staff relating to the students.	A social change is happening in our classrooms. There is a dysfunction between management relating to its staff and its staff relating to the students.	Dysfunctional relationships exist at two levels: staff and managers, and staff and students.	Power shift
AB3	I came from a society which believes in equality, my experience as a child in the sixties. Teachers and students, there was a very special relationship. When I came to Australia, I was instructed that students must call me as Mr YY; I was stunned because I have always addressed my teachers by their first name since I was in kinder and primary, to high school and to university.	I was instructed that students must address me as Mr YY. I have always addressed my teachers by their first name since kinder. ...	Teacher-student relationship depersonalised	
AB5	Students seem to have more power than administrators, due to this new client and service provider relationship.	Students have more power than administrators due to this new client-service provider relationship.	Client-service provider relationship emerging.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB3	What do you mean by power? When I first started three or four years ago, there was a power relationship between the teacher and the students.	Three or four years ago, there was a clear power relationship between teacher and students.	Disempowerment of teachers.	
AB2	I don't want to be tarred with the same brush as somebody who does not do their job very well. So here I am: a professional wanting to distance myself from the leadership decisions that are made within the centre.	I don't want to be branded as somebody who does their job poorly; I want to distance myself from the leadership decisions that are made.	Poor decisions are diminishing teachers' professionalism.	Self-protection
AB4	There is no apparent change between teachers and students, depending on the teacher involved.	Depending on the teacher involved, there are no apparent changes between teachers and students.	Resisting the change.	

### Role change

There has been an overall role change at the institutional level of VET: from society driven to business driven.

There are two different roles: one is business driven and the other is social. (AB1)

At the same time, trainers' roles have also changed; in the past trainers had more influence on the students' educational progress in the classroom.

In the past I was the organisation: everything that happened to a student that walked through the door, I felt I had some input. (AB2)

Trainers today have more of a mentoring role, mirroring that of the pastoral role of a parent rather than being a trainer.

Teachers are performing more of a mentoring and parental role rather than being a teacher. (AB5)

Perhaps a more dramatic change comes from the loss of respect of students towards trainers: being a trainer in front of the classroom does not necessarily guarantee respect.

There has been a power shift between the students and teachers. Individual students may acknowledge you but the rest will just ignore you. (AB1)

The notion of students being the clients, trainers being service providers and the centre manager being the boss, has created a lot of confusion for trainers. They simply do not know to whom they should be responsible:

Teachers are caught between serving the students as clients and the managers as bosses; thus they are confused as to whom they should service in order to keep their jobs. (AB6)

At the same time, students are frustrated by the system in which they study, where they are just part of a process with little or no understanding of the process.

Students are facing accountability frustrations that create tensions between them, the teachers and the organisation. (AB2)

Role changes have resulted in trainers feeling ambiguous about their position: with VET being business driven, their role appears to be more of a social than instructional one. As a consequence, they have experienced a loss of influence on overall student wellbeing; this is particularly reflected in their shift to a mentoring and pastoral role, resulting in a loss of respect from students and the creation of a 'service ambiguity' between them, the 'clients' and the 'bosses'. From the students' perspective, accountability tensions arise as teachers are forced to take on a more systemic role.

### **Power shift**

There is a lack of cohesion between staff and management that in turn has contributed to a lack of social cohesion between staff and students.

A social change is happening in our classrooms. There is a dysfunction between management relating to its staff and its staff relating to the students. (AB1)

In some European education classrooms the relationships between teachers and students are special, and they can address each other by first name. In some Australian institutions students are instructed to refer to their teachers as Mr YY.

I was instructed that students must address me as Mr YY. I have always addressed my teachers by their first name since kinder. (AB3)

With the introduction of the new 'client and service provider' model, students as clients seem to have more power over VET central administration.

Students have more power than administrators due to this new client–service provider relationship. (AB5)

Prior to the introduction of the client and service provider model, the role of a trainer was a lot more powerful.

Three or four years ago, there was a clear power relationship of teacher over students. (AB3)

The introduction of a client and service provider model in vocational education has resulted in less cohesion between trainers and students, and trainers and managers: a dysfunctional relationship now exists between both; in particular, the teacher–student relationship has become depersonalised. Students in this client–service provider relationship now behave differently towards their trainers. The overall impact on teachers is one of disempowerment.

### **Self-protectionism**

Staff who do not want to be associated with a system that is losing creditability as a result of poor leadership decisions being made by central administration, are being safeguarded by distancing themselves from the system.

I don't want to be branded as somebody who does their job poorly; I want to distant myself from the leadership decisions that are made. (AB2)

Some individual trainers still believe the teacher will always be the teacher if they conduct themselves in a manner that commands the respect of students. For them, the teacher–student relationship has not changed:

Depending on the teacher involved, there are no apparent changes between teachers and students. (AB4)

Some trainers are distancing themselves from the poor decisions made by central administrators; these decisions, they believe, are diminishing their professionalism. In order to protect themselves from any stereotyping in the vocational education industry, they are resisting the changes being made.

## **Synthesis**

With the corporatisation of vocational institutions and the quest for profitability, centre managers now, more than ever, have a great responsibility to ensure their centres operate at a profit. With this new responsibility, centre managers have become more self-reliant and powerful; this in turn has contributed to less cohesion within the centre and loss of motivation and morale amongst staff.

Some staff argue that profitability has now taken precedence over the quality of teaching and learning in the VET industry. The changes in education policies have also contributed negatively to the quality of education in VET, because policies are created with a political agenda in mind; in particular, it is the opinion of many staff that this political agenda does not include quality of educational outcomes for the students in VET.

The introduction of the client and service provider model has resulted in changing roles within VET institutions. Instructors do not have the influence they had when they were teachers rather than service providers. Students did not have the power they do now, as the client, to challenge both instructors and, sometimes, administrators. These power relationship shifts have resulted in a loss of cohesion amongst instructors and managers, students and instructors, and instructors and the institution.

## Question 5. What leadership skills are required to lead in this culture of change?

Three emergent themes were identified in the IDR process, namely:

- Change management skills.
- Situational leadership skills.
- Transformation leadership skills.

### Change management skills

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Organisational awareness.
- Aspects of change.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.17. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.17 Change management**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	At ABI we are now in crisis; we are not getting the students, we haven't got any money, um and the most important thing you have got are your staff, so if you don't get off you bum and go and talk to them, you are not going to know anything.	We are now in crisis, we are not getting the students, we haven't got any money; if you don't go and talk to your staff then you are not going to know anything.	Communication is vital in a centre facing potential crisis.	<b>Organisational awareness</b>
AB1	Think of this wheel we have been on, think of this economic wheel we have been on, now America has gone through a huge global crisis, we had a potential one.	Think of this economic wheel we have been on, now America has gone through a huge global crisis; we had a potential one.	Crisis management is essential.	<b>Aspects of change</b>

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	We have gone through four restructures in the past twenty years. And each time we have to apply for our job again, in front of about four to five different people before I can get my job back again. The title will change again, and it is getting to the point, how many restructures can you go through?	With every restructure we have to apply for our job again; it is getting to the point, how many restructures can you go through?	Uncertainty is demotivating to staff.	
AB2	When you ask people to be part of the change, they don't respond to the email because they are already overworked and they are tired of the changes.	When you ask people to be part of the change they don't respond, they are already overworked and they are tired of the changes.	Staff less responsive.	

### Organisational awareness

With the changes in educational policies and the decreasing number of students in respective centres, it is important for staff to have an awareness of how their centre or organisation as a whole is performing.

We are now in crisis, we are not getting the students, we haven't got any money; if you don't go and talk to your staff then you are not going to know anything. (AB1)

Communication is vital in a centre facing potential crisis; this awareness is not apparent.

### Aspects of change

In times of global financial crisis it is important for centre leaders to have a clear understanding of what the crisis is. AB1 equates the situation at ABI with the global financial crisis of 2008.

Think of this economic wheel we have been on, now America has gone through a huge global crisis; we had a potential one. (AB1)

There have been numerous restructures taking place in all centres.

With every restructure we have to apply for our job again; it is getting to the point, how many restructures can you go through? (AB1)

The uncertainties resulting from these restructures that necessitate re-applying for positions are having a demotivating effect on staff.

With the numerous changes some managers are overworked, leaving them little or no time to interact with their staff; and staff in turn have become less responsive.

When you ask people to be part of the change they don't respond; they are already overworked and they are tired of the changes. (AB2)

The numerous changes that have occurred over a relatively short period of time have required a critical response that has created uncertainty, staff lack motivation and this makes them less responsive to accepting imposed change.

### **Situational leadership skills**

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Knowing your stakeholders.
- Situational leadership.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.18. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.18 Situational leadership skills**

<b>Rspndt</b>	<b>Comment</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Theme</b>
AB5	There is also a need for managers to know staff individually and, where possible, get to know the students as much as possible.	Managers need to know their staff individually and the students as much as possible.	Knowing individual group members.	<b>Knowing your stakeholders</b>
AB5	Management also need to get out of the office and get to know the staff and the students in the immediate surroundings.	Management needs to get out of the office and get to know their staff and students in the immediate surroundings.	Management by wandering around. (MBWA).	



Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB3	There are different types of leadership and there is what I call situational leadership where leadership is practised according to the situation.	Situational leadership, a different type of leadership, where leadership is practised according to the situation, is required.	Situational leadership skills required.	<b>Situational leadership</b>
AB2	The leadership is absolutely crucial, and I say this whether it be from the teacher to the students or from the management to the staff; I see a similarity because I think it is global.	Leadership provided by both teachers to students, and by management to staff is absolutely critical.		
AB2	I think the most important thing is observation; have a look and open your eyes, get in touch, if a manager sits with her door closed, or most of the time, a manager will not see what changes are taking place you will not be very successful. They should get up and walk around, have a cup of tea.	The most important thing is observation; if the manager sits with their door closed they will not see what changes are taking place.	Managing by wandering around.	
AB5	Management needs to be flexible and open to change; they must also do things differently in order to adapt to change.	Management needs to be flexible and open to change; be able to do things differently, to adapt to change.	Situational leadership is adaptable.	

### Knowing your stakeholders

It is important, as AB5 observes, for leaders to know all the stakeholders and how they relate to the situation at hand. They also need to understand the internal and external environment in which they operate by engaging in ‘management by wandering around’ (Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Managers need to know their staff individually and students as much as possible... management needs to get out of the office and get to know their staff and students in the immediate surroundings. (AB5)

Knowing individual group members – both staff and students – and engaging in ‘management by wandering around’ is key to knowing the stakeholders.

**Situational leadership**

Some staff believe that, in times of change, managers need to lead according to the situation in which they operate; AB3 believes that situational leadership skills is required.

Situational leadership, a different type of leadership, where leadership is practised according to the situation, is required. (AB3)

This view is supported by AB2, who suggests that situational leadership skills are applicable for an organisation as a whole, the different centres and in the classroom.

Leadership provided by both teachers to students, and by management to staff is absolutely critical. (AB2)

True situational leadership, according to AB2, can only happen if the leaders have a holistic understanding of the situation in which they lead – gained through ‘managing by wandering around’.

The most important thing is observation; if the manager sits with their door closed they will not see what changes are taking place. (AB2)

Management, according to AB5, needs to be able to adapt to change and do things differently when required, in order to ensure a positive outcome for themselves, the staff, students and institution.

Management needs to be flexible and open to change: be able to do things differently and adapt to change. (AB5)

In times of change there is a large dependency placed on situational leadership skills that are adaptive to particular situations and environments.

## Transformational leadership skills

As a result of the IDR process four themes have emerged, namely:

- Team building.
- Communication and transparency.
- Ethical leadership.
- Transformational leadership.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 4.19. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 4.19 Transformative leadership skills**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	When you go to meetings where information is disseminated and the information is passed onto you, you do not feel like you are part of the process of change, you are just being told what to do to be part of this change.	When information is merely disseminated and passed on, you do not feel like you are part of the process of change; you are being told what to do to be part of this change.	Need to be part of a change team.	<b>Team building</b>
AB2	What works for me is camaraderie and it should be part of the management style. I am not saying that management needs to be your friend. I don't think it's a good way to manage.	Camaraderie should be part of the management style; this does not imply that management should be your friend.		
AB1	So there is no point in sending emails to everybody, go and talk to them. We are not so busy that we cannot talk to them.	There is no point in sending emails – go and talk to them.	Two-way communication	<b>Communication and transparency</b>
AB1	People get stressed if they don't know what is going on, or who is being audited, the stress level will then get quite high.	If staff don't know what is going on, or why they are being audited, the stress level will then get quite high.		
AB1	[Management] are too busy doing stuff, is again quality driven, process driven, procedure driven, and yet we are the ones who are part of these changes.	Management are too busy doing quality, process and procedural stuff; yet we are the ones who are part of these changes.		

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	I am not naïve, but if you don't get people to go with you on the journey, you might as well just ... we are losing a lot of motivation here.	If you don't get people to go on the journey, we are losing a lot of motivation here.	Communication and transparency will overcome fear of change.	
AB1	But one thing that doesn't change in any organisation is the people and communication ... if you get that right, obviously you have got budgets and you have got political pressures.	... One thing that doesn't change is the people and the need for communication ... you need to get that right; obviously the budget and political pressures remain.		
AB4	Open communication is important in terms of leadership when there are so many changes going on.	Open communication is important in terms of leadership; there is so much change going on.		
AB4	If there is open communication then the fear of change can lessen; delays in communication will only result in fear.	Open communication can lessen the fear of change; delays in communication will only result in increased fear.		
AB6	The need to communicate cannot be over-emphasised in times of change, the staff need to know why changes are necessary and how these changes will be implemented.			
AB6	Communications with transparency regarding the decision-making process can also help to involve and motivate staff.	Transparency regarding decision making can also help and motivate staff.		
AB3	However, I think if you are at senior administration in an institute such as TAFE, and remember TAFE and university are now blurring because this is an old model which is passé.	If you are now a senior administrator in a TAFE institute your role is blurred between TAFE and university: the old model is passé.	Ethical leadership required that meets the needs of the immediate community.	Ethical leadership
AB3	I believe the leadership in a respectable government institute leadership should be ethical; they should have a wide spectrum of the needs of the immediate community including international students.	Leadership should be ethical and should have a wide spectrum [of views] in order to meet the needs of the immediate community including international students.		

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB2	A true meeting is where you have an agenda and minutes are taken and there will be follow-up. In the past five years I have only been to one meeting that followed this mentality.	In a transparent and ethical meeting, there is an agenda and minutes are taken; there will be follow-up...this no longer occurs.	Need for transparent and ethical meetings.	
AB1	You can't have creativity and innovation if you have management that do not know how to manage this change. Words are not enough, titles are not enough, departments are not enough, as far as a senior educator at ABI in tourism and events is concerned.	You can't have creativity and innovations if management do not know how to manage change. Words are not enough ...	Need for action, not just words.	
AB6	Honesty is another important element of leadership in times of change.	Honesty is another important element of leadership in times of change.	Honesty is most needed in times of change.	
AB3	[The leadership] should be extremely gender sensitive, it should be sensitive to the indigenous culture of this country with their educational policy and it should be innovative.	Leadership is gender sensitive, racially sensitive and innovation is required.	Leadership is ethically and morally sensitive.	
AB3	I think for Australia to move towards the service model leadership style, it will have to come from the next generation, not from Gen Y.	A move towards a service model leadership style ... comes from the next generation.	Transformational leadership from the next generation.	Transform-ational leadership
AB2	Our process of management at the moment is making it harder, because people are rebelling, because they are not bringing the staff with them on the journey. John (CEO) told us to get off the train if we weren't on the same journey.	Staff are rebelling, because they are not bringing the staff with them on the journey. The CEO told us to get off the train if we weren't on the same journey.	Authoritarian leadership is inappropriate in times of change.	
AB3	It should be more of the servant's model rather than the authoritarian model, where I am the leader and you need to follow me. So they need to move from administrative type leadership to a community leadership which the servant's leadership reflects.	A servant's model rather than the authoritarian model is preferred – a move from administrative type leadership to a community leadership.		
AB3	I think this type of leadership in Australia is missing, it is more prevalent in the US and Europe. But in Australia it is missing because we still have an Anglo Saxon model.	This type of leadership is missing in Australia ... because we still have an Anglo Saxon model.	A more transformational leadership style is required.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
AB1	You are not managing if nobody is with you, and I am not talking about one particular person, it is institute wide. But I think it is coming from the top. This type of management is like a disease. It is having an effect on creativity and innovation.	You are not managing if nobody is with you ... this type of management is like a disease that is having an effect on creativity and innovation.		

### Team building

According to AB2, staff need to be part of the process of change: they want to know what is going on and why; they need to build trust and friendship to build camaraderie; and to contribute and to participate in a two-way dialogue.

When information is merely disseminated and passed on, you do not feel like you are part of the process of change; you are being told what to do to be part of this change... Camaraderie should be part of the management style; this does not imply that management should be your friend. (AB2)

There should be a sense of belonging for all staff if they are to be more productive, but there should also be a sense of professionalism involved.

In order for a group to work together well in times of change, staff need to work in a team where there is integrity, open dialogue and honesty.

### Communication and transparency

AB1 stressed the importance of two-way communication, identifying inefficacy of one-way communication through the use of emails; staff want to be able to see and talk to their superiors.

There is no point in sending emails – go and talk to them. (AB1)

An outcome of one-way communication, according to AB1, is that the level of stress can rise very quickly (e.g. stress will be at high levels if staff are being audited, and they have no idea why or for what they are being audited).

If staff don't know what is going on, or why they are being audited, the stress level will then get quite high. (AB1)

It seems a bit strange for some managers to be too busy doing things and making no time to engage their staff, when it is their staff and themselves who are in the middle of two-way communication.

Management are too busy doing quality, process and procedural stuff; yet we are the ones who are part of these changes. ... One thing that doesn't change is the people and the need for communication ... you need to get that right; obviously the budget and political pressures remain. (AB1)

Staff are clear that good, transparent communication will assist staff in overcoming their fear of change; this will give them a sense of being on the same journey as centre managers and the institution; without this, the institution can lose its staff morale and motivation.

There is a need for open communication and transparency to minimise the level of stress and fear being experienced by staff.

Open communication is important in terms of leadership; there is so much change going on ... Open communication can lessen the fear of change; delays in communication will only result in increasing fear. (AB4)

Understanding why changes are taking place and how change is being implemented is the best way of reassuring staff in times of change. Transparency, according to AB6, can be seen as the bright light in the darkness of change.

Transparency regarding decision-making process can also help and motivate staff. (AB6)

The need for transparent communication cannot be underestimated, nor can it be ignored in times of change: it is an essential element in overcoming the fear of change.

### **Ethical leadership**

AB3 argues for senior administration that displays ethical leadership which meets the needs of the immediate community; this means adapting to a new model for the institute:

If you are now a senior administrator in a TAFE institute your role is blurred between TAFE and university: the old model is passé ... Leadership should be ethical and should have a wide spectrum [of views] in order to meet the needs of the immediate community including international students. (AB3)

As leaders in an educational institution, one must be ethical in one's approach to cultural diversity and the staff community they lead.

Ethical actions also need to flow into meetings, where there are agendas, minutes and, most importantly, post-meeting follow up.

In a transparent and ethical meeting, there is an agenda and minutes are taken; there will be follow up...this no longer occurs. (AB2)

Leaders must be able to understand and know how to manage change, if there is to be true innovation and creativity. Changing titles and using passionate words are not enough; there is a need for action, not just words.

You can't have creativity and innovations if management do not know how to manage change. Words are not enough .... (AB1)

Honesty is most needed in times of change.

Honesty is another important element of leadership in times of change. (AB6)

When dealing with the issues of gender and cultural diversity, leaders must be ethically and morally sensitive.

Leadership is gender sensitive, racially sensitive and innovation is required. (AB3)

Ethical and moral leadership will need to be exhibited to ensure the true responsibilities of staff in classrooms, in centres and in the institution are sustained. Of particular importance is that gender and racial sensitivity to diversity, which exists in the immediate environment, is sustained. Finally, the institute will need to be a source of innovation and change that follows ethical and moral principles.



**Transformational leadership**

To transform the educational system there may be a need to implement the servant model leadership style, but this is not likely to happen with the current Gen Y; rather, it needs to come from a subsequent generation.

A move towards a servant model leadership style comes from the next generation.  
(AB3)

Staff can and will rebel against an authoritarian leader, and being told what to do may be enough to destabilise the educational system within an institution's centre. According to AB2:

Staff are rebelling, because [the administrators] are not bringing the staff with them on the journey. The CEO told us to get off the train if we weren't on the same journey. (AB2)

Some staff believe the servant model of leadership will work better than the authoritarian model, and there is a need to get away from administrative leadership style and adopt community leadership style.

A servant model rather than the authoritarian model is preferred – a move from administrative type leadership to community leadership. (AB3)

AB3 believes that a community model leadership style, such as that found in some European countries, is missing in Australia due to the fact that we have an Anglo Saxon model.

This type of leadership is missing in Australia ... because we still have an Anglo Saxon model. (AB3)

Finally, AB1 observes that, to be a true leader, one needs to have followers, and lack of leadership can have a stifling effect on the staff's ability to be creative and innovative.

You are not managing if nobody is with you ... this type of management is like a disease. It is having an effect on creativity and innovation. (AB1)

To lead one needs to have followers; to inspire one needs to work with the team; and to transform one will need vision and perseverance.

**Synthesis**

With the numerous changes in our national education system and the ever decreasing number of students in our VET sector, both local and international students are now being enrolled. There is tremendous pressure for administrative level staff to perform well financially; unfortunately, this pressure is also being felt by all levels of staff without fully understanding what that pressure is or how they can contribute to its alleviation. This in turn has led to a decreased level of morale and motivation within respective centres.

There is a need to know who the institution's stakeholders are in these times of change, that is, a need to fully understand the environment in which one is to lead. The best way to carry this out is to be amongst the environment and the staff community one is leading; by understanding the environment of changes and the community, it is possible to form a holistic view of what is required to lead in these times of change.

To lead in a culture of change one must be flexible and adaptive to the situation at hand. Through the use of open communication one can begin to build a team of people who are also willing to adapt and be part of the process of change in their respective centres. Staff want to belong, but they will find it hard to belong if there is no transparency; once transparency is established, staff will become more creative and innovative members of a team.

To truly transform staff to meet the needs of changes and reforms, some have highlighted the merits of a servant and community model leadership style. The data analysis for the MNI follows in Chapter 5.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **MATTHEW NIXON INSTITUTE**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, I introduce the process of inductive data reduction (IDR) employed in my research, and apply that process to identify the themes that emerge from the second case study undertaken at the Matthew Nixon Institute (MNI). As with the previous chapter, data relating to each of the emergent themes are summarised in a set of tables; this data is used to provide a description of the emergent constructs and concepts in order to provide a coherent picture of the changes that have occurred at MNI in the past ten years.

#### **Inductive data reduction**

Using the technique of IDR, I was able to reduce the data collected from semi-structured interviews into constructs, concepts, and themes. I have grouped clusters of themes in order to form organising themes that provide in-depth understanding of the meanings I believe have emerged out of responses provided in the semi-structured interviews. Thus, the organising themes represent a set of reconstructed themes. The reconstructed themes agree with my perceptions as a member of staff currently working in the VET industry: they represent the views of someone who has first-hand understanding and experience of the VET context.

## Question 1: What changes have you noticed in the past five to ten years in the workplace?

Two emergent themes were identified in the IDR process, namely:

- Analysis of organising themes.
- Changes in management.

### Analysis of organising themes

The organising themes to emerge in response to the first question asked of the MNI staff were as follows:

- Compliance.
- Changes in management.
- Student impact.

### Compliance

As a result of the IDR process, two themes emerged, namely:

- Increased amount of administrative work.
- Increased accountability.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.1. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.1 Compliance**

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN1	[There is] far more paperwork, far more accountability. How should I put this: [there is] a lot more government involvement, such as the AQTF.	Far more paperwork, far more accountability, a lot more government involvement, such as the AQTF.	Increase in accountability.	<b>Increased administrative work</b>

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN2	With the changes in packages which led to curriculum changes in the past five years, changes were particular to the administration task which is now 50% of the work, if not more.	Changes in training packages in the past five years, leading to increased administrative work by 50%.	Changes in training packages.	
MN4	Well, there has been a big increase in administrative work to ensure that all the roll books are in order, to comply with internal and external audits.	Increase in administrative work, to comply with audit requirements.	Audit requirements.	
MN5	Classroom management now extends beyond the classroom; specifically for a) "students at risk", b) "students on contracts" and c) "students who fail units of competencies".	Extending beyond classroom management, students at risk, students on contract and students who failed.	Student welfare concerns.	
MN5	More and more "administrative" work is being directed towards the teaching load. More and more "administrative" work is required to be done online.	More administrative work is directed to the teaching load, and more is required to be done online.	Increased accountability.	
MN1	The AQTF is what drives a lot of the changes. There is a framework from which we have to work towards. It drives what we do and how we do it.	AQTF is the framework that drives what we do and how we do it.	Increased workload.	
MN1	RTOs in the past have not been accountable, but they are held accountable now and that's why some of them are going out of business, because when they try to be accountable and cannot meet audit [requirements] they just close up and finish. Whereas for us, we have always been accountable, and now we are made especially accountable.	RTOs close up and finish when they try to meet accountability at the TAFE level. In meeting this accountability level, TAFEs have also had to increase their level of accountability.	Bridging the accountability gap.	<b>Increased accountability</b>
MN2	There should be a lot more alignment between all TAFEs and RTOs. There's much more accountability. There shouldn't be a lot of differences between them.	TAFEs and RTOs should be more aligned in terms of accountability.		

**Increased administrative work**

This increase in administrative work is largely due to greater involvement from government departments through the processes of auditing. The involvement of the AQTF has meant a large increase in paperwork and far more accountability in order to stay compliant.

[There is] far more paperwork, far more accountability. How should I put this:  
[there is] a lot more government involvement, such as the AQTF. (MN1)

The introduction of new and revised training packages has also resulted in an increase in administrative work.

With the changes in the packages which had led to the curriculum changes in the past five years, changes particular to the administration task which is now 50% of the work, if not more. (MN2)

MN4 agrees, pointing out the impact of new audit requirements.

Well there has been a big increase in administrative work to ensure that all the roll books are in order, to comply with internal and external audits. (MN4)

Changes in classroom management have been extended to include student welfare concerns.

Classroom management now extends beyond the classroom; specifically for a) “students at risk”, b) “students on contracts” and c) “students who fail units of competencies”. (MN5)

Increased accountability involves more classroom administrative work that has resulted in an extra workload on top of the existing roles staff have to perform for the purpose of compliance; the introduction of computer technology has increased the immediacy of this work.

More and more “administrative” work is being directed towards the teaching load.  
More and more “administrative” work is required to be done online. (MN5)

The AQTF is the department that drives all the required compliance work in all registered training organisations.

The AQTF is what drives a lot of the changes. There is a framework from which we have to work towards. It drives what we do and how we do it. (MN1)

The numerous changes taking place in new training packages, new compliance standards and advancement in technology have all contributed to an increase in administrative work with increased teaching workloads.

### **Increased accountability**

When smaller registered training organisations (RTOs) are unable to maintain the required level of accountability they close down and go bankrupt. When TAFE institutes have their level of accountability increased they must bridge the accountability gap.

RTOs in [the] past have not been accountable, but they are held accountable now and that's why some of them are going out of business, because when they try to be accountable and cannot meet audit [requirements] they just close up and finish. Whereas, for us, we have always been accountable, and now we are made especially accountable. (MN1)

MN2 argues that TAFE institutes and the private or smaller RTOs should be more aligned in terms of accountability.

There should be a lot more alignment between all TAFEs and RTOs. There's much more accountability. There shouldn't be a lot of differences between them. (MN2)

The changes in accountability for private and public RTOs means there has been an increase for both to be more accountable and a significant increase in administrative work, which TAFEs and their staff cannot avoid.

### **Changes in management**

As a result of the IDR process four themes have emerged, namely:

- Addressing employer's expectations.
- Profitability.
- Motivation.
- Pressure to perform.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.2. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.2 Changes in management**

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	They want value from the fact that they are losing someone and they need to take someone else on to cover this work; there is [a] bigger cost than just having someone to fill the position at work. So are they getting value for money? How relevant is what we teach at TAFE to their workplace?	Employers need to take someone else on to cover that work; the cost is greater than just having someone fill the position. Are the employers getting value for money? How relevant is what we teach at TAFE?	The relevancy and value for money from TAFE training.	<b>Addressing employer's expectation</b>
MN2	The focus is off the students; the main focus is now on the procedure, paperwork and money. Money, process and paperwork; the students are right at the bottom of the scale.	The main focus is on procedures, paperwork and money. Students are right at the bottom of the scale.	Compliance and profitability most important.	<b>Profitability</b>
MN4	It seems that the department is going from an education institution to a business organisation, where teachers are hired based on their potential salary rather than their ability to deliver the required training and industry knowledge.	Teachers are being hired based on salary rather than their ability to deliver the required training.	Cost management rather than staff quality.	
MN4	There has been a large increase in sessional workers and the notion of ongoing positions no longer exists.	The notion of an ongoing position no longer exists.	Loss of security.	<b>Loss of motivation</b>
MN2	The teachers are not even in the equation; we are just a facilitator of change. We have no value, we mean nothing; we are not valued.	Teachers are just facilitators of change. We have no value, we mean nothing.	Staff treated as a resource.	
MN2	They are not interested in us, [Management] walk in and they see a picture and they make an assumption and they don't want to know anything more. We are a tool waiting around.	Management walks in and they get a brief picture only: we are just tools waiting to be used.	Staff no longer feel valued.	
MN4	New teachers are not given the required training or induction before they begin work. More and more teachers are becoming unhappy with the department because they don't know what is going on from one semester to the next.	With inadequate initial training more teachers are unhappy with the department because they don't know what is going on.	Lack of job readiness and insecurity leads to staff discontent.	



Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN5	[There is] more and more pressure to develop teaching and assessment resources – without reducing teaching loads.	There is growing pressure to develop resources without reducing teaching loads.		<b>Pressure to perform</b>
MN5	More directed duties are no longer classified as ‘directed duties’ (with a subsequent reduction in teaching loads), rather a pressure statement is being applied – ‘it’s just the role of a teacher’ or you ‘must do this if you want to keep your job’.	Former directed duties are being de-classified; they are now regarded as being ‘the role of a teacher’ to be undertaken ‘if you want to keep your jobs’.	Pressure on staff to do unpaid work.	
MN4	The department seems to be very focused on the bottom line of the operation, and the teachers seem to have become workers rather than teachers.	By focusing on the bottom line of the operation, management has reduced teachers to being workers rather than teachers.	Operational profitability the key focus.	

### Addressing the employer’s perceptions

The employers are more conscious of their apprentices’ time away from work, and they want to know if they are learning the skills needed for the job, and more specifically, if they will be more productive having gone to TAFE (i.e. they are seeking ‘value for money’). At the same time, MN3 notes that employers question the relevancy, to their workplace, of the skills taught at TAFE.

They want value from the fact that they are losing someone and they need to take someone else on to cover this work; there is [a] bigger cost than just having someone to fill the position at work. So are they getting value for money? How relevant is what we teach at TAFE to their workplace? (MN3)

The issue of return on investment raised by employers needs to be addressed both at management and trainer levels: the result being additional workload for trainers.

**Profitability**

In order for a TAFE institute to survive, it needs to address the issue of profitability like any other business. There has been a shift in focus away from students; compliance and profitability have become more important.

The focus is off the students; the main focus is now on the procedure and paperwork, money. Money, process and paperwork; the students are right at the bottom of the scale. (MN2)

Cost management, seen as cost cutting, is another method employed in the quest for greater profitability; as a result, teachers are being hired on the basis of lower salary costs.

It seems that the department is going from an education institution to a business organisation, where teachers are hired based on their potential salary rather than their ability to deliver the required training and industry knowledge. (MN4)

Operational profitability has become the priority for management; it may come at the cost of quality products and educational outcomes: staff feel they are being used; certainly, they no longer feel valued.

**Motivation**

Trainers are now seen as facilitators of change in TAFE, and that this kind of work can be carried out by sessional or casual trainers. This has caused a significant increase in the number of sessionals, who are hired for the purpose of facilitating training rather than actual training. At the same time permanent staff fear a loss of security.

There has been a large increase in sessional workers and the notion of ongoing positions no longer exists. (MN4)

This shift has also caused many of the permanent staff to feel undervalued; MN2 suggests that staff are merely being treated as a resource or as 'tools waiting to be used':

The teachers are not even in the equation; we are just a facilitator of change. We have no value, we mean nothing; we are not valued. (MN2)

Sessionals are not receiving sufficient initial training and their lack of readiness leads to general discontent among staff.

New teachers are not given the required training or induction before they begin work. More and more teachers are becoming unhappy with the department because they don't know what is going on from one semester to the next. (MN4)

The new identity of trainers as facilitators of learning has contributed to poor staff morale. Less time spent on induction has contributed to an increase in confusion for new sessional staff: they lack a clear understanding of the expectations placed upon them or the processes they are supposed to follow. The overall impact is a loss of departmental motivation.

### **Pressure to perform**

Trainers are put under more and more pressure to produce teaching resources and assessment tools, without any compensation in terms of work hours or monetary gains. Under the terms of required duties, trainers are also expected to perform extra administration.

[There is] more and more pressure to develop teaching and assessment resources – without reducing teaching loads. (MN5)

Directed duties are being reclassified, with the result of new pressure being placed on staff to do unpaid work:

More directed duties are no longer classified as 'directed duties' (with a subsequent reduction in teaching loads), rather a pressure statement is being applied – 'it's just the role of a teacher' or you 'must do this if you want to keep your job'. (MN5)

With all these extra duties and no compensation, trainers are left feeling unappreciated: operational profitability has become the key focus.

The department seems to be very focused on the bottom line of the operation, and the teachers seemed to have become just workers rather than teachers. (MN4)

The change in management direction has left many trainers feeling unmotivated and stressed; an increase in the number of sessional trainers is leaving full-time staff feeling stressed over the lack of job security. The latter are also taking on extra duties to assist new sessional staff with their

enquiries and to make them work ready. Thus they are under pressure to perform.

## Students

As a result of the IDR process four themes have emerged, namely:

- Changing student needs.
- Decrease in student numbers.
- Increased teaching difficulties.
- Political influences.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.3. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.3 Students**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	Students have changed in a sense that they have a lot more choice now, in a sense that there are pressures from the workplace as well as individual needs.	Students have changed: more choices; more pressure from the workplace; meeting individual needs.	Pressure to meet student and workplace needs.	<b>Changing student needs</b>
MN3	[Students] are not as tolerant as they could possibly be, they want information pretty much suddenly, right there and then, they want to know now.	Students want information pretty much right there and then.		
MN6	As there has been a change in the laws for permanent residency, this market has done a complete turnaround resulting in many service providers reducing the loads of teachers.	The change in the laws for permanent residency has resulted in few students and service providers having to reduce teacher loads.	Fewer students; lower staff loads.	<b>Decrease in student numbers</b>
MN1	We don't have the number of apprentices [in hospitality] because they won't work the long, hard hours, and they won't work the holidays and the night shifts.	The number of apprentices has decreased because of the unfavourable conditions in hospitality.	Fewer students caused by unattractive working conditions.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN1	And that type of student is very hard to engage, [and] because of that there is a higher non-completion rate, because they can't see the point of being there or there is always something else better to do in their personal life.	There is a high non-completion rate, because they [students] can't see the point of being there.	Disengaged students.	Increasing teaching difficulties
MN1	I think the teaching has changed. I think it is a lot harder now because we have to work with disengaged students at Certificate 2 level.	I think it is a lot harder now because we have to work with disengaged students at Certificate 2 level.		
MN3	They are knowledgeable in the sense they know that they have a choice now, they are knowledgeable about the workplace training and assessment system, there is RPL, they are more knowledgeable about the TAFE system. Some are even playing the system.	They know they have choices now, there is RPL, they are more knowledgeable about the TAFE system. Some are even playing the system.	Students are 'playing the system'.	
MN6	Changes in our VET sector, in particular the International Market, [mean] that assessments have been simplified to suit our market.	Assessments have been simplified to suit our international market.	Assessment standards simplified.	Political influences
MN1	You have to learn, it's a different type of engagement now to what it used to be. It used to be they are there because they want a career, and now they are there because they have to be there, they are getting paid to be there.	It's a different type of engagement now. They used to be there because they wanted a career; now they are getting paid to be there by the government.	Changes in students' intent.	
MN1	I think a lot of the students are here because the government tells them they have to be here. I am talking about the Certificate 2 level.	A lot of the students are here because the government tells them they have to be here.	Students influenced by government to attend school.	

### Changing student needs

Student needs have changed because they have to take into consideration (when studying at TAFE) their own individual needs as well as those of the employer. Institutions under pressure to meet student and workplace needs offer more choices to cater for individual and employer needs when it comes

to their studies, choices such as locality, flexible delivery and relevance of studies undertaken at the institutions.

The students have changed in a sense that they have a lot more choice now, in the sense that there are pressures from the workplace as well as individual needs. (MN3)

Students' needs for information have also changed; when they want to know something they want it then and there, and this need is mostly met with advanced technology such as the internet.

[Students] are not as tolerant as they could possibly be, they want information pretty much suddenly, right there and then, they want to know now. (MN3)

Students' needs have changed as a result of choices in the VET market; now, they must consider their own needs as well those of the potential employer, when choosing their institution. With advancements in technology students have also become less patient when it comes to learning and research.

### **Decrease in student numbers**

The number of international students has decreased in recent years due to changes to immigration laws in Australia, particularly regarding permanent residency. In the past, many international students came to study in Australia with the hope of gaining permanent residency. When the new changes were introduced, international student numbers fell dramatically. This has contributed to the downsizing of many TAFE institutes and the number of staff required.

As there has been a change in the laws for permanent residency, this market has done a complete turnaround resulting in many service providers reducing the loads of teachers. (MN6)

At the same time, the requirement to work long hours has also caused a decline in local and international student numbers: an increasing number of hospitality students find their work conditions to be unattractive; as a direct result, there have been fewer student applications.

We don't have the number of apprentices [in hospitality] because they won't work the long, hard hours, and they won't work the holidays and the night shifts. (MN1)

The changes in Australian permanent residency laws and changing perceptions relating to unfavourable conditions under which hospitality workers are required to work have contributed to the downsizing of all hospitality centres. The decrease in student numbers has been the most significant change over the past ten years.

### **Increased teaching difficulty**

There is a strong perception that students are less engaged with their studies to the point where it seems like there is always something better to do in their lives, something more interactive and fun over the internet. This is especially true for students studying level two (Certificate 2) qualifications, which may be why there is such a poor completion rate. They just don't want to be at school; students are much more disengaged than previously.

And that type of student is very hard to engage and because of that there is a high non-completion rate, because they can't see the point of being there or there is always something else or better to do in their personal life. (MN1)

Student engagement in the classroom is no longer a given; teachers have to work very hard to engage them, especially at the lower level.

I think the teaching has changed. I think it is a lot harder now because we have to work with disengaged students at the Certificate 2 level. (MN1)

Some students are very knowledgeable about the TAFE system, to the point where they can 'play the system'. Some students understand they have the right to repeat all assessments if they continue to fail, and with this knowledge they are able to pass with minimal study effort.

They are knowledgeable in the sense that they know they have a choice now, they are knowledgeable about the workplace training and assessment system, there is RPL, and they are more knowledgeable about the TAFE system. Some are even playing the system. (MN3)

VET training has become very difficult due to the low level of need to be trained and qualified, and the fact that some students can use the system to pass makes it even harder. These students know they will pass regardless of their engagement in class. Under these circumstances, teaching has become more problematic.

### **Political influences**

An increase in the number of enrolled international students in TAFE has contributed to the rise of language barriers in learning, and to resolve this issue some trainers believe assessments have become easier to guarantee student success rates.

Changes in our VET sector, in particular the international market, [mean] that assessments have been simplified to suit our market. (MN6)

It is a general consensus amongst trainers in TAFE that the less qualified the students are, the less they want to learn. This is partly because they do not attend to meet their educational needs; they are there so they can continue to receive Centrelink payments. As MN1 explains, there is a 'different type of engagement'.

It used to be they are there because they want a career, and now they are there because they have to be there, they are getting paid to be there. (MN1)

Some students are being told they must go to school by government bodies in charge of their wellbeing in the community, especially at Certificate 2 level.

I think a lot of the students are here because the government tells them they have to be here. I am talking about the Certificate 2 level. (MN1)

The current cohort of TAFE students has their own individual needs; they must also be sensitive to the needs of their employers. Some students are familiar with the TAFE system and how it operates, and they use this knowledge to gain competency with minimal effort. There are students who come to study at TAFE for the purpose of gaining Centrelink payment and their lack of engagement in classes makes it very hard for trainers to deliver



quality learning outcomes. Changes in federal government policies relating to permanent residency laws resulted in a significant decrease in international student numbers; this directly affected the job security and job opportunities of staff – both full-time and casual.

## **Synthesis**

In recent years changes discussed by trainers all seem to point towards increased workloads, whether it be administration, resource development, counselling or keeping up with the advancement of technology. Increase in workloads have caused anxiety, but the most stressful change for trainers is the fact that ongoing and full-time contract work are scarce and, in some cases, non-existent. All these changes can relate to policy reforms that have taken place in recent years.

In the midst of all these changes the style of management is more focused and central, to the point where most of the attention is placed on operational compliance and funding. Some staff views this change as a negative outcome because they have lost that human contact with management, and they are often confused with the direction of the centre in which they work.

Students are also changing regarding their needs and motivations. Some are there for the purpose of gaining Centrelink payments, while others are there because they need a qualification but lack the incentive to learn while in school. All these changes have made it hard for new and experienced trainers to deliver the required training to produce outcomes that are desirable for employers.

## Question 2: What driving forces have directed changes in the VET industry in recent years

### Federal government policies

As a result of the IDR process three themes have emerged, as follows:

- Federal government policies.
- Changes in the AQTF quality system.
- Political priorities.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.4. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.4 Federal government policies**

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN1	Government handouts are easy to obtain, and the 16 year olds know exactly what they can get from Centrelink.	16 year olds know exactly what they can get from Centrelink.	16 year olds paid to go to school.	<b>Government funding models</b>
MN4	Every institution is required to compete for funding and to become self-reliant to make a profit in order to survive.	Institutions are required to become self-reliant, and make a profit in order to survive.	Institutions are self-reliant and profitable.	
MN4	Government funding seems to be the major driving force of these changes.	Government funding seems to be the major driving force.	Funding is driving change.	
MN4	The AQTF is now requiring a lot more compliance from the institutions and therefore we as teachers have to spend more time to ensure the paperwork is complying with the requirements of the AQTF.	The AQTF is now requiring a lot more compliance, more time is needed in administrative duties	AQTF compliance demands increased administrative work.	<b>Changes in the AQTF quality system</b>
MN1	AQTF is what is driving a lot of the changes, in terms of administration work and compliance.	AQTF is driving a lot of the changes.	AQTF is a driving force of change.	

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN2	Political reform: whether it is liberal or labour they have been politicising education. It's used as a political weapon; no one is really interested in improving it, except in terms of money. I don't believe they are interested in improving the outcome.	Political reform is being used as a political weapon; politicians are not interested in improving the outcome.	The political agenda more important than VET.	Political priorities
MN5	The almighty dollar is the bottom line; where government wants the educational expense to be transferred directly to the student and not out of government coffers.	Politicians want VET educational expenses to be transferred directly to students.	Transferring the education burden to end users.	

### Government funding models

Government payments organised via Centrelink have provided, for some teenagers, the incentive to study at TAFE. MN1 suggests that these payments are seen as easy 'handouts' from the government.

Government handouts are easy to obtain, and the 16 year olds know exactly what they can get from Centrelink. (MN1)

This arrangement has increased administration workloads for some staff, because they now have to record and report the students' attendance in order for students to obtain their Centrelink payments.

All VET providers, both TAFE institutes and RTOs, have been directed to become self-reliant and profitable.

Every institution is required to compete for funding and to become self-reliant to make a profit in order to survive. (MN4)

The result is that competitive funding is driving change; MN4 points out that 'government funding seems to be the major driving force of these changes'. To be effective, this has to be achieved through the application of a business model; the outcome has been a change in the operational systems of all TAFE institutes.

**Changes in the AQTF quality system**

Changes to the AQTF have resulted in more time being spent by staff to ensure paperwork complies with both external and internal audits.

The AQTF is now requiring a lot more compliance from the institutions and therefore we as teachers have to spend more time to ensure the paperwork is complying with the requirements of the AQTF. (MN4)

MN1 agrees:

AQTF is what is driving a lot of the changes, in terms of administration work and compliance. (MN4)

Staff at MNI believe that AQTF compliance is the cause of increases in administrative work required of them.

**Political priorities**

MN2 believes that politicians are not interested in improving educational outcomes.

Political reform: whether it is liberal or labour they have been politicising education. It's used as a political weapon; no one is really interested in improving it, except in terms of money. I don't believe they are interested in improving outcomes. (MN2)

Ultimately, MN5 believes that federal politicians want VET educational expenses to be transferred directly to students.

The almighty dollar is the bottom line; where government wants the educational expense to be transferred directly to the student and not out of government coffers. (MN5)

Generally, respondents believe that, in TAFE, the political agenda is more important than the VET system. This issue is something that disturbs them greatly.

## An emergent business model

As a result of the IDR process three themes have emerged, as follows:

- Business management model.
- Focusing on profitability.
- Anticipating market demand.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.5. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.5      Emergent business management model**

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN5	I believe it has to be run as a business, you have got to be accountable, and you have got to be viable. I am sure there is [a] bigger picture here where we are creating skilled labour, but you [have] still got to be accountable.	It has to be run like a business; you have got to be accountable.	Education as a business.	Business management model
MN2	Education has become big business – it is no longer seen as a service industry.	Education has become big business.		
MN2	Money has been the driving force behind all the changes, money and politics.	Money has been the driving force behind all the changes.	Financial and political issues are paramount.	
MN2	We put all the resources into international [students] and now, with this new policy, there is a big collapse in international [student] numbers. Institutes are driven by where the markets were rather than what um... Well they are driven by markets in a business oriented institute.	We put all the resources into international [students] and now, with this new policy, there is a big collapse in international [student] numbers. Institutes are driven by where the markets are.	TAFE institutes are market driven.	Focusing on profitability
MN2	There is no true care about the students understanding it at the supervisory level.	There is no true care about students’ understanding.	Student learning outcomes come second.	
MN2	It is not about going through till the end and learning something. It’s about going through the process, and the process has been dumbed down.	It is only about going through the process so that basically anyone can succeed.		

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	The changes are also driven by managers who are very focused on cost cutting rather than team building to deliver a quality outcome for the students.	Managers who are very focused on cost cutting rather than team building to deliver a quality outcome for the students.		
MN3	In the workplace it is all about the end dollar, it is all about the dollar.	In the workplace it is all about the end dollar.		
MN4	They have watered down the curriculum so it is broken up into little pieces that are aimed at dumbing down the system; they just want the entry level staff.	The curriculum is broken up into little pieces that are aimed at dumbing down; they just want entry level staff.		
MN2	In the TAFE system they don't want supervisors and the way we package things does not attract supervisors.	They don't want supervisors in the TAFE system, the way we package things does not attract supervisors.	Dumbing down the curriculum.	
MN3	If we are training properly, we should be financially viable anyway. It is all about viability, there is no point [in] teaching things that are unrealistic or cannot be performed in the workplace.	It is all about viability, there is no point [in] teaching things that are unrealistic or cannot be performed in the workplace.	Financial viability comes from teaching skills that are relevant.	Anticipating market demand
MN3	We don't know our market, so we are trying to be a bit more diversified and we are trying to capture everyone ... Two years ago hospitality was probably the out word, now hospitality is the in word and culinary is the out word.	We don't know our market, so we are trying to diversify, and we are trying to capture everyone while the market is in a state of flux.	Trying to cater for supply and demand in a changing market.	
MN3	If we had focused on the apprentice groups and apprenticeships three years ago we'd have missed out on the other markets like the international market ... if we'd focused purely on apprentices things would be better now.	If we had focused on the apprentice groups and apprenticeships three years ago, things would be better now.	Anticipating market demand.	

### Business management model

Respondents indicated that they believe education in TAFE institutes and private RTOs are now businesses, and that financial and political issues have

become paramount. MN5 indicates that TAFE institutes have to be run as profitable businesses which are accountable to government.

I believe it has to be run as a business, you have got to be accountable, and you have got to be viable. I am sure there is bigger picture here where we are creating skilled labour; you still have to be accountable. (MN5)

MN2 agrees; education is 'big business' and can no longer be seen as a service industry and further argues that financial and political issues are the driving forces for change:

Education has become a big business – it is no longer seen as a service industry. Money has been the driving force behind all the changes, money and politics. (MN2)

Education is no longer seen as a community service but big business, where product is being promoted and sold for a profit. Money is the driving factor in education, not education and learning.

TAFE institutes and private RTOs are now being operated and managed as businesses, where staff accountability is an important key to quality and productivity. Staff also need to demonstrate their viability in the institution, in order for the institution to operate as a business. As an institution they remain responsible for the creation of a skilled labour force: staff at all levels are accountable.

### **Focusing on profitability**

One respondent, MN2, spoke at length about profitability now being the main focus in TAFE institutes as they have become completely market driven and business oriented.

We put all the resources into international [students] and now with this new policy there is a big collapse in international [student] numbers. Institutes are driven by where the markets were ... There is no true care about the students understanding it at the supervisory level ... It is not about going through till the end and learning something; it is about going through the process, and the process has been dumbed down. (MN2)

There is a sense that process triumphs over product, that there has been a ‘dumbing down’ of courses, and that student learning outcomes come second. And that, all the time, there is a single focus on the ‘economic bottom line’ – a view supported by MN2, who referred to cost cutting as the single focus rather than team building, reporting ‘In the workplace it is all about the end dollar, it is all about the dollar’.

Another means of cost reduction is to keep staff salaries to a minimum; to do this management has reduced the challenges of courses requirements.

They have watered down the curriculum so it is broken up into little pieces that are aimed at dumbing down the system; they just want entry level staff. (MN4)

As a consequence, there is a lack of supervisory staff.

They don’t want supervisors in the TAFE system, and the way we package things does not attract supervisors. (MN2)

The view of many staff is that the curriculum is not valued – neither by them nor the students. Management’s focus on profitability as the major concern has led to this situation at the expense of maintaining a satisfying and worthwhile curriculum.

### **Anticipating market demand**

It is the strong belief of MN3 (an instructor who is also a businessman) that the financial viability of an institution comes from delivering products that are needed by the market in terms of their relevancy and currency. Skills being taught must be realistic and industry relevant; it is all about viability.

If we are training properly, we should be financially viable anyway. It is all about viability, there is no point teaching things that are unrealistic or cannot be performed in the workplace. (MN3)

While MN3 believes that financial viability in TAFE will only come if the institution is teaching skills that are relevant, MNI Institute does not recognise the market; consequently, it is diversifying its programs in attempt ‘to capture everyone’, only to find that the market is in a state of flux:



We don't know our market, so we are trying to be a bit more diversified and we are trying to capture everyone. And then we streamline them when we know the market is not growing: two years ago hospitality was probably the *out* word; now, hospitality is the *in* word and culinary is the *out* word. (MN3).

The lesson to be learnt from this example is that market demand must be anticipated.

If we focused on the apprentice groups and apprenticeships three years ago we'd have missed out on the other markets like the international market ... if we'd focused purely on apprentices things would be better now. (MN3)

MN3's message is that financial viability is dependent on a careful analysis of likely changes in market demand.

Anticipating marked demand is difficult at any time; when it is not being given due attention under pressure to be financially viable the difficulties are enhanced.

### **Changing student attitudes**

As a result of the IDR three themes have emerged, as follows:

- Changed educational focus.
- Internationalisation of the student cohort.
- Students challenging the system.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.6. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

#### **Changed educational focus**

Students today do not have a specific focus on a career choice, and this is due to the fact they will have at least five career changes in their working life; as a result, they are unsure about their future.

This generation will now have five changes of career in their lifetime, and so they don't really know what they want out of life. (MN1)

Related to this, MN2 sees significant changes in the attitude and skills that the current cohort of students bring to their studies.

The students are impatient and they are not willing to work for anything. The basic skills of reading and writing have been lost. Technology has made the kids today more savvy, but alone. (MN1)

Some students appear impatient, lazy and not willing to work in order to acquire the skills they need to build upon. They use today's technology to help them do the tasks they find mundane and boring, such as checking their spelling and using correct grammatical structures in a sentence.

**Table 5.6 Changing student attitudes**

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN1	This generation will now have five changes of career in their lifetime, and so they don't really know what they want out of life.	This generation will have five changes of career in their life time.	Students unsure about their future.	Changed educational focus
MN1	The students are impatient and they are not willing to work for anything. The basic skills of reading and writing have been lost; technology has made the kids today more savvy, but alone.	The basic skills of reading and writing have been lost, but technology has made kids more savvy.	ICT provides students with a different skill set.	
MN4	The international student numbers, which have increased, have also contributed to the forces driving the changes in the industry.	International student numbers have increased thus contributing to these industry changes.	The composition of the student body has changed.	Internationalisation of the student cohort
MN6	I would say the driving force has been the international market.	The driving force has been the international market.	Internationalisation of the student market.	
MN1	Students don't do enough sport; sport teaches them discipline, teamwork, rules. There is not enough sport.	Students don't do enough sport; sport teaches them discipline, teamwork, rules.	Students today lack discipline, teamwork and regard for rules.	Students challenging the system
MN4	The students are now more assertive in their demands, and they will use the system to get what they want. The more the students know about the system, the more they will demand from the teachers.	The more students know about the system, the more they will demand from the teachers.	Students using the system to achieve what they want in TAFE.	

The students are impatient and they are not willing to work for anything. The basic skills of reading and writing have been lost; technology has made the kids today more savvy, but alone. (MN1)

Today's TAFE students have shifted their educational focus, brought about both by the advent of information and communication technology and significant changes in the way in which this generation views future job prospects.

### **Internationalisation of the student cohort**

The increase in the demand from international students has also been a driving factor in recent changes.

The international student numbers, which have increased, have also contributed to the forces driving changes in the industry. (MN4)

I would say the driving force has been the international market. (MN6)

The internationalisation of the student market has led to significant changes in the composition of the student body; this in turn impacts on the content and delivery of programs, with a direct impact on teaching staff. Thus, directly and indirectly, the driving forces for change relate to internationalisation of the student cohort.

### **Students challenging the system**

There appears to be a clash of perceptions between what instructors expect of their students and what students expect of their instructors. MN1, for instance, wants more discipline, teamwork and rules to control students' behaviour: more sport, he asserts, is needed.

Students don't do enough sport; sport teaches them discipline, teamwork, rules.

There is not enough sport. (MN1)

MN4 is conscious that students are 'using the system' to achieve what they want in TAFE.

The students are now more assertive in their demands, and they will use the system to get what they want. The more the students know about the system, the more they will demand from the teachers. (MN4)

On reflection, there is a sense that due to the different composition of the student body, and different expectations and different approaches to learning, students are challenging the authority of teachers. As a result, teachers are feeling uncomfortable, are unexpectedly being confronted and resorting to blame: both the students and a set of changing social circumstances. The imposition of a business management model with a focus on profitability is the perception that management are out of touch with changing market demands. The present students who are more aware of their rights and, who are prepared to challenge authority can challenge both the TAFE system and the teachers operating within it.

### Competition

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged: Competition for funding.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 5.7. This theme is then discussed in the following subsection.

**Table 5.7 Competitive forces**

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN1	The RTOs are also another driving factor in the changes in vocational education. We. [TAFE] have to compete for funding against the RTOs. So competing for funding is another driving factor for change.	TAFEs have to compete for funding against the RTOs. Competing for funding is another driving factor for change.	Increased competition from new and existing private RTOs.	<b>Competit- ion for funding</b>

Rspdnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	Competition is driving the changes that have been identified; there are also a lot more providers out there, some private and some public. Obviously TAFE is still considered as a business, and so like running a business they still have to meet the running costs of the institution and so forth, and training and cost have always been touchy issues.	Competition is driving the changes. Like any business, boards still have to meet the running costs of their institutions.	Increased competition has resulted in the adoption of a business model.	

### Competition for funding

With changes to the government funding model, both TAFE institutes and RTOs have to compete within the same funding pool; MN1 points out this has been a new, emergent driving force for change.

The RTOs are also another driving factor in the changes in vocational education.

We [TAFE] have to compete for funding against the RTOs. So competing for funding is another driving factor for change. (MN1)

At the same time as there has been an increase in competition for funds, increased competition in attracting students has been a major driving force in recent changes in VET; this in turn has led TAFE institutes to move towards a business management model. They must now focus more closely on their profit and loss financial statements in order to ensure long-term survival in the VET industry. MN3, speaking from the point of view of both a lecturer and businessman asserts:

Competition is driving the changes that have been identified; there are also a lot considered as a business, and so like running a business they still have to meet the running cost of the institution and so forth, and training and cost has always been a touchy issue. (MN3)

These competitive forces – increased competition from new and existing private RTOs and the adoption of a business model – have led to conflict

between the nature of the training offered at TAFE institutes and the business model being applied to contain costs.

## **Synthesis**

The driving forces causing the recent changes in VET arise from four main factors stemming from governmental policy changes. When VET funding changed; TAFE institutes and private RTOs were required to be self-reliant while competing for funds from the same pool. Management of both government and private providers adopted a business management model in which staff (at all levels of these institutions) were to be politically accountable; in particular, teaching staff were to be educationally accountable in meeting the course demands of centrally designed training packages, while remaining financially accountable at the operational level.

In order to be compliant, the changes in training packages resulted in an increase in administration workloads required to update teaching and learning resources. At the same time, changes in the AQTF have, in order for institutions to be compliant with external and internal audits, also caused an increase in administrative work.

The new business operation model has resulted in a change in student–teacher relationships to a client–service provider relationship, which the interview comments suggest may be a contributing factor to diminishing student etiquette in TAFE institutes. By focusing on profit and loss of institutions, staff have become more diversified and less focused on students’ learning outcomes. Cost cutting has resulted in the ‘dumbing down’ of the curriculum, and has increased the appointment of less experienced and lower paid staff.

### Question 3: How have changes affected the day-to-day activities of VET practitioners?

Six emergent themes were identified in the IDR process, namely:

- Changing work force.
- Industry standards.
- Management issues.
- Multiskilling.
- Students' attitudes.
- Increased administrative work.

#### Changing work force

As a result of the IDR process three themes have emerged, as follows:

- Career choice in TAFE.
- Better work–life balance.
- Staff casualisation.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.8. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.8 Changing work force**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN2	A lot of the teachers do not want to work in the hospitality industry, the hours are not friendly, the pay is not great, and people want to get out of the hospitality industry. The hours are not suitable to their family; now young people are getting wind of education.	In hospitality, the hours are not friendly, the pay is not great; young people are getting wind of [the advantages of working in] education.	Young people keen to become TAFE teachers.	<b>Career choice in TAFE</b>

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN2	I will do anything to stay in teaching because I am not working all night. And because I am a supervisor I am working seven nights a week in industry. The pay is better here; the pay is fantastic compared to the industry.	I will do anything to stay in teaching because I am not working at night. The pay is fantastic compared to the industry.	The pay in TAFE is great compared to the industry.	
MN2	The majority of full-time staff and even the contract ones are on \$72, and sessionals can now earn up to \$65 an hour. So who wants to work in the industry where you only get \$26 an hour compared to \$65 an hour and you get weekends off?	Who wants to work in the industry where you only get \$26.00 an hour compared to \$65.00 an hour [at TAFE]?	Working conditions in TAFE are much better than in the hospitality industry.	<b>TAFE career choice – better conditions</b>
MN2	[Previously] people would do work in the industry until 45, then [they] look to get into the education industry. They are now looking to get into an easier world.	Hospitality workers are no longer staying in the industry until 45; now they are looking to get into an easier world much earlier.	Younger people see education as a better career.	<b>Better work–life balance</b>
MN2	They are getting to the age of twenty-five and they say they don't want to do this; I want to do something easier. So all the older people in MNI are being booted out.	They are getting to the age of twenty-five and [they are saying] I want to do something easier. So all the older people in MNI are being booted out.	Younger individuals are replacing those who are older.	
MN2	There will be no ongoing staff; soon they will be non-existent. In future there will be one at MN, one at OP, one at QR; soon it will go down to 2 per cent.	There will be no ongoing staff; soon [they will] be non-existent.	Ongoing staff will be a thing of the past.	<b>TAFE staff casualisation</b>

### Career choice in TAFE

There are more people attracted to a career in training with vocational education; this is due to the unfriendly working hours in the hospitality industry and the lack of remuneration rewards compared to the training industry.

A lot of the teachers do not want to work in the hospitality industry, the hours are not friendly, the pay is not great, and people want to get out of the hospitality industry. The hours are not suitable to their family; now young people are getting wind of education. (MN2)



Some staff are willing to do almost anything to keep a job in TAFE, and this is due to the better working conditions available to them in the VET industry. There are no late shifts and you only work five days a week. The pay is better than the hospitality industry and there are chances to increase the next level of pay scale with further qualifications.

I will do anything to stay in teaching because I am not working all night. And because I am a supervisor I am working seven nights a week in industry. The pay is better here; the pay is fantastic compared to the industry. (MN2)

Sessional training staff are also paid quite well compared to the hospitality industry, so with all the incentives of better pay and working conditions why would anyone want to work in the hospitality industry?

The majority of full-time staff and even contract ones are on \$72, and sessionals can now earn up to \$65 an hour. So who wants to work in the industry where you only get \$26 an hour compared to \$65 an hour and you get weekends off? (MN2)

When people in the industry hear of a career with better conditions and benefits, the demand for an easier career in the training industry suddenly increases. This has contributed to a change in the VET work force where older employers are being adversely affected.

### **Better work–life balance**

Hospitality workers are no longer staying in the industry until they are middle-aged: some, as young as twenty-five, want to join the training industry, where there is a better work–life balance; as a consequence, younger individuals are replacing older employees.

[Previously] people would do work in the industry until 45 then look to get into the education industry. They are now looking to get into an easier world... They are getting to the age of twenty-five and they say they don't want to do this; I want to do something easier. So, all the older people in MNI are being booted out. (MN2)

This creates animosity towards new, younger appointees who are seen as wanting an easier life; there is a higher level of unease and distrust as a result.

Now there is an opportunity to achieve a better work–life balance in the VET industry, where one can have dinner with one’s family on a regular basis compared to having to work the unsociable hours associated with shift work: this has created more attractive incentives for industry staff to join the VET work force.

### **Staff casualisation**

Currently, the prospect of obtaining a full-time contract or ongoing position in the VET industry is almost non-existent; the number of contract positions is decreasing rapidly.

There will be no ongoing staff; soon they will be non-existent. In future there will be one at MN, one at OP, one at QR; soon it will go down to 2 per cent. (MN2)

There is a major concern amongst older TAFE employees that ongoing staff will become ‘a thing of the past’.

### **Industry standards**

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged, namely:

- Unclear definition of industry standards.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 5.9. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.9 Industry standards**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	I have seen industry standards and I have seen “industry standards”. So using this term has in some way affected our day-to-day work as well.	Using the term “industry standards” has in some way affected our day-to-day work.	Confusion over industry standards.	<b>Unclear definition of industry standards</b>
MN3	I don’t know what industry standards are, and I don’t think they – the people who wrote the training packages – know what industry standards are either. To put it all in words on how to train someone how to cook is not an easy task.	The people who wrote the training packages don’t know what industry standards are. [Putting] it into words on how to train someone how to cook is not an easy task.	Clarifying the hospitality industry standards is not an easy task.	
MN3	It is hard to put on paper someone’s recipe; it is very much an individual process.	[The industry] is very much an individual process.	There are no real industry standards.	

MN3 suggests that the problem arises because the authors of the new training packages are also unclear; also, they have failed to make the standards clear.

I don’t know what industry standard is, and I don’t think they – the people who wrote the training packages – know what industry standards are either. To put it all in words on how to train someone how to cook is not an easy task. (MN3)

To some it seems the term ‘industry standards’ requires an individual interpretation; in reality, as MN3 suggests, it is highly likely there is no consensus at all in the industry regarding cooking standards.

It is hard to put on paper someone’s recipe; it is very much an individual process. (MN3)

This suggests there may be no absolute industry standards.

If industry standards are to have a clear and concise meaning for both training institutions and industry partners there needs to be extensive collaboration between the writers of the training packages and their prospective industries; only then will all parties have a clear understanding of industry standards required.

## Management issues

As a result of the inductive data reduction process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Process is driving hospitality education.
- Autocratic management.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.10. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.10 Management issues**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN2	One of the biggest [issues] I have is how does it affect me day to day? Time, there is no time to do what is required because administration takes up so much time; we are putting them through a process.	There is no time to do what is required because administration takes up so much time putting them through a process.	Administration of the process conflicts with normal teaching duties.	<b>Process is driving hospitality education</b>
MN2	We are not guiding them; we are just putting them through a process, [rather] like putting them through a car wash and hoping that we meet the requirement in the process.	We are not guiding them; we are just putting them through a process, hoping that we meet the requirement in the process.	Staff are only going through the motions of training.	
MN2	I don't like the direction I am going: there is no way to leave the system altogether; there is no way to get off the conveyor belt. You are now forced to just go along with the TAFE process. I believe this now occurs throughout TAFE.	There is no way to get off the conveyor belt. I believe this now occurs throughout TAFE.	The 'TAFE process' is predominant in TAFE institutes.	
MN2	We are now time poor, we [staff and students] are all forced to follow the process. You are put on this conveyor belt going down [to] the other end, and there is no way of getting off. I don't like what is going on at the [other] end.	We are all put on a conveyor belt and there is no way of getting off. I don't like what is going on at the [other] end.	An unrelenting systems approach in the TAFE system.	<b>Autocratic management</b>
MN2	I believe this department is the worst at it; I believe it [systems approach] is now throughout TAFE.	I believe the systems approach is now throughout TAFE.	Compliance with a systems approach policy is mandatory.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN2	I [believe] there was an acknowledgement that most staff are over 55 years of age. There is a push to employ younger people who will replace older staff.	There is a push to employ younger people who will replace older staff.	An ageist policy of staff replacement.	

### Process is driving hospitality education

Staff are feeling the pinch of insufficient time in their day-to-day work activities, with hospitality education being driven by process. The increase in administrative work has resulted in a lack of time for staff to perform other duties. MN2 suggests that administrative work conflicts with normal teaching duties and that staff are forced to merely go through the motions of training.

Time, there is no time to do what is required because administration takes up so much time; we are putting them through a process .... We are not guiding them we are just putting them through a process, [rather] like putting them through a car wash and hoping that we meet the requirement in the process. (MN2)

These issues lead hospitality staff to have grave concerns about the direction in which VET is heading; however, they cannot see any possible ways to improve the system. This is a systemic problem evident throughout the VET industry.

Vocational education is seen as a process driven system by many training staff; associated with this systematic approach, there has been a dramatic increase in administrative work for all staff involved. For training staff, the worrying aspect of this process driven aspect is weakened educational outcomes.

### Autocratic management

Staff and students are forced to go through the educational process of meeting the requirements of the AQTF in TAFE, and some of the trainers do not like what they see at the end of this process. MN2 is most vocal in this

regard, observing that the process is unrelenting, and that compliance is mandatory throughout the TAFE system.

We are now time poor, we [staff and students] are all forced to follow the process. You are put on this conveyor belt going down [to] the other end, and there is no way of getting off. I don't like what is going on at the end ... I believe this department (Hospitality) is the worst at it; I believe it [systems approach] is now throughout TAFE. (MN2)

With ageing human resources available in TAFE, some centre managers are now hiring younger workers and making older workers redundant. This may be a form of succession planning employed by management; MN2 believes it is an ageist policy in which younger staff will force older staff out of the work force and implemented without clarification.

I [believe] there was an acknowledgement that most staff are over 55 years of age. There is a push to employ younger people who will replace the older staff. (MN2)

The seemingly autocratic style used to implement process driven education in TAFE – involving, as it does, the forcing of numerous new requirements upon staff without communication or clarification – is the reason why most staff feel that detrimental changes to their teaching work in hospitality are being forced upon them by management.

**Table 5.11 Multiskilling**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN1	Teachers nowadays have to have more resolution skills, with all the problems the students bring along with them.	Teachers need more resolution skills to assist students in solving their problems.	Teachers need counselling as well as teaching skills.	Teaching and problem solving
MN1	Teachers have to be more attuned to the student's needs, in terms of understanding their personal problems.	Teachers have to be more attuned to the students' personal needs.	Being more attuned to students' personal needs.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN1	VCAL students, in particular, have a lot of personal and behaviour[al] problems, and so do the Certificate 2s. Teachers' day-to-day activities have changed in the respect that there is less teaching and more counselling.	The Certificate 2 teachers' day-to-day activities have changed in respect of less teaching and more counselling.	Shift from teaching to student counselling.	Teaching and counselling
MN1	Teachers have to have counselling skills; they have to be counsellors as well as teachers before they can become the teacher and teach the students anything.	They have to be counsellors before they can become the teacher.	Counselling skills of equal importance to teaching skills.	

## Multi-skilling

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Teaching and problem solving.
- Teaching and counselling.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.11. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

### Teaching and problem solving

Teachers have to learn to resolve students' learning and personal problems; thus, they now need to have counselling as well as teaching skills.

Teachers nowadays have to have more resolution skills, with all the problems the students bring along with them. (MN1)

Part of this means that hospitality teachers need to be more attuned to students' personal needs.

Teachers have to be more attuned to the student's needs, in terms of understanding their personal problems. (MN1)

### Teaching and counselling

The students with the most personal and behavioural problems are the ones from lower level qualifications such as VCAL (Victorian Certificate of

Applied Learning) and Certificate 2. It is apparent that hospitality teachers need to be prepared to shift their teaching focus to include student counselling at these levels; MN1 has noticed an increase in VCAL and Certificate 2 students' needs, to the extent that some do less teaching and more counselling at these levels:

VCAL students, in particular, have a lot of personal and behaviour[al] problems, and so do the Certificate 2s. Teachers' day-to-day activities have changed in the respect that there is less teaching and more counselling. (MN1)

MN1 suggests that often they have to be counsellors before they can become teachers.

Teachers have to have counselling skills; they have to be counsellors as well as teachers too before they can become the teacher and teach the students anything.

For some teachers, multiskilling – both in teaching and counselling – is now needed, particularly for those working with VCAL and Certificate 2 students.

Multiskilling has now extended to the learning of counselling skills for students in TAFE. This is necessary for trainers to understand their students better and to deliver a learning outcome that is meaningful, which in turn will invite the students back to undertake further studies with the institution.

### **Students' attitudes**

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged, namely:

- Change of focus.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 5.12. This theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.



**Table 5.12 Students' attitudes**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	[Students] make all these assumptions that we have all this expertise behind us. My students are focused more on the culinary [practical] side rather than the theoretical component.	My students are focused more on the culinary side rather than the theoretical component.	Students are more focused on short-term benefits.	<b>Change of focus</b>
MN3	I think there is a lot of justification [going on]: [students] justifying their existence; [we] are constantly justifying ours.	Justifying the needs of students as opposed to student needs as perceived by staff.	Meeting students' needs.	

### Change of focus

Students are more focused on learning new skills which they know they can use on the job, rather than the theoretical understanding of skills and concepts. MN3 suggests that students are challenging the assumption a theoretical background is necessary; they are more focused on short-term benefits.

[Students] make all these assumptions that we have all this expertise behind us. My students are focused more on the culinary [practical] side rather than the theoretical component. (MN3)

Students are constantly challenging the teachers' knowledge and skills in the classroom; indirectly, they are challenging the authority of both teachers and institute in the industry. MN3 suggests that students are justifying a position that focuses on their own needs.

I think there is a lot of justification [going on]: [students] justifying their existence; [we] are constantly justifying ours. (MN3)

A shift in students' attitudes toward learning is apparent: most students are now more focused on learning the skills needed to get a job, rather than learning the knowledge involved to carry out the job successfully in a whole range of contexts.

**Table 5.13 Increased administrative workload**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN6	My duties have multiplied beyond comprehension [in order] to align with the new package (SIT07), recording attendance and maintaining attendance registers.	A significant increase in duties in order to align with the new administrative packages introduced.	Administrative work increased due to auditing requirements.	<b>Increased administrative work</b>
MN6	Counselling students, telephoning students, putting students on contracts, interviewing students and many other admin duties: these take you away from preparing and planning lessons, researching, amending assessments, LAPS and teaching methods.	Counselling, telephoning, contracting and interviewing students interfere with the task of preparing lessons.	Loss of time for normal teaching duties.	

### Increased administrative work

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged, namely:

- Increase in administrative work.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 5.13. This theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

### Increased administrative work

Many teachers have seen a significant increase in their administrative work compared to when they first started over a decade or more ago. MN6 argues that the increase in administrative work is due to auditing requirements.

My duties have multiplied beyond comprehension [in order] to align with the new package (SIT07), recording attendance and maintaining attendance registers. (MN6)

MN6 also reports that additional duties that did not exist in the past are now part of a teacher's normal duty: this has reduced time to develop new learning and teaching resources.

Counselling students, telephoning students, putting students on contracts, interviewing students and many other admin duties: these take you away from

preparing and planning lessons, researching, amending assessments, LAPS and teaching methods. (MN6)

The increase in administrative work means there is less time for training staff to develop new training resources and plan for new and interactive delivery sequences.

## **Synthesis**

The changes in day-to-day activities arise from a number of factors: changes in management style; lack of clarity in terminologies used in the industry; multiskilling needs; and changes in student's attitudes and to government policy changes. Management is now more focused on the operational profit and loss of the centre and has shifted its focus away from students' learning outcomes. Management is driven by cost cutting, to the extent that they are willing to forego the experience that comes with more knowledgeable (i.e. expensive) staff; instead, they are hiring young, inexperienced staff to cut costs.

The institute, with its lack of clarity on industry standards, has contributed to the confusion regarding training students to the level required by the hospitality industry. There is also a lack of clarity in teachers' roles in TAFE: there is significant growth in counselling skills over teaching skills. Students expect to have teachers who listen to and understand their needs; as a consequence, teachers need to be subject experts as well as have expertise in counselling. There is confusion over which should be given priority.

The many changes in government policies relating to the upgrading of training packages have contributed to an increase in the administrative work needed to be performed by teachers. This increase in administration work has adversely affected the development of teaching and learning resources; some would argue it has completely removed the time previously available for resource development.

### Question 4: What power relationships have emerged between administrators, staff and students?

Six emergent themes were identified in the IDR process, namely:

- Corporatisation.
- Student/teacher roles.
- Power shift.
- Workplace learning.
- Leadership and management.
- Building rapport.

#### Corporatisation

As a result of the IDR process three themes have emerged, namely:

- Flexibility.
- Profitability.
- Quality assurance.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.14. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.14 Corporatisation**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN4	A sessional teacher can be teaching one semester and not teaching the next, because they don't fit well in the department.	A sessional teacher may lose their teaching position if they don't fit in well.	Teachers need to fit in to gain sessional employment.	Flexibility
MN5	Administrators expect additional input from teachers without offsets [and] thus [they are] impacting on the professional outcomes that teachers and students require.	Administrators' expectations of additional staff work without offsets impact adversely on learning outcomes.	Cost reductions impact negatively on learning outcomes.	Profitability
MN3	I think the managers are driven by the dollar and there is nothing wrong with that; however, you have to have an equal focus on business and education.	Cost controls are necessary, but there has to be an equal focus on the educational function.	An equal focus on profitability and on educational outcomes.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	Education is our core business. If I were in the bakery business my core business would be to ensure all the food products are right and safe to eat.	Education is our core business; as with running a bakery, staff have to ensure they are delivering a quality product.	Ensuring quality of core product.	<b>Quality assurance</b>

### Flexibility

The corporate world of TAFE is a very unstable working environment; sessional teachers need to be flexible if they are to fit into the existing culture. They can be working in the centre one semester and not the next, but if they can fit in, they may have a better chance of coming back to work next semester.

A sessional teacher can be teaching one semester and not teaching the next because they don't fit well in the department. (MN4)

Sessional staff need to be proficient, able to build rapport with fellow staff members, and be flexible in the tasks they are asked to undertake. If not, they are likely to lose their positions.

### Profitability

Existing contract and ongoing staff are expected to put in more and more without any offsets made to their teaching loads. The impact of cost saving by expecting more work is impacting negatively on learning outcomes.

Administrators expect additional input from teachers without offsets [and] thus [they are] impacting on the professional outcomes that teachers and students require. (MN5)

While cost controls are necessary, some staff – such as MN3 – believe that management is more focused on the operational revenue without really thinking of the quality of the products being produced.

I think the managers are driven by the dollar and there is nothing wrong with that; however, you have to have an equal focus on business and education. (MN3)

Profitability is the bottom line for all centre managers: they need to maintain operational viability as TAFE institutes become more and more self-reliant; this requires an equal focus on both profitability and educational outcomes.

### **Quality maintenance**

The quality of the institution's products must be maintained, if it is to survive and compete against all RTOs in the VET industry. This also makes good business sense.

Education is our core business. If I were in the bakery business my core business would be to ensure all the food products are right and safe to eat. (MN2)

Understanding that education is the core product of TAFE suggests that staff must ensure the delivery of a quality product as their contribution to quality assurance.

### **Student/teacher roles**

As a result of the IDR process one theme emerged, namely: Changing roles. Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 5.15. The theme is then discussed in the following subsection.

#### **Changing roles**

The role of teaching seems to be converting to a role of facilitating, where the teachers are there as more of a guide and facilitator of learning rather than a teacher of skills and knowledge.

Teachers are now acting more in the facilitating capacity than in the teaching capacity. We are trainers not teachers. (MN1)

Some teachers found that by changing their role and blending in with the students' learning, they can achieve a better learning outcome.

**Table 5.15 Changing roles**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN1	Teachers are now acting more in the facilitating capacity than in the teaching capacity. We are trainers not teachers.	Teachers are engaged more in a facilitating capacity and less in a teaching capacity.	Facilitators of learning, rather than teachers.	<b>Changing roles</b>
MN3	I have learnt if I blend in and become part of their learning, I get a better result if I become part of their learning instead of being a facilitator. I am happy to give guidance but I am happier to be a part of learning with them.	I find I get better results if I become part of their learning instead of being a facilitator.	Teaching more effective than facilitating.	
MN3	I feel like I get better results through that process as long as the students know there is a difference between them and myself. I get involved with the processes, and they learn through that as well.	I get better results as long as the students know there is a difference between them and me.	Facilitation requires a change in role and identity.	

I have learnt if I blend in and become part of their learning, I get a better result if I become part of their learning instead of being a facilitator. I am happy to give guidance but I am happier to be a part of learning with them. (MN3)

MN3 believes that being part of the students' learning to achieve a better learning outcome is important, and so too is the maintenance of a clear demarcation between the identities and roles of teachers and those of students.

I feel like I get better results through that process as long as the students know there is a difference between them and myself. I get involved with the processes, and they learn through that as well. (MN3)

Some teachers are finding it hard to teach in a non-teacher-centred environment; others are finding that being part of the student's learning can actually achieve a good learning outcome.

## Power shift

As a result of the IDR process three themes have emerged, namely:

- Adaptability.
- Centralisation of control.
- Power shift.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.16. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.16 Power shift**

Rspnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN4	Teachers need to become more adaptive to the managers' needs and the students' needs.	Teachers need to adapt to both managers' and students' needs.	Adapting to the needs of both 'superiors' and 'clients'.	<b>Adaptability the key to survival</b>
MN4	Managers are calling all the shots in their respective departments, and the teachers are vulnerable to changes in management.	Managers are calling all the shots ... teachers are vulnerable to changes in management.	Teachers are vulnerable to management changes.	<b>Centralisation of control</b>
MN5	A tug of war exists between all three parties [– centre managers, teachers and students].	There is a tug of war between three parties.	Power balance has shifted.	<b>Power shift</b>
MN1	Students will now question you, the teacher, about your knowledge; how much do you know about what you are teaching?	Students question teacher's knowledge, how much they know.	Students challenging teacher's subject knowledge.	
MN5	Teachers are continually being squashed between what the other two groups require and not being able to achieve what anyone wants, because of the time management issue.	Being squashed between what the other two groups require and not being able to achieve what anyone wants ... time management issues.	Teachers diminished by student and manager demands.	
MN4	They know that they are the customer and teachers are servicing their needs/learning.	... Teachers are servicing their needs/learning.	Teachers seen as service providers, not respected as teachers.	



**Adaptability**

In order to survive in the TAFE sector teachers must know how to adapt to managers' and students' needs.

Teachers need to become more adaptive to the managers' needs and the students' needs. (MN4)

This dual identity arises because managers have moved into a role that makes them 'superiors'; students have become the 'clients'. Being adaptable is the key to survival of TAFE teachers.

**Centralisation of control**

MN4 identifies a key shift: teachers have become vulnerable to management changes as a result of department heads becoming managers of their centres.

Managers are calling all the shots in their respective departments, and the teachers are vulnerable to changes in management. (MN4)

The centralisation of power means that, with centre managers now 'calling all the shots', teachers must either adapt or risk losing their job security.

**Power shift**

With the new client–service provider relationship between students and VET institutions, there is a three-way tug of war for control inside and outside the classroom between students, teachers and centre managers.

A tug of war exists between all three parties [– centre managers, teachers and students]. (MN5)

As a consequence, students as 'clients', now readily challenge the teachers' authority and their subject matter expertise; MN1 sees this as students demonstrating a loss of patience and respect.

Students will now question you, the teacher, about your knowledge; how much do you know about what you are teaching? (MN1)

MN5 notes that, because of time management issues occasioned by teachers facing pressure to comply with the centre and student demands, teachers are feeling diminished in their role.

Teachers are continually being squashed between what the other two groups require and not being able to achieve what anyone wants, because of the time management issue. (MN5)

The perception is that, in the role of service provider, teachers have lost the respect of students.

They know that they are the customer and teachers are servicing their needs/learning. (MN4)

The power balance shift between students, centre managers and staff has changed significantly: students have become more demanding of the teacher's time and efforts; the role of administration staff has shifted to a more centralised, controlled strategy; as a result, teachers are become less important in the shift to a more service orientated vocational education system.

### Workplace learning

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged, namely: Workplace learning.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 5.17, which is then discussed in the following sub-section.

**Table 5.17 Workplace learning**

Rspnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	The workplace is where all true learning comes from. If you put someone in the workplace for four weeks they would have probably learnt a lot more than what we would be able to teach them at TAFE.	If you put someone in the workplace for four weeks they would probably learnt a lot more than what we would be able to teach them at TAFE.	Real learning comes from working in the industry.	<b>Workplace learning</b>

Rspnt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	Just because they can see something does not mean they can grasp the concept of it; maybe, with time, they can understand the concept a lot better.	... With time they can understand the concept a lot better.	Conceptual understanding takes time and practice.	

### Workplace learning

Acquiring skills can sometimes be best done in the workplace, and what the students/apprentices can practically learn in the workplace can be more relevant and current than TAFE training.

The workplace is where all true learning comes from. If you put someone in the workplace for four weeks they would have probably learnt a lot more than what we would be able to teach them at TAFE... Just because they can see something does not mean they can grasp the concept of it; maybe, with time, they can understand the concept a lot better. (MN3)

At TAFE training demonstrations take place in a methodical manner; concept skills are introduced but often they are difficult for students to grasp: students usually need more time to absorb and better understand the concepts being taught; most trade skills are still better learnt, if they are practised and improved in the workplace.

### Leadership and management

As a result of the IDR process four themes have emerged, namely:

- Hierarchical influences.
- Authoritarian leadership.
- Lack of teamwork.
- Lack of transparency.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.18. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.18 Leadership and management**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	These managers are driven by other managers who are higher than them as well, and it could just be a reflection of what the people above them are saying as well.	Managers are driven by senior management, resulting in a reflection of what the latter direct.	Managers are driven and influenced by hierarchical power groups.	<b>Hierarchical influences</b>
MN1	A lot of the teachers look to the PCs [program coordinators] for leadership, because they may not always [be] there or [they] are too busy; but the PCs look to the managers for leadership.	Teachers look to their program co-ordinators for leadership who, in turn, look to the managers for leadership.	Staff look to the hierarchy for leadership.	
MN2	It is dictatorial [authoritarian] leadership; it all comes back to this process because it [depends on] one-way communication. It [the product] is forced out the other end.	The system encourages authoritarian leadership reinforced by one-way communication.	Managers manage and control with an iron fist.	<b>Authoritarian leadership</b>
MN2	There is no going back to ask questions; you are just being pushed that way, pushed out the other end. We are not being led or guided or encouraged; we are just being pushed in one direction.	There is no going back to ask questions: we are all being pushed along; we are not being led or guided or encouraged.	Teachers feel discontented due to authoritarian leadership.	
MN2	It's a political agenda; it's not about reform.	A political agenda driven by managers; it is not about reform.	A politically driven reform.	
MN5	[There is] little recognition and reward from administrators for what teachers do. This all leads to low morale and teachers having little respect for administrators.	Lack of recognition and reward from administrators leads to low staff morale and teachers having little respect for administrators.	Low morale due to lack of acknowledgement results in lack of respect.	<b>Lack of teamwork</b>
MN2	The staff are powerless, the students are powerful and management are just about control.	Staff are powerless, students have been empowered and management is about control.	Loss of control to be effective teachers.	
MN3	The value of managers is different from teachers in my experience. While the students have evolved and changed, some of these managers have not been in the system long enough to see that they might require a different method of teaching.	The values held by managers and staff differ: teachers see that a new group of students require a different approach to teaching. The managers do not share this view.	Teachers [are] not part of the team.	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN6	I have seen the relationship between admin and teachers being enforced in some instances; [there has been] little or no information about their decisions.	Admin are directing teachers to follow a new approach about which there has been little discussion or explanation.	Management is forcing change without teacher input.	<b>Lack of transparency</b>
MN6	When they are working together they seem to be forcing admin work onto teaching staff.	Management are authoritatively enforcing administrative work onto teachers.	Increased administrative work for teachers.	
MN3	The managers are judged on numbers; they are driven [by meeting] short-term goals.	Managers are judged on their meeting short-term throughput goals.	Managers are motivated by meeting short-term goals.	

### Hierarchical influences

Centre managers are invariably driven and influenced by senior management. They appear not to be taking into account other stakeholders' perceptions – teachers and students – of how things are going in the centre. MN3 suggests that this is top-down, hierarchical administration.

These managers are driven by other managers who are higher than them as well, and it could just be a reflection of what the people above them are saying as well.  
(MN3)

The outcome, according to MN1, is that teachers, who once experienced the guidance and support of program coordinators, no longer receive this support; instead, they receive directives from senior managers without any level of consultation occurring.

A lot of the teachers look to the PCs [program coordinators] for leadership, because they may not always there or are too busy; but the PCs look to the managers for leadership. (MN1)

Strong leadership, in the form of guidance and support, is what is needed in times of change; the strategies of authoritarian and hierarchical leadership may be a thing of the past. Perhaps it is time for strong leadership across all levels of the organisation.

**Autocratic leadership**

There is a lack of open communication between administration and teaching staff, to the point where the latter feel they do not have any input into how the training should be delivered: they are merely following a process. MN1 suggests that the hierarchical TAFE system uses one-way communication to reinforce what he calls ‘dictatorial leadership’.

It is dictatorial [authoritarian] leadership; it all comes back to this process because it [depends on] one-way communication. It [the product] is forced out the other end.  
(MN2)

Staff can no longer go back to the managers to ask questions, for clarity and guidance. They are forced to follow the procedures within the process. The observation of MN2 suggests that teachers are feeling very discontented with this authoritarian approach.

There is no going back to ask questions; you are just being pushed that way, pushed out the other end. We are not being led or guided or encouraged; we are just being pushed in one direction. (MN2)

MN 2 believes that some managers are even developing a personal political agenda within their centres that is not related to the overall VET reform agenda: ‘It’s a political agenda; it’s not about reform’ (MN2).

The increase in autocratic leadership has added to the confusion associated with the VET reform agenda; for many staff this has caused lack of motivation and has had a disorienting effect.

**Lack of teamwork**

There seems to be little or no recognition for the increase in workloads being placed on staff in times of change. The result, according to MN5, is teachers experiencing a loss of respect for centre managers and senior management; the result is a drop in staff morale in the department.

[There is] little recognition and reward from administrators for what teachers do. This all leads to low morale and teachers having little respect for administrators.  
(MN5)

The staff feel disempowered: they have lost control of the classroom, because their former students are now regarded as ‘clients’; they feel they have lost control of their professional role, with centre managers in full control of everything associated with their work.

The staff are powerless, the students are powerful and management are just about control. (MN2)

Some staff, such as MN3, go as far as to say that centre managers are a breed unto themselves: they exert their own values and ideas and they have a very different mindset compared to teachers. Thus teachers no longer feel a part of the educational team.

The values of the managers are different from the teachers in my experience. While the students have evolved and changed, some of these managers have not been in the system long enough to see that they might require a different method of teaching. (MN3)

Lack of recognition of the extra workload being placed on staff plus the increase in control by the managers over what the teachers do, have left many teachers disenchanted with the vocational education system, and particularly with how it is being managed at MNI. Students, as clients, have also contributed to this disenchantment: they have become more demanding and challenge teacher authority.

### **Lack of transparency**

Centre managers make decisions about their operations and they enforce these decisions with little or no explanation. The most frequently mentioned decision made by managers is the increase in administration workload without any consultation with staff, and without any time compensation.

I have seen the relationship between admin and teachers being enforced in some instances; [there has been] little or no information about their decisions. (MN6)

When they are working together they seem to be forcing admin work onto teaching staff. (MN6)

Centre managers are now judged on their performance according to measures related to their operations; however, these figures are not revealed to staff. It appears that centre managers are driven by short-term throughput goals rather than long-term planning.

The managers are judged on numbers; they are driven [by meeting] short-term goals. (MN3)

The lack of transparency in decisions made by managers to increase staff's administrative workload and measures associated with the centre's performance has left many staff confused and lacking motivation.

### Building rapport

As a result of the IDR process one theme has emerged, namely: Building rapport.

Full details of steps that resulted in the identification of this theme are contained in Table 5.19. This theme is then discussed in the following sub-section.

**Table 5.19 Building rapport**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
MN3	[Management] don't seem to see. If you treat the students well now, in the future you can be teaching their friends and their students and so on.	If you treat the students well now, you can be teaching their friends and their future employees.	Ensuring future business.	<b>Building rapport with students</b>
MN3	We should be building on a relationship which is already there. I am teaching students who are employees of the students I taught before. So do we see that, do we see that there is a bigger picture with our students in the future?	I am teaching students who are employees of the students I taught. Do we see that there is a bigger picture?	Building on past relationships builds for the future.	



**Building rapport**

Building rapport with current and past students is essential to the operational viability of a centre, because students may one day become business owners who will employ apprentices and they will remember the institutions that contributed to their success.

[Management] don't seem to see. If you treat the students well now, in the future you can be teaching their friends or their students and so on. (MN3)

Building rapport with students, who will become future employers, is part of a holistic approach to aim for operational viability in the long term. MN3 suggests that senior management at MNI do not appear to see this as an important 'bigger picture':

We should be building on a relationship that is already there. I am teaching students who are employees of the students I taught before. So do we see that, do we see that there is a bigger picture with our students in the future? (MN3)

**Synthesis**

It seems with the new focus of the institution being directed towards financial survival in an increasingly competitive environment, a number of changes are taking place in power relationships between administrators (managers), teachers and students.

Given students now have the awareness and understanding that they are the clients and teachers deliver learning, students' respect towards their teachers is constantly diminishing. They will not hesitate to voice their concern if they believe the teacher may not have adequate knowledge or skills. Some students having knowledge of how the VET system operates and they will manipulate the system to obtain results or outcomes they believe they are entitled to.

Centre managers are put under enormous pressure to perform; they are responsible for the financial viability of their respective centres – for their operational profit and loss. This new responsibility has shifted some centre managers' style of management, communication and leadership. Some staff

believe that management has changed to a centralised style; communication is a one-way flow; and that leadership is autocratic and without transparency.

Staff believe they are the ‘meat in the sandwich’ in this shift of power between centre managers, students and teachers. They constantly have to deliver the outcome their clients (students) want, increasing their productivity to justify their existence to the centre managers, and constantly acquiring new skills, such as counselling, in order to keep their clients and centre managers happy.

### Question 5: What leadership skills are required to lead in a culture of change?

Three emergent themes were identified in the IDR process, namely:

- Workplace situational leadership.
- Transformational leadership.
- Transparent leadership.

**Table 5.20 Situational leadership**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
CH1	Managers need to be more adaptable to be able to see the big picture.	Managers need to be more adaptable, to see the big picture.	Adaptability in management at all levels.	<b>Adaptability</b>
CH1	In class teachers are more relaxed about leadership; they have to become more adaptable in the classroom to deliver teaching or training.	Teachers are more relaxed in class; they need to become more adaptable to engage in both training and teaching.		
CH5	[It is necessary to] understand the benefits and be able to communicate this to others in a way that is understood by all. Don't embrace change for change sake.	Understanding the purpose and benefits and communicating these, so that they are understood by all.	The benefits of change must be fully communicated.	<b>Communication skills</b>
CH4	...most of those people would do their own in-house training rather than using the TAFE system or external training.	Most people would prefer to do their own in-house training rather than using TAFE.	In-house specific training is preferred.	<b>In-house training</b>

## **Workplace situational leadership**

As a result of the IDR process three themes have emerged, as follows:

- Adaptability.
- Communication skills.
- In-house training.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.20. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

### **Adaptability**

Centre managers need to be more adaptable to the changes taking place in the VET sector in order to manage their perspective centres well in a chaotic environment – to see the ‘big picture’.

Managers need to be more adaptable to be able to see the big picture. (CH1)

In the classroom teachers also have to take a different approach to their leadership style, if they are to achieve a positive learning outcome for the students and themselves – they must engage in both training and teaching.

In class, teachers are more relaxed about leadership; they have to become more adaptable in the classroom to deliver teaching or training. (CH1)

Managers and teachers both need to adapt to the changes taking place in the VET sector and subsequently in their classrooms. Managers need to adapt to changes and the needs of staff in their respective centres, if they are to achieve a positive learning outcome for all students.

### **Communication skills**

With any change taking place there will be both chaos and benefits; with change comes benefits – but the need for change must be well communicated, otherwise it will appear to be ‘change for change sake’.

Understanding the benefits and being able to communicate this to others in a way that is understood by all. Don't embrace change for change sake. (CH5)

Change takes place for many reasons; all stakeholders – students, staff and managers – need to have these changes communicated fully and adequately if they are to embrace them.

### **In-house training**

Many industries would prefer to deliver their own in-house training in these times of change, because they believe they can target their own skills needs better than an external training provider. CH4 believes in-house specific training is preferred:

...most of those people would do their own in-house training rather than using the TAFE system or external training. (CH4)

If there is a genuine need for in-house training, TAFE needs to understand, by communicating effectively with their staff and business owners to reach solutions that are beneficial to all parties.

### **Transformational leadership**

As a result of the IDR process five themes have emerged, namely:

- Empathy.
- Leading with knowledge.
- Support for staff.
- Transforming students.
- External involvement.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.21. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.21 Transformational leadership**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
CH2	The managers need to support their teachers instead of treating students as customers.	Need to support their teachers instead of treating students as customers.	Balancing teacher support with client needs.	<b>Empathy</b>
CH2	Managers need to have a concern for their teachers, and have a good understanding of the curriculum.	Managers need to be in touch their teachers and have a good understanding of the curriculum.	Leaders being in touch.	
CH2	Managers need to understand the risks involved with students who are emotionally unstable.	Understanding the risks involved with students emotionally unstable.	Meeting the emotional needs of young people.	
CH5	Understanding what it means to others when change occurs, not just yourself – being in it together	Understand what it means to others when change occurs – being in it together.	Building an empathetic team environment.	
CH2	They need to be able to deal with pastoral care, because there are a fair number of students with personal problems.	Pastoral care [is needed] because there are many students with personal problems.	Classroom teachers as pastoral care leaders.	
CH4	I would say utilise staff [who are] at their best what they do best, rather than just putting them in the same basket and assuming everyone has the same skill sets.	Utilise staff at what they do best do not assume everyone has the same skill sets.	Staff skill being best at what they do best...	
CH4	Leadership skills? They need to inspire, to constantly re-enforce the purpose of why we are here; they need to be reminded of that.	To inspire, to constantly re-enforce their purpose; they need constantly to be reminded of that.	Leaders need to inspire others.	<b>Leading with knowledge</b>
CH2	Leadership style of teachers? I would say they must first understand the curriculum... [This] could be seen as the quickest and simplest [step] to deliver.	Teachers must first understand the curriculum knowledge if they are to be good classroom leaders.	Leaders in classrooms need to know their stuff.	
CH2	Teachers need to provide clear structures; students need structure, consistency and stability.	Provide clear structures, be consistent, and provide a stable environment.	Clarity, consistency, stability	
CH6	I believe leadership skills should be understanding of what is required,	Leadership skills should provide a clear understanding of what is required.	A clear understanding of what is required...	

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
CH4	In the classroom you need to lead by example. Managers need to lead by following through with accountabilities.	Classroom teachers need to lead by example; managers need to lead by following through with accountabilities.	Leading by example and through being accountable.	
CH6	Reasonable timeframes and qualification with skills and knowledge are required to perform any request.	Reasonable timeframes and qualification knowledge required to perform.	Time, skills and knowledge important.	Support for staff
CH1	There is a need to provide guidance and knowledge to the new staff, some of whom have very little knowledge.	Provide guidance and knowledge to those with very little knowledge.	Enhancing skills and knowledge base of staff.	
CH1	Provide support for those who are affected by change (i.e. all affected, including those who remain with the old, or who are left behind).	Provide support for all staff affected by change including those who are older or who feel 'left behind'.	Support required throughout the change process.	
CH1	Teachers need to look at each student on an individual basis; teachers cannot generalise about the group of students they teach.	Look at each student on an individual basis; teachers cannot generalise	Consider different learning needs of each student.	Transforming students
CH5	Consultation [is required]: not just the word but actioning the word. Tell the truth, no matter what the consequence! [This involves] sharing, empathy, [and] listening.	Consultation must be put into action; leaders must tell the truth, no matter what the consequences are.	Honest, open consultation will create a trusting environment.	
CH4	We should be bringing people into the TAFE system that can become the drivers of this, not us, you know.	Bringing people into the TAFE system to drive changes.	Bring in external expertise to drive changes forward.	External involvement
CH4	The chefs in the industry should be driving the changes in the curriculum. I don't think the industry believes in our courses.	Industry should be driving the changes in the curriculum; those from 'high end restaurants' do not believe our courses are credible.	Industry leaders should be involved to ensure the curriculum is relevant.	
CH4	What is required here is a greater understanding of the industry itself; we should be leaders in the industry rather than chasing the industry.	A better understanding of the industry is required; we should be leaders in the industry rather than chasing the industry.	A better understanding of industry is required.	

**Empathy**

Centre managers need to have a balanced approach to maintain quality of service as well as team morale; teachers need to have a balanced approach in the classroom through authoritative or consultative teaching styles.

The managers need to support their teachers instead of treating students as customers. (CH2)

CH2 believes that leaders must be in touch, particularly with their staff and with the curriculum.

Managers need to have a concern for their teachers, and have a good understanding of the curriculum. (CH2)

Centre managers need to have a good understanding of the immediate environment, be in touch with their staff and have a genuine concern for their wellbeing, both as a team and as individuals. At the same time, they need to help staff to meet the emotional needs of young people.

Managers need to understand the risks involved with students who are emotionally unstable. (CH2)

A sense of empathy from centre managers is also required if they are to understand different individual and team needs in times of change: they need to build an empathetic team environment.

Understanding what it means to others when change occurs, not just you – being in it together. (CH5)

Empathy for students means teachers need to be able to provide pastoral care for those students who need it most.

They need to be able to deal with pastoral care, because there are a fair number of students with personal problems. (CH2)

Utilising staff in the role they are best equipped for is important in times of change, to create a sense of comfort and belonging, rather than just allocating staff where needed, even when they are not specifically trained. CH4 senses that staff morale will be boosted when they are well utilised.

I would say utilise staff [who are] at their best, what they do best, rather than just putting them in the same basket and assuming everyone has the same skill sets. (CH4)

In times of change centre managers need to be empathetic both at the macro and micro level. Understanding the effects of change holistically can help managers to create an environment where all team members can be comfortable and productive. Staff will perform well when they can work in a risk free environment, and students will learn more when teachers are seen to be empathetic to their individual needs.

### **Leading with knowledge**

Inspirational leadership can be a result of constant reminders of what we do as an educational institution, and some staff would argue that centre managers also need to be reminded of educational purpose in these times of change.

Leadership skills? They [leaders] need to inspire, to constantly reinforce the purpose of why we are here; they need to be reminded of that. (CH4)

For teachers to lead in a classroom, they must first have a good understanding of the subject matter – of curriculum knowledge – and be able to create a learning program that is clear and adaptive in order to achieve a positive learning outcome for the students. CH2 emphasised the importance of knowing their stuff.

Leadership style for teachers? I would say they must first understand the curriculum... [This] could be seen as the quickest and simplest [step] to deliver. (CH2)

CH2 believes that a clear structure that provides clarity, consistency and stability are essential for positive learning.

Teachers need to provide clear structure; students need structure, consistency and stability. (CH2)

CH6 sees that the key to effective classroom leadership is to provide a clear understanding of what is required.



I believe leadership skills should be an understanding of what is required. (CH4)

Ultimately, CH4 believes that teachers need to lead by example in the classroom, and centre managers need to support staff in ensuring they are accountable in order to lead them through times of change:

In the classroom you need to lead by example. Managers need to lead by following through with accountabilities. (CH4)

A sound understanding of the educational ideals for the different centres and institutions involved is vital for the purpose of leadership in times of change. Managers need to know what is required to succeed as a centre and as an institution. Teachers need to have a sound knowledge of the learning required to create learning programs that contribute to positive learning outcomes. And students require a clear, structured and consistent learning environment to be successful with their studies. Holistically, leadership comes with an in depth understanding of what is required to succeed as a team, as a centre and as an institution.

### **Support for staff**

Providing adequate time for teachers to succeed in achieving the required qualifications helps to continually improve VET.

Reasonable timeframes and qualifications with skills and knowledge are required to perform any request. (CH6)

Centre managers need to provide guidance and support for new staff, because they may come into VET with little or no understanding of how the system works.

There is a need to provide guidance and knowledge to the new staff, some of whom have very little knowledge. (CH1)

Some staff may need extra support when affected by the changes taking place, regardless of whether they still have a job or not. Older staff will need guidance as to how changes are taking place and what they can do to keep pace with them.

[The need to] provide support for those who are affected by change (i.e. all affected, including those who remain with the old, or who are left behind). (CH5)

Support for staff is an important mechanism for the success of the respective centres, and for the institution as a whole. Guidance for new staff entering the industry is important for their success. Support for remaining staff is essential to ensure smooth transition.

### **Transforming students**

In the classroom teachers cannot assume that all students are the same, because they are all individuals with individual needs. CH1 believes that teachers will need to treat students as individuals if they are to become work ready.

Teachers need to look at each student on an individual basis; teachers cannot generalise about the group of students they teach. (CH1)

At the same time, centre managers need to be transparent and consultative with all stakeholders; being truthful is important and manipulating the truth will only bring about discontent. CH5 believes that honest, open consultation creates a trusting environment:

Consultation [is required]: not just the word but actioning the word. Tell the truth – no matter what the consequence! [This involves] sharing, empathy and listening. (CH5)

In order to transform students into competent individuals who are work ready, teachers must treat students as individuals and help them where they need help.

### **External involvement**

It is important to bring external expertise into the institution to help drive and improve the system; centre managers and teachers are great for maintaining the system but may not be able to improve upon it, because they are immersed in the system.

We should be bringing people into the TAFE system that can become the drivers of this, not us, you know. (CH4)

CH4 further suggests industry leaders need to be a part of the driving force behind the change happening in VET, if TAFE courses are to remain relevant and meet current industry requirements.

The chefs in the industry should be driving the changes in the curriculum. I don't think the industry believes in our courses. (CH4)

Overall, a better understanding of industry needs is required.

What is required here is a greater understanding of the industry itself; we should be leaders in the industry rather than chasing the industry. (CH4)

External involvement from those who have industry expertise is important – if not vital – for the survival and success of respective centres, and the institution as a whole. Maintaining relevance and currency with industry needs is the key to success during transition.

### Transparent leadership

As a result of the IDR process two themes have emerged, namely:

- Communication skills.
- Transparency.

Full details of the steps that resulted in the identification of these themes are contained in Table 5.22. Each theme is then discussed in the following sub-sections.

**Table 5.22 Transparency**

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
CH3	The staff rely on management for clear information to better understand what the changes are, how they will be implemented, and how this implementation will affect job security.	Staff rely on clear information to better understand what is changing, how the changes will be implemented, and how this will affect job security.	Understanding the changes and their consequences is important in times of change.	<b>Communication skills</b>

Rspndt	Comment	Construct	Concept	Theme
CH5	[What is required is] clarity of vision, understanding of the benefits, and being able to communicate this to others in a way that is understood by all.	Clarity of vision, understanding the benefits, and having this communicated to others in a way that is understood by all.	Clearly communicated rationale, purpose and vision behind changes.	
CH3	The most important leadership skill in my opinion is communication skills, especially in these times of change.	The most important leadership skill in times of change is having good communication skills.	Good communication skills are vital in times of change.	
CH1	[Management] needs to show respect and build rapport with the teachers; communication is very important [so that] teachers understand what is going on in the department as well as in the industry.	Management need to respect and build rapport with the teachers; they need to communicate what is going on in the department as well as the industry.	Communicating departmental and industry events is important in building rapport and respect.	
CH4	[Management] needs to be a bit more transparent in their operation. We need to know what everyone else is doing.	Management needs to be transparent about what is needed and what everyone is expected to do.	Transparency in the team in order to build a sense of 'team'.	Transparency
CH1	Without [good] communication subordinates may not deliver to the best of their ability. This [creates] confusion and distrust; morale will diminish; there will be very little morale – not even existing at all.	Without good communication subordinates are unlikely to deliver to the best of their ability; there will be confusion and distrust; morale will diminish.	Transparent communications help create a supportive environment.	
CH4	There is [a lack of] reinforcement: 'You said you were going to do this but it has gone nowhere and what have you done?' You need to have good communication skills.	There is no positive reinforcement: rather it is all negative. You need to have good communication skills.	Good communication skills and being positive are essential.	
CH3	There is already too much stress created by uncertainty, and there is no need for more.	Stress is created by uncertainty, and there is no need for more.	Uncertainty in times of change leads to an increase in stress.	

### Communication skills

Staff need to know what the changes are, how these changes will be implemented and how this will affect their job security in the immediate future.

The staff rely on management for clear information to better understand what the changes are, how they will be implemented, and how this implementation will affect the staff's job security. (CH3)

Communicating the reasons behind changes taking place and a vision of how the institution will move forward needs to be delivered in such a way that it can be understood and followed by everyone.

[What is required is] clarity of vision, understanding of the benefits and being able to communicate this to others in a way that is understood by all. (CH5)

CH3 believes that good communication is vital and the most important leadership skill.

The most important leadership skill in my opinion is communication skills, especially in these times of change. (CH3)

Teachers need to know what is going on in the centre as well as industry changes taking place; without this knowledge they feel stressed, disoriented and some may lose their self-esteem. CH1 argues that communicating departmental and industry change is important in building mutual rapport and respect.

[Management] needs to show respect and build rapport with the teachers; communication is very important [so that] teachers understand what is going on in the department as well as in the industry. (CH1)

Follow up with individual accountability is important if a centre is to increase its productivity, because saying what you will do is not and will not be the same as having it done. CH4 worries that negative criticism prevails.

There is [a lack of] reinforcement: 'You said you were going to do this but it has gone nowhere and what have you done?' You need to have good communication skills. (CH4)

Communication skills for all leaders will always be an important, because all stakeholders need to know what is going on in order for everyone to feel a sense of belonging and to be productive. Leaders need to follow-up on individual's commitments to bring about productivity, and noting these

achievements can bring about success for individuals and their respective centres.

### **Transparency**

Staff need to know what each other's roles are if they are to perform well as a team, and jobs must be allocated if productivity is to be measured and to increase. CH4 sees transparency as being an essential part of team building.

[Management] needs to be a bit more transparent in their operation. We need to know what everyone else is doing. (CH4)

Lack of communication by centre managers with staff can only lead to distrust and overall low morale. The uncertainty surrounding the current changes has contributed to a lot of stress through lack of communication. CH1 suggests that transparent communication helps create a supportive environment.

Without [good] communication subordinates may not deliver to the best of their ability. This [creates] confusion and distrust; morale will diminish; there will be very little morale – not even existing at all. (CH1)

Finally, CH3 observes that uncertainty in times of change leads to more stress, which is unnecessary.

There is already too much stress created by uncertainty, and there is no need for more. (CH3)

Transparency in roles and responsibilities is important for the monitoring of individual success, and that of the team as a whole. Without transparency individuals can end up confused, unmotivated and worse, lack of productivity.

## Synthesis

Whether it is situational or transformational, leadership is required. The one thing that stands out is the need to communicate clearly and effectively. Centre managers and teachers alike need to understand the changes and how they can be implemented, in order to fully understand the effects.

Situational leadership requires all centre managers and teachers to understand the changes taking place, and to communicate these changes throughout the centre to reach consensus. In the classroom teachers need to adapt to the changing characteristics of their clients (students) and provide individual attention to achieve a positive learning outcome.

Transformational leadership requires empathy, guidance, support and the utilisation of external expertise to ensure training is current and industry relevant. Empathy for managers can take the form of a balanced approach when dealing with students and teachers. Allocating staff in their area of expertise can also help transform and maintain individual skills and knowledge, by providing professional development and job security. Empathy for teachers comes in the form of pastoral care to deal with the student's individual problems.

In sum, good communication skills are essential, especially to inform all stakeholders about how these changes will affect them: this is essential for best management practice. Good communication can overcome confusion and lead to an increase in individual productivity and success. Transparency will be the key driver in any institution's quest to survive.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **FINDINGS AND REFLECTIONS**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter I present a synthesis of my findings based on the responses of participants from the Andrew Barton Institute (ABI) and Matthew Nixon Institute (MNI) respectively – in response to the five specific research questions (see Chapter 1 and below) that have driven this research.

As part of these combined findings, I present a personal reflection in the form of a short auto-ethnography. By way of explanation, I point out I was a sessional TAFE staff member from 2006 until 2011 at a number of TAFE institutes; I have been a full-time TAFE member of staff from 2011 to the present (2015). I have also worked at different levels in these institutions and have thus gained an intimate insight into both the TAFE and VET industries. This has enabled me to reflect on key issues identified from both a training and administrative staff member perspective. I believe this experience has been invaluable and has enabled me to provide well-rounded reflections on key issues identified from the inductive data reduction (IDR) process.



**Question 1: What changes have you noticed in the past five to ten years?****Issue 1.1 – Compliance**

As a consequence of the changes in policy, the compliance process has also changed or increased as argued by many training staff. I believe this increase is due partly to cost cutting by management in administration staff, and changes in training packages. Every time there was a change in the training package, we all had to change the unit delivering resources to reflect the changes in required learning outcomes, and in the unit codes and unit names. Sometimes we had to change the delivery schedules to suit nominal hours allowed in the new training package. There had also been a lot of advancement in terms of technological aids in the delivery of teaching resources, and the internet has been a major factor in these changes. A lot of teaching resources are now online and readily accessible by students at a time and place convenient to them. This will ensure that students will not be disadvantaged if they cannot make it to class, but this has also given rise to more administration work to keep online resources current and relevant. In 2011, the state government also required all registered training organisations (RTOs) to prove student interactions in order for these organisations to receive government funding. The reason for this change in compliance is due to the many RTOs, mainly private, that were ticking off students, even though they may not have been present in class.

**Issue 1.2 – Policy changes**

Another policy change that shook up the VET industry and, in particular, the TAFE sector was the change in the funding process for all RTOs. Irrespective of whether these organisations were government or non-government funded they had to compete from the same pool of funds. This led to an increase in the number of private RTOs, which resulted in more competition and less collaboration between RTOs and TAFE institutes.

Every institution was keeping their work confidential in order to create a competitive market niche, but the odd thing was that RTOs were hiring trainers who came from other RTOs and they were sharing their resources. In the end all the RTOs were really doing was recycling teaching and learning resources.

For institutions and private RTOs to stay viable and profitable, they all had to manage and reduce their operational costs. This cost cutting sometimes came at the expense of less physical resources needed for training and delivery, such as the use and recycling of computers that were more than eight years' old. Furniture used in classrooms was not replaced even after ten years, and very little budget had been allocated for purchasing new training resources, both hard and electronic copy. These cost cutting measures minimised and eliminated the use of student workbooks; some institutions and most private RTOs would request the students purchase their own workbooks.

The number of full-time employment contracts offered to staff has become fewer every year, and the term 'ongoing contract' has almost become extinct. This is because it is cheaper to have sessionals delivering training, and easier in terms of administration work, especially if the organisation had to let them go. To let a sessional staff go, the institution simply did not offer sessional staff any work. Table 6.1 contains an estimate of how much RTOs

**Table 6.1      Sessional staff cost savings**

	Teaching hours per week	Leave entitlements	Cost per hour	Teaching weeks per year	Average annual wage
Ongoing staff classification	21	Annual leave, public holidays, etc...	\$35.43	40	\$73,603.00
Sessional staff	21	None	\$60.00	40	\$50,400.00
				<b>Savings</b>	<b>\$23,203.00</b>

Source: MBA, 2009

can be saved by hiring sessional staff instead of full-time staff. As shown in the table, RTOs can save up to \$23 203.00 by hiring a sessional training staff instead of hiring a full-time training staff per year. If we multiply this by an average figure of 100 staff per institution, we can see there would be an average saving of approximately \$2 million a year.

TAFE institutes had also diversified their educational products; instead of delivering products they were good at with the staff they had. They also had to offer products the students wanted. TAFE had to cater for the skills shortages identified by the industry. RTOs were funded based on the five bands according to the nation's skills shortage. This funding arrangement is shown in Table 6.2.

This change along with government funding cuts in VET training meant a number of centres in some TAFE institutes were no longer viable. As a result, hundreds of staff's employments were ceased. This created a ripple effect in the institutions' facility utilisation rate, which is used to calculate returns on assets. The institution's utilisation rate was worse than it had ever been; there were too many non-utilised facilities and not enough students or income. Some institutions had tackled this problem by selling off buildings that were not utilised and renting whatever else they could. Smaller private RTOs simply closed down, because they did not have any assets to sell or lease.

**Table 6.2 Government subsidy band for funding**

Subsidy band	Subsidy range per hour of training delivery
B and A	>\$10.00
B and B	\$7.50–\$10.00
B and C	\$5.00–\$7.00
B and D	\$2.00–\$4.50
B and E	< \$2.00

Source: DEECD, 2013

**Issue 1.3 – Student profiles**

There was a dramatic change in the age range within student cohorts. The average age of apprentices was no longer 16 to 18; instead, the range changed to 16 to 40 and this was due to:

- older international students competing for apprenticeship places;
- a declining manufacturing industry, thus local adult workers began to apply for apprenticeships in the hospitality industry – an industry that, in the past, they would have ignored; and
- employers in the hospitality industry seeking mature-age apprentices whom they regarded as being more reliable than school leavers.

In 2011/12 there was a sudden decline in the international student market when the government changed the skills shortage list, which included hospitality. In some institutions, the number of international students dropped from 1800 to 180 across one summer holiday. The rapid decline in international student numbers also contributed to the low facility utilisation rate of many institutions. To compensate for this loss, RTOs accepted all students who had applied to enrol in VET programs to retain their economic viability. In particular, this led to a broadening of the range of academic abilities within the hospitality student cohort. The lowering of the academic standard was particularly disturbing to some of the teaching staff; some staff argued that students' academic ability was as low, or lower, than that of Year 8 secondary students. The lack of elementary spelling skills, for example, was of considerable concern: even in diploma and degree programs, I have taught students who could not spell simple words such as 'example'; instead, they used 'esample'.

It was evident that the intellectual gap between academically able and not so able students was widening. This gap was further amplified by those students who were enrolled so they could receive Centrelink (Department of Human Services) payments. These students were not motivated to enrol at a TAFE institute or a RTO; they attended in order to be registered as someone

trying to obtain a qualification and hopefully, a job. Once registered, they were entitled to Centrelink payments.

#### **Issue 1.4 – Centralisation of decision making and a change in management style**

Management were under enormous pressure to perform well financially in order to keep their centres viable and profitable. Some managers were even under pressure to perform in other centres, for which their immediate director or executive manager was responsible. Educational managers had not previously experienced this type of financial pressure. Combined with limited time for decision making in light of rapidly changing situations, some decisions needed to be made outside the normal consulting cycle. This had left operational staff feeling either alienated or excluded. These staff saw these shifts in the decision-making process as a centralisation of responsibility and power.

As a training staff member involved in many such decision-making processes, my response had been one of frustration and dismay. I was frustrated, because staff would either not take responsibility for any of the ideas put forward, or they would regard those who volunteered to take on additional responsibilities with disdain – suggesting that this reflected badly on those who held back. I was dismayed when there was no follow-up on the part of decision makers with volunteer staff, who had agreed to take on extra responsibilities. Attendance at subsequent meetings reinforced a sense of negativity: ‘a new agenda; more “doom and gloom”’. Overall, there was no implementation of steps to support a sense of ‘moving forward’, nor was there any monitoring of progress to assist staff either to improve further or to learn from their mistakes.

A number of staff argued that there had been a change in management style: management had become less transparent and more dictatorial – particularly in relation to work issues such as compliance. Staff were told what they must do to be compliant, but never told *why* it had to be done, or

worse still, how to do it properly. After every audit, staff were told how poorly they had performed; they were never provided with any suggestions as to how they might improve their performance.

Away from the compliance issue – and looking more broadly at the review of policy within both institutions – I have been able to recall many situations that had been open to misinterpretation by individuals. One vivid memory relates to evidence gathering in relation to student learning. All centre managers took the position that evidence had to be paper-based: nothing else would be adequate. I argued that evidence could be provided by a ‘soft copy’, collected electronically via the internet – provided we could confirm student engagement, using student ID and photos of their practical work; students, together with the trainers, would sign-off on the photos either via an electronic signature or through the learning management system (with their student and/or staff ID). Subsequently, this simple procedure proved to be a most effective method of collecting evidence of learning compared with a more complicated procedure involving paper-based evidence.

Some staff engaged in the study commented on the loss of personal contact between managers and staff: the manager’s office door appeared always to be closed; staff were not encouraged to knock unless they had something urgent or very important to discuss. As a training staff member, I related by responding only to ‘important issues’; however, when I acquired a position of greater responsibility, I realised there was a human need to be met. Some staff did not, in fact, have anything major to say; instead, they wanted to make personal contact to show they were active and on the job; some, in fact, used such opportunities to be proactive at the same time – sometimes with unexpected outcomes. For example, a staff member approached me and said: ‘What do you think of the idea of making videos of some training sessions so that we can put it up on the learning management system?’ I responded immediately by saying: ‘Yes, it’s a great idea. When can you produce a sample for me? Please make sure that the video can be mapped across the unit of competency. Otherwise it will be a waste of time’.

I sensed some dismay; a look of regret was on his face, as if to say: ‘Why did I open my big mouth?’ He then said he would think about it and that he would get back to me. This exchange occurred in September 2013; he had still not responded by February 2014, five months after the encounter.

## **Question 2: What have been the driving forces directing changes in the industry in recent years?**

The driving forces to emerge were threefold: policy changes, the shift to a business model of operation, and the changing perception of students as clients.

### **Issue 2.1 – Policy changes**

The main driving forces for policy change came directly from government initiatives to change educational policies in the VET sector in the areas of compliance and funding arrangements. These drivers have also contributed to a change in management style and students’ position in the RTOs.

The changes in compliance requirements have contributed to an increase in administrative work for training, administration and office staff. Some staff viewed this increase as being stressful, because it had taken up more of their productive time in developing teaching and learning resources. The funding policy changes have contributed to an increase in competition between all RTOs regardless of whether they are government funded or privately funded. The outcome has been an erosion of the small level of collaboration that TAFE institutes had had in the past. Similarly, there has been a diminution in the sharing of innovations in teaching and learning has also diminished resulting from this increased competition.

The change in management style was, and still is, the driver of change in the working lives of VET practitioners and the working culture within VET. With numerous changes taking place, it is not surprising to see institutions and centre managers with little or no time for future planning: they are

constantly forced to react to what is happening. These responses are reflected in the behaviours of training and administration staff: they feel obligated to follow suit. This creates a very uncomfortable feeling of insecurity and, to a high degree, has lowered the morale of staff in the workplace.

Another driver of change in the working lives of VET practitioners has arisen from students being treated as clients. Trainers are no longer the knowledge providers, nor are they the caretakers they once were: they are now merely ‘facilitators of knowledge delivery’. Administrative office staff can no longer provide students with help and direction; now they must deal with students as clients in search of an educational product they wish to purchase.

## **Issue 2.2 – Business model of operation**

The new funding system, enabling all RTOs to have the same access to available funding for all applicants, has created a situation in which a TAFE institute functions in the same way as all other RTOs: they must become self-reliant in order to be viable and profitable. As a consequence, institutions and their centre managers have shifted their focus to increasing productivity, efficiency and profitability while, at the same time, cutting costs. This has resulted in increasing the number of students in the classrooms while maintaining the same number of trainers and assigning them extra administrative duties.

Increased efficiencies have been brought about by requiring staff to become multi-skilled – resulting in the hiring of fewer people while maintaining the same breadth and array of skills in order to deliver a wide range of educational products. Hiring less full-time and contract staff and replacing them with sessional staff have resulted in decreasing the cost of human resources. This minimises the cost of creating staff redundancies and reduces the intensity and frequency of conflict in the field of industrial relations. The result of this approach to cost cutting has been a large increase



in the number of sessional staff being employed in all RTOs, which of course includes all TAFE institutes.

While it has been argued that increases in productivity and efficiencies, together with associated cost cutting measures will ensure the profitability and survival of all RTOs, many TAFE trainers have argued that this increase in productivity comes at the expense of delivering quality outcomes. This situation has arisen because trainers are now required to spend significantly more time on compliance and administrative work – the purpose of which is to sustain a high level of funding. I believe there is truth in the trainers' argument: there has been a loss of educational quality due to the reduced time for them to engage in developing creative teaching resources. I have observed, as a full-time staff member, that twenty per cent of the full-time trainers' productivity is lost through their not being required to attend when they are not engaged in teaching activities. This is the equivalent of one day's work; until very recently, most, if not all, training staff had simply used this day away from the institute as a 'day off'. The time away from the institute was intended as a flexi day where trainers were free to either work at home or at the institute. Recently (February, 2014), the training staff at ABI and MNI were advised – finally, by their CEOs – on specific work requirements for work to be produced when staff take their 'non-required day off'. At this time, the CEOs also drew attention to the gap between operational expenses and operational revenues, revealing a negative gap of millions of dollars. They highlighted the need to bridge this gap; if the bridging failed then their institutes faced the inevitability of closing down.

### **Issue 2.3 – Changing perception of students as clients**

The shift from 'students' to 'clients' has created many challenges at both the institutional and classroom level. At the institutional level, the concern is about offering educational products with high profit yields. These decisions based on product offerings have been directly and indirectly affected by funding policies.

Government funding available for different courses offered by RTOs has been directed by a skills shortage list including in technology, in aged care, and in 'green jobs' (see TAFE NSW bytes, 2013), which attracts greater funding than those skills not on the shortage list. The consequence of this change in funding distribution meant that centres, such as hospitality and business management studies, were no longer able to operate viably or profitably; they had to be closed down. The students/clients were not given prior notice of these changes; some were left stranded in the middle of their courses without being able to complete them. This situation created a very unpleasant experience for many overseas students; some vowed never to return to study in Australia. Others persevered, despite their having to enrol into another course in order to complete their qualification. Closure of various centres in RTOs resulted in a rapid decline in international student numbers.

This situation was further exacerbated when changes to the Visa Act resulted in bridging visas (for students studying courses no longer on the skills shortage list) being withdrawn (a complete listing of the skills that were withdrawn are contained in Appendices 3 and 4). Students with bridging visas no longer had a reason to study in Australia; their bridging visas were withdrawn and they had to leave.

At the same time, local students were choosing VET institutions based on subject availability rather than location; for instance, they were quite willing to travel 36 km to Dandenong, despite their living in Mornington, because the course they wanted to study was not available nearer home. They were also choosing courses that would steer them into a secure job that would, eventually, be financially rewarding. This set of factors – the dropping of courses, visa changes resulting in sharp decreases in enrolments of overseas students, willingness to travel to VET suppliers of courses that appeared more attractive in the sense of future work opportunities – made it extremely difficult for institutions and organisations to plan ahead. For a time, all RTOs in Victoria were uncertain as to the source and number of students; their

budget requirements, dependent on a critical number of students, simply could not be determined accurately.

The new client–service provider relationship, created in 2007, contributed to a decrease in the quality of student etiquette both in the classroom and at a personal level. As clients, the students demanded a lot more staff time outside of class for counselling purposes or extra help with their assessments. This additional time decreased staff productivity and led to an increase in operational costs. The staff's answer to this issue was the so-called 'dumbing down' of assessments and training delivery which, unfortunately, led to reduced standards in learning outcomes.

Reduced standards have long-term negative consequences in our nation's quest to be better educated and more productive. Institutions and stakeholders, nevertheless, became immersed in immediate issues confronting them when policies changed; there was little opportunity for considering problems in future. I believe the 'dumbing down of assessment' resulted from institutions wanting to pass all students in order to ensure their return to the institution to pursue further studies. Thus, this change was driven by economic imperatives: the ultimate intention was institutions achieving maximum funding with increased numbers of students deemed as 'competent'.

A second negative consequence occurred as the result of standardisation of learning and assessment. Some trainers had become very possessive of their own materials; they neither wanted to share resources, nor did they accept being held accountable for the quality of these resources and assessment of student outcomes. I believe that standardisation should drive innovation: it can provide the foundation upon which improvements and further creativity for better and more interactive learning and assessment resources may be built. I have no doubt that standardisation, if used as a foundation for building blocks of creativity, innovation, improvement, monitoring and further alignment, will provide our education system with a brighter future.

### **Question 3: How have changes affected day-to-day activities of VET practitioners?**

#### **Issue 3.1 – Management**

Different management expectations were one of the changes that affected VET practitioners' day-to-day activities; this change was brought about by the necessity of the employing organisation to become viable at both centre and institutional levels. To be viable an institute must first become compliant, for with compliancy comes funding – and funding is essential for its survival. Inevitably, for the teaching staff involved, compliancy meant more administrative work – essentially to have all the necessary paperwork in place for both internal and external audits. The decrease in government funding for training delivery also contributed to an increase in administration for all staff: this was due to a reduction in the number of administrative staff and full-time and ongoing sessional teaching staff. New sessional staff required the assistance of ongoing staff in relation to operational issues; by giving new sessionals this support they were effectively cutting their available work time. This loss of time was not compensated by the institute, and thus experienced staff became increasingly reluctant to help new sessionals as the efficiency and therefore effectiveness of their own work was reduced. Some staff argued that, in order to reduce costs, management was quite willing to hire inexperienced staff (both in the classroom and in the industry) over more experienced existing staff that were more costly and more demanding.

I experienced this cost cutting personally, when I applied for a full-time position at my institute. I did not get the position; nevertheless, I was asked to train this new staff member, despite their being hired instead of me. I have a vivid memory of this inexperienced staff member who sought my assistance in the creation of a lesson plan for a FOH (Front of House) training session. His first question to me was 'What does FOH stand for?' I was both bemused and angry. I was bemused because our students would be

taught by this trainer, who clearly had no idea what the hospitality industry entailed and what current terminologies were in use. I was angry because, instead of me, someone else was hired; he was cheaper and less experienced with no better qualifications. I received reports from other RTOs that this had become the norm.

Some senior staff had suggested that newly appointed inexperienced staff would be easier to manage as they were unfamiliar with the vocational education system and not fully aware of their rights and obligations. Reflecting upon this approach as a program coordinator, I can understand how some management might have come to this conclusion. New staff are more likely to be compliant and less likely to question every decision made: more likely to support a manager as and when professional help is required. Had centre managers been more visionary when considering their role and the future of their respective centres, they would have worked at creating a staff balance between experienced and inexperienced staff. If they had maintained a balance, experienced staff would have been able to assist those who were new, thus creating a culture of teamwork, respect and collaboration. At the time of writing, constructive collaboration between and within the institutions, senior managers, centre managers and staff in our vocational education sector was notably absent.

### **Issue 3.2 – Increase in administration workload**

The increased administrative workload placed upon staff and, in particular, training staff, according to a number of those who are long-serving and experienced, has reduced the time available for creating innovative learning and training materials: this has been a sustained position on their part. However, there is little justification for this claim. As mentioned previously, if training staff had used the one-day non-attendance time available each week to work productively, this would have allowed 20 per cent of free time per week for the preparation of learning materials. As a full-time and current ongoing staff member for the past four years, I have found that if I work at

home on my non-attendance days, I am able to ensure compliancy with my administrative work. In addition I have been able to produce e-learning resources for the courses with which I have been involved. One day per week has been invaluable for preparing teaching resources and maintaining all the necessary documentation required. In casual conversation with staff in my everyday work, I have come to the realisation that the non-attendance day has been, and still is, observed as a holiday each week.

There have been times, particularly associated with training packages changing every three years, when staff have been placed under pressure to maintain compliance. The three-year cycle has been hardly long enough for staff to get used to the training package: delivering the program well; and developing and amending the necessary resources. Some have argued that the changes in the training package have merely required an amendment to the unit codes and unit names. There have, however, been occasions when some of the units required total modification; this resulted in different teaching and learning units, and consequent new measures of competency. On such occasions, I was able to sympathise with training staff, for I also found it difficult to develop and maintain new resources for teaching and learning as well as maintaining compliance with the new administrative documentation.

### **Issue 3.3 – Multiskilling and multi-tasking**

As changes to both teaching and learning units, and compliance requirements took place, there was increased pressure on staff to be more productive at the classroom level, and better qualified in order to have an enhanced understanding of the training packages and changes that had taken place. Most staff were given the option to update their Certificate IV Training and Assessment to a Certificate 4 Training and Assessment (TAFE) in 2006 in their respective institutes or RTOs. Others were given the opportunity to upgrade their qualification to a Diploma of Vocational Education and Training. Many staff availed themselves of this opportunity and they worked

hard outside of working hours to achieve this qualification; others however did not want to return to the classroom.

At this time further opportunities outside the VET sector were provided to assist staff in gaining further qualifications. This required participation in special courses funded by the government (e.g. Master's degree of Adult Education) through university studies. These courses were offered on a scholarship basis; staff were required to apply through a formal process during which they were required to provide reasons why they were seeking such courses. For me and most staff who took up this opportunity, we were able to learn and experience firsthand the differences in learning delivery in university settings. I also learned new techniques in research and interpretation; I improved my writing skills, made new friends, and was able to identify some of the contemporary problems facing vocational education in Australia. The most important learning was gaining an in-depth understanding of how training packages evolved and how these might be adapted to different training packages in different contexts using different delivery modes. I was able to use these newly acquired skills in 2011 to develop new courses for trainers in the Graduate Diploma of Adult Literacy and Numeracy Practices and in Certificate II Electro-technology Studies (pre-vocational). I delivered these courses by taking a blended learning approach (a mix of theory and practical application) similar to that which I had experienced in my university studies. Similar successful stories were obtained from staff that had completed this same course. Multiskilling is important for individual personal and career development for, as stated in TAFE NSW bytes (2013), there are hundreds of careers offered today that were unknown a decade ago.

Multi-tasking at the VET trainer's level includes training, administration, industry contacts and student counselling. At the administration level, this refers to normal office duties that staff undertake, learning about new and existing training packages, communicating with potential clients/students, and assisting with new and sessional staff that require help in their day-to-

day activities. At administration and management levels, multiskilling relates to being more productive, cost efficient and profitable. As a training staff member, I ran many counselling sessions outside class hours; these were fruitful and I felt I had helped my colleagues. There were staff who would argue that these counselling sessions were biting into their preparation and rest time, and there was an element of truth in this argument. It really was each individual's perception as to whether the counselling sessions were productive or time wasting. At administration and management level there was pressure to transform an educational culture into a corporate culture. This pressure has been met with considerable resistance: training and administrative staff have not truly grasped the essential elements of this new culture. For many staff, education and profit-making could not, should not, and ought not be compatible. I believe this to be the essential barrier to all staff fully understanding the corporate culture: there has to be a blending of education and profit-making – there is, indeed, an entity known as the business of education. Nevertheless, for conservative members of staff, the position taken was that there should be no mixing of the two. Despite this resistance, the vocational education industry will continue to be run as a corporate organisation. In keeping with all corporate organisations, all institutes and RTOs exist to deliver an educational product while remaining viable and profitable.

There has been much discussion and expression of discontent in staff office areas about the manner and speed with which the changes have occurred; as a consequence, there has been a noticeable decrease in staff morale. At the same time, there have been significant redundancies amongst staff, arising directly from both the decrease in student numbers and government funding cuts made in 2009, 2010 and 2011 respectively. Overall, there have been expressions of concern and disquiet amongst staff at all levels of the organisation. Continuing centres have had to operate with fewer staff and smaller budgets. I believe that staff morale (during my research period: 2009 to 2012) has been at one of its lowest points in the history of



Australian vocational education. It has been marked by lack of staff enthusiasm that has had a negative effect on the students' learning outcomes and on their motivation for learning.

The numerous redundancies, ultimately, have affected staff perceptions of their job security in the vocational education environment: most staff have simply not known whether their jobs are secure from one year to the next. Everyone has been worried about financial commitments; nevertheless, for some, this appears not to have impacted upon their determination to accommodate the changes in their required work practices. This group continues as though no changes have occurred; they do the minimum amount of work expected of them and they do not engage in additional activities that might enhance their job security.

Is this the fault of a relaxed education system that has persisted for far too long? Is it the fault of managers who have failed to motivate their staff to achieve more in these times of decreasing revenue and funding? Could it simply be the perpetuation of a myth: trainers choose to work in the vocational educational sector in order to prepare for retirement?

#### **Question 4: What power relationships have emerged between administrators, staff and students?**

##### **Issue 4.1 – Profitability and financial survival**

The introduction of a corporate management structure in the VET sector – and particularly in TAFE institutes – has contributed to a shift in the power relationship between administrators and frontline staff. Administrators have, throughout the past decade, fundamentally focused on profitability for their institutions and respective centres; this has been at the expense of non-profitable educational products and centres – most of which have been either minimised or eliminated. There has been a relentless expression of need for profitability in CEO forums, institutional meetings, management meetings and centre meetings; as a consequence, many staff have experienced a

distinct sense of power imbalance. These staff recognise that they have only been given minimal detail about the changes being made: staff perception is that there has been no two-way communication.

Away from these meetings, administrators have exclusively focused on maintaining their budgets, keeping costs down and being compliant with the Australian Quality Framework. There has been little or no time for discussion because the changes have been frequent and constant: if not funding policy changes, the concern has been changes in training packages every three years. The staff felt a lack of belonging to their respective centres; as a trainer, I frequently felt that too. I and my colleagues did not know, in advance, what the next phase of change would be until it was suddenly revealed. This led to a decrease in sense of belonging; it resulted in the lowering of staff motivation and morale in all centres.

In the classroom, trainers expressed negative sentiments be known through their lack of care for student learning and by their lack of appropriate preparation. Some trainers arrived late to class and let their students go early: the effect was to minimise class contact time between staff and students. In attempting to enforce staff punctuality in starting and ending classes, managers had been widening the rift between frontline and administrative staff. The resulting confrontations heightened trainers' perceptions of the power imbalance in their institutes.

From my perspective, as an experienced VET trainer, I do not subscribe to the proposition that this was a *deliberate* power imbalance: managers have to manage; they too have had time constraints placed upon them. If by discouraging extended staff feedback they did not seem to be sufficiently transparent or sympathetic, they were responding to the fact that some staff were doing too much talking and not enough working. These particular staff members believed that if they talked long enough, they could not be held accountable for not completing the tasks to which they were assigned. They believed they should have been able to justify their lack of productivity. The outcome was that when it came to student's learning resources, some trainers

were using resources that had not been updated for more than a decade. (I witnessed trainers who were using resources that had not been updated since 1993.) The extraordinary aspect of this was they did not even delete the development date (i.e., 1993) for resource materials being used in 2013 – this was clearly visible on the footer of every page. In this situation, the students/clients had been justified in complaining to those who would listen: centre managers and institute administrators.

### **Issue 4.2 – Clients**

The concepts of students as ‘clients’ and trainers and institutions as ‘service providers’ created many challenges for RTOs and trainers with respect to classroom delivery. The students, understanding their new status and associated rights as clients, presented a new set of challenges, especially in relation to their assessment. As clients, they had been empowered to require institutions to show cause as to why they had failed. They were able to seek opportunities to re-sit the tests or to resubmit an assessment task in order for them to be deemed competent – even three months after the results had been published. They used arguments such as ‘having been away for three months’ or ‘being very busy at work’ and ‘forgetting to check up on their results’. Such situations created difficulties for both institutions and trainers: the situation was complex. The dialogue ran something like this:

What should be done? Not allowing a resit or a resubmit would mean a loss of funding; a successful resit or resubmit would attract full funding for that student/client. In this situation, should we let the student re-sits and resubmit or should we simply say “Three months is far too long for any student to re-sit and resubmit”.

If the student had attended all classes it was easy to say it was far too long for re-sits or resubmits, but if they had not attended some of the classes then, as an institution, it would be hard to say it was too late for the student to re-sit or resubmit. They had, in fact, the right to request a resit or resubmit, if the unit of competency they had failed as a result on non-completion remained as part of their current studies.

The other dilemma was how to ensure that the institution attracted full funding of that unit of competency for that student. If the institution allowed the student to resit or resubmit, then the institution would be able to obtain full funding for that student. If not, the institution will only be able to claim the funding relative to the number of hours he/she attended class.

Students who understood their rights to re-sit or resubmit were no longer enthused, or as motivated to get their assessments completed in the timeframe stipulated by trainers. They knew that if they were late in handing in their assessments, or if they failed their written tests, they would have had the benefit of other student's insights regarding their assessments. This knowing of how to pass assessments and tests resulted in a loss of respect for trainers in the classrooms. Some trainers reported that students were using social websites rather than engaging with them in class.

#### **Issue 4.3 – Communication and hidden agendas**

From 2005 to 2014, there has been regular communication between government, VET authorities and all RTOs regardless of their size, in relation to their sustaining profitability and viability. Some staff have argued there was a 'hidden political agenda' behind the changes that were taking place. While I have been unable to discern any hidden agendas, it is clear to me that the Victorian state government wanted the VET system to be similar to the federally based tertiary education system: to be at least partially independent from government funding. The introduction of VET fee assistance was a similar concept to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) and an extension of the *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. The latter provides further evidence of state and federal governments wanting the VET sector to be more independent. The structural changes have been aimed at minimising the skills shortage list, thus ensuring millions of dollars of savings to state governments. The consequences of these cuts in funding for the VET sector have been dramatic: the quality of training delivery in the VET sector has fallen into rapid decline.

During this period, administrators have been faced with the considerable pressure of transforming an educational, non-profit institution into one that could be viable and profitable; they were left with little or no time for consultation and feedback. Administrators had to make decisions quickly and, most of the time reactively: funding offers were only offered within a narrow time window; if that window was closed it was not possible for it to be re-opened. The tight funding timeframe demanded prompt implementation and proof of changes in monitoring and productivity: without this proof, the funding would have been withdrawn. As a consequence of these external pressures, senior management had very little choice but to centralise the decision-making process; this centralisation developed into an autocratic management style of which many staff did not approve.

### **Question 5: What leadership skills are required to lead in this culture of change?**

#### **Issue 5.1 – Financial survival skills**

There have been many stakeholders with a vested interest in the changes made to the vocational education system over this decade including state and federal governments, industry employers, RTOs (public and private), institutional administrators, training staff and students. Of these stakeholders:

- government policymakers introduced reforms leading to major changes in the vocational education system;
- major industry employers provided input as to how skill sets they were seeking in order to maintain and grow their industries;
- senior management of large RTOs provided input as to how they could deliver the necessary requirements;
- middle managers were required to follow the instructions that filtered down from senior management;
- students expected to receive an educational product they believed to be the best.

Thus, as mentioned above, a one-way, autocratic style of management emerged; it was particularly visible at the RTO level because:

- RTO boards sent directives to the general managers;
- general managers sent directives to centre managers;
- centre managers sent directives to training staff; and
- students (or ‘clients’) tried to manipulate the VET system to receive the educational product they wanted (i.e. the qualification) – with or without guarantee of educational learning quality.

In this intensely hierarchical system, in which consultative processes with staff to create better educational products were non-existent, the successful collaboration to create a better educational product that had previously existed between RTOs and their trainers had virtually vanished by the end of 2007.

I attended my first and only TAFE conference in 2007; at that time, TAFE institutes were able to express their ideas and display their achievements. After 2007, TAFE conferences were no longer held: staff suspected they were abandoned due to costs and budget cuts. Annual National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) conferences continued; however, these conferences were not mentioned at centre meetings or any other meetings held at TAFE institutes. I was able to maintain contact with NCVER conference organisers via an independent membership with the organisation. The absence of consultation and collaboration reflects an autocratic management style that appears to permeate the vocational education sector. I believe this situation has arisen due to the need to meet rapidly increasing financial pressures.

**Issue 5.2 – Servicing clients**

As mentioned, staff have experienced a significant shift in power relations between students (as ‘clients’) and trainers; between students and administration staff; and, generally, between students and RTOs. Trainers in the classroom have experienced a lack of enthusiasm in students’ attitudes toward their learning, and the respect they once showed towards their teachers no longer exists.

This loss of respect has emerged with the transition from teaching to facilitating training and learning. Students, as clients, have been encouraged to provide feedback; initially RTOs used this feedback to support continuous improvement as part of innovative best practice. While the concept of feedback and continuous improvement is sound and valid, it was abused by some students who, realising that RTO performances were measured by positive student feedback, used it to their advantage to get the result or outcome they wanted in particular areas of study.

At the same time, administration staff have become ‘client liaison agents’; their main task is to assist student entry into the courses they choose. Courses chosen were often not necessarily in the students’ best interests: all that mattered was that the course lay within the RTOs educational product range, and the final choice was that of the administration staff. These client liaison agents were there to smooth out any issues that arose between staff and students.

In the new structure, institute training and administration staff are required to liaise to promote both existing and new ‘educational products’. This has been deemed as necessary to ensure both centre promotion and maintenance of client affiliation; ultimately, the goal has been to ensure a steady revenue flow within respective centres, thus ensuring the financial viability of institutions and organisations. Finally, trainers and administration staff were expected to contact industry employers and local schools to recruit potential clients/students.

This client–service provider model would have been effective if all stakeholders had known how to operate within its requirements; stakeholders needed to understand and grasp the way the model worked, and then commit. Such commitment had not been forthcoming at the time of introduction, nor was it fully evident as late as the end of 2013; in 2014 it still does not work effectively.

### **Issue 5.3 – Transparency**

Some staff argue that there have always been hidden political agendas behind every policy decision and change, but that these hidden agendas have been never communicated to stakeholders. I have not seen, nor did I experience any of the political agendas that were mentioned. Nevertheless, the political agendas that were obvious to me were not concerned with prioritising educational outcomes but rather compliance.

As a trainer I was constantly reminded of the need to ensure that all documentation was available in order to guarantee compliance; if the paperwork was not in order the institution would have to give back the funding it had acquired. I was also constantly reminded to use a blended learning approach and reduce face-to-face delivery time, in order to lower labour costs. As a program coordinator in both 2013 and 2014 I continued to be reminded of these two elements. One of the programs I coordinated at that time had a nominal 585 hours for delivery; however, the actual delivery time was restricted to 257 hours – under half the nominal time. As a coordinator I was limited by two essential resources: human and training resources. There was always talk of not having enough money in the budget. For example, we were unable to provide each trainer with their own laptop to assist them in developing training resources and to carry out other administrative activities while they were in the classroom. This became a contentious issue since administrative duties involved marking electronic rolls, reporting student absenteeism to other organisations and schools on the internet, and documenting late arrivals to and early exits from class.



As for human resources, in 2014 I delivered two programs with the aid of sessional trainers, who were only allowed to work two and half days a week. With this limitation on human resources I was not able to put together succession plans; nor could I rely on other staff for support when I needed to develop training resources for new training packages. There has been no long-term planning for product improvement, implementation or monitoring, followed by modification to allow for improvement. I am forced to rely on external resources to assist in my resource development and training. This, coupled with the continuing need to deliver training in classrooms, has increased the challenges I experience in program coordination and development. I am engaged in the role of program coordinator but I must continue to deliver the same level of classroom training because I was hired as a ‘teacher *and* program coordinator’ – there is no time concession for the extra workload. From my perspective, there is no ‘hidden’ agenda: it is clearly evident that, with all VET organisations struggling to remain financially viable, cost cutting has become the main focus for all staff engaged in administration.

Many staff believe that, with this new focus on cost cutting and maintaining profitability, there has been a major shift in the decision-making process: it has become more and more centralised, and there is little or no communication of, or involvement in, any decision-making processes. I confirm staff observation; there is indeed an immediate short-term need for decision making transparency. VET has been created as a very large bureaucratic system; senior administrators are fighting to survive and productivity needs to increase. Thus, it can be argued that decision making needs to be more autocratic in order to meet short-term goals. The longer term effects, however, must be noted: one-way communication is not always bad, but there remains a need to balance this with a consultative team approach. Without such a balance staff will continue to feel ‘left out’; lack of transparency will lead to feelings of isolation; staff will not be motivated; and

group morale will decline. My research has identified that these longer term effects are already evident.

#### **Issue 5.4 – Meeting the needs of stakeholders**

Trainers and administration staff, all of whom are at the ‘frontline’ – dealing with students, colleagues and administrators – feel they are the ‘meat in the sandwich’. Training staff are required to treat students like clients; as clients, students have begun to feel they ‘are always right’. I have experienced, directly, such a shift. For example, a student, having been absent for two weeks of an eight-week course, complained he was not given enough time to study for the written tests and that was why he failed. We provided this student with additional learning resources to study on his own; he was allowed to re-sit the written tests. He did not pass on the second attempt. He complained again and we provided further tuition; to our relief, he passed on the third attempt. Of course, this outcome came at considerable cost: staff sacrificing both lunch hours and non-attendance time – especially as this resulted from his non-attendance in class, without any excuse, in the first instance. Nevertheless, as a ‘client’, he had the right to re-sit the test: this is institute policy. No concessions were made for the training and administrative staff involved in this protracted process. A series of unanswered questions remain: Did we as a centre handle this well, or not? Was this a case of clients taking advantage of the system? Should trainers have been compensated for their loss of productive time? What was the role of administrative staff in this situation – whom did they support? Ultimately, a happy client resulted in very disgruntled staff members.

This case was just one of the many that led trainers and administrative staff to feel that they are the ‘meat in the sandwich’: they have often found themselves between the clients and the system that has encouraged ‘flexible delivery’. And similarly, they have found themselves between clients and centre managers.

My observation that personnel from both institutions responded to the changes similarly is likely to have arisen because both groups were experiencing the same policy constraints imposed upon their institutions by the federal government. The prevailing issue raised was that there was more administrative work required of teaching staff as a direct result of their institutions' drive for greater productivity.

### **Issue 5.5 – Understanding each other's position**

With so much restructuring in the VET system, RTOs and institutions alike need all stakeholders to understand these changes and their implications. There is no doubt that administration has been under pressure to perform financially; at the same time, frontline staff have been under pressure to ensure the profitability and viability of the institution. Administration has continued to seek ways of minimising costs and increasing productivity; it is evident from my research that the outcome of minimising costs has come at the expense of the quality of the educational product. Using resources developed by sessional trainers in their places of previous employment is one example of reducing quality while reducing costs of learning resources development: most of these resources however have proven inadequate in meeting current industry needs. A specific example has been the use of paper napkins in training hospitality students in the provision of fine dining for patrons – on a table which had no table cloth. In order to be more productive in training resource development, frontline staff have had to copy resources from other organisations; the result has been performing a role without truly understanding the different needs that need to be met within their own institution.

To be effective, all stakeholders in the training process need to know and understand the key responsibilities of others' positions, and to be able to accommodate different pressures in order for everyone to be able to help each other. I believe that this 'lateral understanding' on the part of all stakeholders has been lost in this decade of change. The outcome has resulted

in the lowering of staff morale and loss of motivation felt by all stakeholders in the institutions with which I have been involved. I suggest that these responses are apparent, overall, in the vocational education sector.

To lead in their respective roles as trainers, frontline staff need to know what changes occurred in the immediate past, and what changes are currently taking place within VET classrooms, RTOs and related industries. And senior administration staff need to comprehend these changes at state, national and international levels.

### **Issue 5.6 – Understanding the environment**

In order to better understand their changing environment, stakeholders need to have a holistic view. Senior administrators need to better understand their staff, the changes that have been influencing staff motivation and morale, the rapid changing needs occurring in the trade industry and vocational education sector, and what their staff and organisation is requiring of them. Senior administrators need to get to know their middle level managers personally – and, to a lesser extent, their frontline staff – to provide direction. They also need fully to understand the changes taking place in the industries they are servicing, in order for them to deliver an educational product that meets industry needs.

Frontline staff need to know and understand who their clients are, their needs and produce educational products to gain an edge in the employment market. Frontline staff also need to understand the changes occurring within classroom environments in order to help them bridge any gaps occurring in age, culture and learning abilities.

The ability of an organisation to develop and deliver a quality educational product is dependent on how well the organisation understands the internal and external environment in which it operates. Working across lower, middle and higher levels within the organisations in my study, I have noticed a lack of succession planning to help staff take on more responsible roles. Currently, it is left to staff – without mentoring or guidance – to further

develop themselves. I have heard in the past, and continue to hear in more than one TAFE institute this phrase: ‘Our people are our point of difference’. I wonder if the people who use this phrase understand what it really means in the context of the changing environment in which VET now operates.

### **Issue 5.6 – Communication skills**

In times of change – now, more than ever – staff need new skills to meet change head on in order to survive and succeed in future. An understanding by staff of these needs will only be possible if there is clear communication across all levels in the organisation and transparency within the decision-making process.

As a trainer I have heard diverse comments relating to lack of communication: not being told what is going in a centre; management making decisions ‘on the run’ without consultation with staff; always ‘being kept in the dark’; and ‘I don’t understand why we bought that when we ought to be spending the money on this’. These examples indicate the importance – now and in the future – of effective communication with staff, keeping them informed and thus aware of broader changes in vocational education and in their immediate work environment.

It is my belief that frontline staff in VET organisations will only be comfortable and productive if they know what is going on and why. There has been – and probably always will be – resistance to change in all organisations; however, if frontline staff are given enough information, they will be able to better understand and accommodate changes that directly affect them. This level of involvement would enable them to make decisions about their future: to stay and be part of the restructuring or to leave and find other prospects in the same industry or in other industries.

It is clearly evident that the culture in TAFE institutes is changing. I am aware that there have been many CEO forums, strategic planning workshops, and centre meetings to communicate changes taking place at all levels in these institutions. In early 2014, in four different sessions, the CEO of one

particular RTO delivered the organisation's strategic plan. It was then discussed directly with heads of centres and their respective staff members, all of whom had been invited to participate; documentation of the strategic plan was available for everybody to read, and ask questions if necessary, via the organisation's ICT network.

The changes were met with some resistance and a few individuals were even contemplating leaving, but mostly there was a sense of calm throughout the organisation. Staff had previously been passing on mixed messages about what was happening; once they were informed about the changes they continued their normal work routine. The staff did not become more productive instantly, but at least they knew what was going on. In order for staff to become more productive, administration will need to implement these changes and drive productivity. Increased productivity will in turn increase the organisation's viability and profitability, thus leading to a prosperous future.

### **Issue 5.9 – Transformational skills**

The transformation begins with the administrative staff having the capability to implement change at all levels of the organisation. Some staff have argued that, to truly transform an organisation and its culture, the initial steps must be concerned with empathy, guidance and support. This is evident in the data collected and analysed. I believe these factors are critical for the transformation of any institution.

With all these findings and reflections that have emerged from the data collected, I have developed a model for transformation (see Chapter 7).

## **CHAPTER 7**

### **MOVING FORWARD**

#### **Becoming a corporate educational organisation**

As I have indicated in the literature review, changes in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector have been constant and relentless. These changes – whether driven by government policies, global economic changes, advancements in technology or changing demands from local and international industry demands – have all contributed. Moving from being an education institution to becoming a corporate educational organisation is the biggest change noted in the operational objectives of all Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and TAFE institutes: their primary objective is to provide educational products sought after by students ('clients') and industry employers. The directive is no longer to train and educate our nation.

This shift in operational objectives along with reduced government funding has created great uncertainty both at macro and micro levels. At the macro level, RTOs can no longer afford to plan more than three years ahead; this arises from the uncertainty created by different political parties in government. At the micro level, staff are still in a phase of transition from being educational and training providers to becoming 'facilitators of learning'. Students have become clients, looking for the best educational product to secure their own career path. The biggest change I can see is the lack of certainty in the VET industry: staff can no longer attain ongoing contracts; they are unable to plan more than twelve months ahead; and most staff are employed on a yearly or sessional contract.

In order for us to provide an educational outcome needed by all students in the VET sector, we must first start with shifting the perception of VET by VET practitioners. As the findings have indicated, the most apparent perception is lack of knowledge and how changes are being implemented. There is also a lack of communication, transparency and leadership. The direction in which the VET sector is heading is simply unclear.

While we cannot foresee the future of VET which is driven by both global and local economies, we cannot afford to stand still. We have a duty of care to train and educate our nation regardless of the shape or form it is taking. We must delve deeply into individual organisations: we need to improve the morale of staff. We need to reduce confusion and disenchantment. While it is the responsibility of organisational leaders to improve the organisation's overall morale, every individual must be held responsible for lifting their own morale.

## **VET change model**

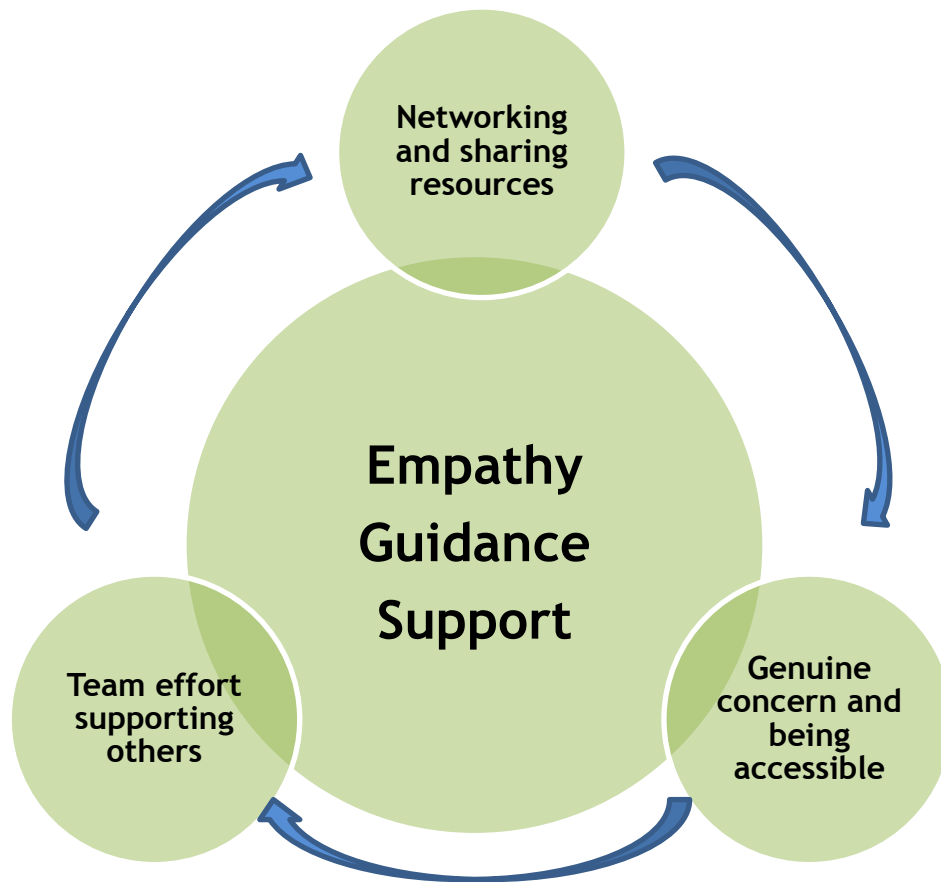
Fullan (2001) has addressed a change model for leading 'in a culture of change' with a distinctive aim: having more good things happening and fewer bad things happening in an organisation. As an outcome of my research undertaken in the hospitality departments of two TAFE institutes, I propose a VET change model which I believe can help individuals and improve working relationships between colleagues and stakeholders with whom they work. This model:

- encourages better communication at an individual level: it requires the removal of organisational hierarchy barriers;
- requires everyone to have an idea of each other's role and their objectives: such understanding will foster mutual empathy; and
- requires an understanding that decisions made at work are not personal: they are made for the good of the organisation and our students/clients.



These decisions will ensure the survival of the institution and/or continuous improvements needed to transform our vocational education sector into one that will be able to cope with change at national and international levels. They should not take away the rights of the individual to question (via an independent third party) decisions they believe are inappropriate. This questioning, however, can only be effective when there is better communication at both a personal and institutional level.

With increased communication and empathy, we should be able to start building smaller networks of individuals, with the intention of building a greater overall network for the institution and industry. These networks will provide a platform where sharing and caring for each other's professional wellbeing is the main objective: sharing our research, experience and learning to improve the organisational environment in which we work. These will then extend to the collaboration and integration of professional knowledge and skills that can be utilised between departments. They will look after individuals' welfare as well as develop their skills, resulting in enhanced productivity.

**Figure 7.1 Individualistic transformational model****Individualistic transformational model**

From these networks we can then begin to build strategic plans to move forward, cope with change and deliver a desirable outcome from the perspectives of the individual, the organisation and the client. The model shown in Figure 7.1 was developed with all the above objectives in mind. Starting with the essential qualities as the centre of the model – empathy, guidance and support – we can rebuild the moral purpose of education and training. Having empathy for all stakeholders’ positions within the VET sector will provide a clearer picture of change: both internally and externally. This will require staff members to be more engaged with each other and with the VET sector. To be truly empathetic towards different roles, it will be

beneficial for staff to carry out different tasks within the organisation: they will need to be proactive in supporting these new roles and responsibilities to fully appreciate what each role entails.

Guidance from individual colleagues and superiors will be important to build relations between individual staff and their immediate environment and co-workers. Through true guidance and the development of respect and working relationships between colleagues, the organisation can build a new work culture – moving forward in these times of change. As Fullan (2001: 8) stated:

Actually, most people want to be part of their organisation; they want to know the organisation's purpose; they want to make a difference. When the individual soul is connected to the organisation, people become connected to something deeper – the desire to contribute to a large purpose, to feel they are part of a greater whole, a web of connection.

The best way to begin building such an important and productive relationship is through constructive guidance. As guidance is given, there will also be lessons learnt from the interactions between the guided and those that guide. These lessons will enable an in-depth understanding of likes and dislikes, strengths and weaknesses. As these understandings deepen, so too will the understanding of the bigger picture of the organisation. And in turn individuals will need to contribute to the overall organisational strategy.

Support will play an integral role in transformation on an individual basis. Colleagues must support each other and superiors must in turn support staff, so that all make a contribution. This support can be tangible or intangible. Tangible support could take the form of: physical resources, such as training materials for training; sufficient computers and software capability; classrooms equipped with the necessary audio and visual aids to deliver training and amenities which are conducive to a productive environment. Intangible support could be: emotional support; simply listening to one another; being genuinely concerned for a colleague's wellbeing, both professionally and personally; and integrity and honesty.

Once we have established three core values – empathy, guidance and support – genuine concern will be assured between staff. This will lead to their being accessible regardless of their level within the hierarchy of the organisation. Being accessible will lend itself to team building. Team goals and objectives will then be supported by every individual within this team. Once teams of individuals are built, we can then build networks between teams or individuals. These networks can then be used to share resources or ideas they may have worked on individually or in their individual teams.

The model may be simple in ideology, but if implemented on an individual level throughout the organisation or institution we can begin to build a culture of trust, dependability, sharing and support. It is within this culture that we can seek long lasting improvements well into the future for the state's vocational education system and the national vocational education system.

Although the staff were disheartened and dispirited, and changes are unlikely to diminish in the near future, the Vocational and Education sector will require passionate, innovative and collaborative individuals to maintain and enhance the integrity of the sector: if we do not create networks of collaboration in these times of change our VET sector will not have a future in this over governed and politicised Australian education.

### **Model for policymakers**

This model can also be adopted by policymakers to assist them to develop future policy that will create a vocational education system that sets us apart in terms of educational excellence worldwide. When we can achieve this distinction, we can be assured we are truly moving forward in our educational system to deliver educational outcomes.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Research process**

The research was put together with the intention of gaining a deep understanding of what changes have occurred and how they have impacted on the everyday lives of VET practitioners. The research was focused on the recent changes, to create a context in which this research could be achieved by a novice researcher. The setting was based in two TAFE institutions, which would give a good representation of the VET sector, and the Hospitality departments were chosen for ease of access to conduct staff interviews.

The research process took approximately five years to complete, which included putting the whole thesis together. This research has opened up my eyes to exciting world of research and how one individual can actually contribute to knowledge. This feeling is one I am grateful for and appreciate. The hope is to have this knowledge gained in this research distributed to public and private VET RTO's, in order for the sector to understand the concerns from VET practitioners and to support them moving forward in improving our VET systems.

#### **Methodology**

The methodology used for this research is of a qualitative nature using two case studies, from two representative institutions for the TAFE. The choice

of using qualitative research was based on the focus of the natural occurrences, in natural settings for VET practitioners. How the global environment and policy changes can have an effect on the changes taken place. It was important for this research to achieve a clear understanding of how VET practitioners constructed their own understanding of their everyday working lives.

The case study methodology was chosen to provide a holistic description and analysis of the changes taken places in the VET sector, and the Inductive Data Reduction analysis was used to build themes to deepen the understanding of the changes. This Inductive Data reduction was grounded in the real everyday lives of the VET practitioners and the changes they had experienced.

The semi-structured interviews were carried out in the participant's natural environment, to enhance their response to the research questions put forward in the interview. It was designed to give the participants a real sense of the importance of the research, in the quest to provide new knowledge and a deeper understanding of the changes taken place.

## **Limitations**

There were limitations to the methodology applied in this research; case study lack statistical reliability, the number of studies may not represent all TAFE institutions, Theoretical model drawn cannot be proven but only to be tested and there may be missing intangible data.

## **The findings**

The findings from this research are now more vivid visible today than ever before, with the funding pool available to RTO's getting smaller and more competitive every year. VET practitioners feeling more pressured to perform in terms of compliance and productivity. The requirements for all staff to be

multi skilled, in order to be able to perform different roles as they are required by the organisation is also very apparent.

All stakeholders will need to work together towards a common goal, if the TAFE institutions and all RTO's are to survive into the future. The VET sector is experiencing a paradigm shift from education, to corporate governance where all RTO's will be responsible for their own survival and viability. The government is moving towards a less supporting role financially for the VET sector, which is main driver for TAFE to shift towards corporate governance.

## **Response Findings**

### **1. What changes have you noticed in the past five to ten years in the workplace?**

#### **1.1. Compliance**

As a consequence of the changes in policy, the compliance process has also changed or increased as argued by many training staff. This increase was due partly to cost cutting by management in administration staff, and partly by changes made to training packages.

#### **1.2. Policy changes**

Policy change that shook up the VET industry and, in particular, the TAFE sector was the change in the funding process for all RTOs. Irrespective of whether these organisations were government or non-government funded they had to compete from the same pool of funds. This led to an increase in the number of private RTOs, which resulted in more competition and less collaboration between RTOs and TAFE institutes.

### **1.3. Student profiles**

There was a dramatic change in the age range within student cohorts. The average age of apprentices was no longer 16 to 18; instead, the range changed to range from 16 to 40.

### **1.4. Centralisation of decision making and a change in management style**

Management were under enormous pressure to perform well financially in order to keep their centres viable and profitable. Some managers were even under pressure to perform in other centres, for which their immediate director or executive manager was responsible. Educational managers had not previously experienced this type of financial pressure. Combined with limited time for decision making in light of rapidly changing situations, some decisions needed to be made outside the normal consulting cycle. This had left operational staff feeling either alienated or excluded. These staff saw these shifts in the decision-making process as a centralisation of responsibility and power.

## **2. What driving forces have directed changes in the VET industry in recent years?**

### **2.1. Policy changes**

The main driving forces for policy change came directly from government initiatives to change educational policies in the VET sector in the areas of compliance and funding arrangements. These drivers have also contributed to a change in management style and students' position in the RTOs.

### **2.2. Business model of operation**

The new funding system, enabling all RTOs to have the same access to available funding for all applicants, has created a situation in which a TAFE institute functions in the same way as all other RTOs: they



must become self-reliant in order to be viable and profitable. As a consequence, institutions and their centre managers have shifted their focus to increasing productivity, efficiency and profitability while, at the same time, cutting costs. This has resulted in increasing the number of students in the classrooms while maintaining the same number of trainers and assigning them extra administrative duties.

### **2.3. Changing perception of students as clients**

The shift from ‘students’ to ‘clients’ created many challenges at both the institutional and classroom level. At the institutional level, the concern was about offering educational products with high profit yields. These decisions based on product offerings have directly and indirectly been affected by funding policies.

## **3. How have changes affected day-to-day work activities of VET practitioners?**

### **3.1. Management**

Different management expectations were one of the changes that affected VET practitioners’ day-to-day activities; this change was brought about by the necessity of the employing organisation to become viable at both centre and institutional levels.

### **3.2. Increase in administration workload**

The increased administrative workload placed upon staff and, in particular, training staff, according to a number of those who are long-serving and experienced, reduced the time available for creating innovative learning and training materials.

### **3.3. Multiskilling and multi-tasking**

Changes to both teaching and learning units, and to compliance requirements increased pressure on staff to be more productive at the classroom level, and better qualified in order to have an enhanced understanding of the training packages and changes that had taken place.

#### **4. What power relationships have emerged between administrators, staff and students?**

##### **4.1. Profitability and financial survival**

The introduction of a corporate management structure in the VET sector – and particularly in TAFE institutes – contributed to a shift in the power relationship between administrators and frontline staff.

##### **4.2. Clients**

Concepts of students as ‘clients’ and trainers and institutions as ‘service providers’ created many challenges for RTOs and trainers with respect to classroom delivery.

##### **4.3. Communication and hidden agendas**

From 2005 to 2014, there was regular communication between government, VET authorities and all RTOs regardless of their size, in relation to their sustaining profitability and viability. Some staff argued there was a ‘hidden political agenda’ behind the changes that were taking place. It became apparent that the Victorian state government wanted the VET system to be similar to the federally based tertiary education system: to be at least partially independent from government funding, confirming that there was a hidden political agenda associated with profitability and viability.

#### **5. What leadership skills are required in this culture of change?**

##### **5.1. Financial survival skills**

There have been many stakeholders with a vested interest in the changes made to the vocational education system over this decade including state and federal governments, industry employers, RTOs (public and private), institutional administrators, training staff and students. Of these stakeholders:

- government policymakers introduced reforms leading to major changes in the vocational education system;
- major industry employers provided input as to how skill sets they were seeking in order to maintain and grow their industries;

- senior management of large RTOs provided input as to how they could deliver the necessary requirements;
- middle managers were required to follow the instructions that filtered down from senior management;
- students expected to receive an educational product they believed to be the best.

As a result, a one-way, autocratic style of management emerged in order to ensure financial survival of the institutions.

### **5.2. Servicing clients**

Staff experienced a significant shift in power relations between students (as ‘clients’) and trainers; between students and administration staff; and, generally, between students and RTOs. Trainers in the classroom experienced a lack of enthusiasm in students’ attitudes toward their learning, and the respect they once showed towards their teachers no longer exists.

### **5.3. Transparency**

There have always been hidden political agendas behind every policy decision and change; in these recent changes the changes have continued to remain ‘hidden’: they were not communicated to stakeholders. The political agendas were concerned with compliance and not with prioritising educational outcomes.

### **5.4. Meeting the needs of stakeholders**

Trainers and administration staff, all of whom are at the ‘frontline’ – dealing with students, colleagues and administrators – felt that they were the ‘meat in the sandwich’.

### **5.5. Understanding each other’s position**

RTOs and institutions alike need all stakeholders to comprehend fully the changes that take place and to understand the implications of these changes.

### **5.6. Understanding the environment**

Stakeholders need to take a holistic view of the institutional environment. Senior administrators need to better understand:

- their staff;
- the changes that have been influencing staff motivation and morale;
- the rapidly changing needs occurring in the trade industry, the vocational education sector, and what their staff and organisation is requiring of them.

### **5.7. Communication skills**

In times of change, staff need new skills to meet change head on in order to survive and succeed in future. An understanding by staff of these needs will only be possible if there is clear communication across all levels in the organisation and transparency within the decision-making process.

### **5.8. Transformational skills**

Transformation begins with administrative staff having the capability to implement change at all levels of the organisation. To truly transform an organisation and its culture, the initial steps must be concerned with empathy, guidance and support.

## **Further lines of inquiry**

The following lines of inquiry flow from this research:

- How can we maintain a high standard of educational outcome in the VET sector, when there are so many changes going on now and in the future? The ideal for VET education to create individuals who will be work ready is constantly restricted by; numerous policy changes, lack of job satisfaction and security, the change from educational to corporate paradigm and the continuous shrinking of government for the VET sector.

- Should training in VET be treated the same as teaching schools? Where trainers have a better understanding of the roles they are taking on when they apply to become VET trainers.
- Are all these trainers' discontents simply due to changes happening too fast and in too great a number? Trainers may have been complacent for far too long to adopt to the changes taking place.
- Are trainers applying to work in the VET sector for the wrong reasons? There have been numerous examples of trainers saying "if you can't do, teach".

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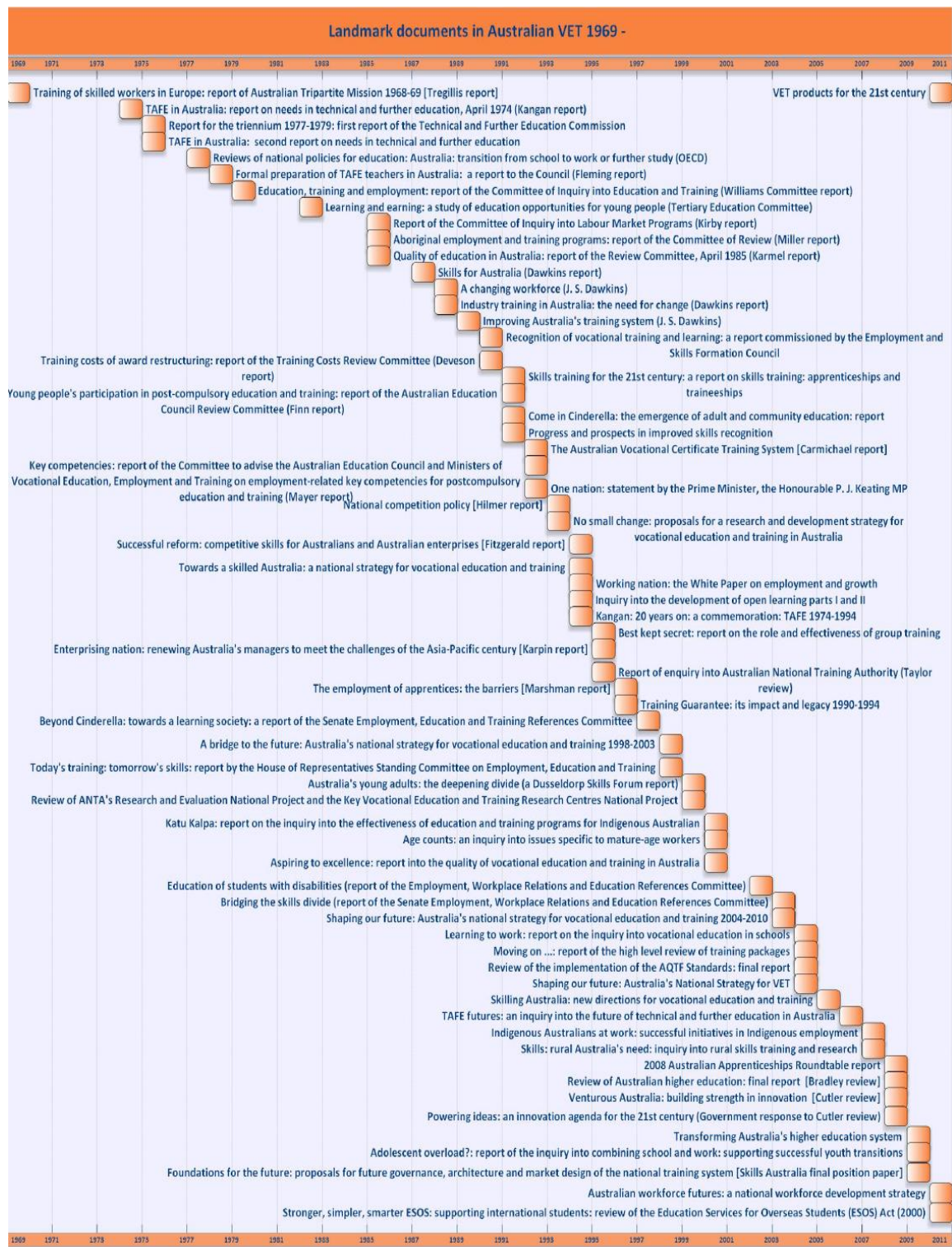
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## **Appendices**

## Appendix 1:



## Appendix 2: Findings and reflections<sup>2</sup>

Question	TAFE	AB	Key Issue	TAFE	MN	Key Issue
<b>Q1. What changes have you noticed in the past five to ten years in the workplace?</b>						
	<b>AB1</b>	The biggest changes experienced in the recent years are contributed by the process of compliance, where staff are required to perform more administrative tasks in order to prove <b>compliance</b> with both the internal and external audits. These extra administrative tasks have caused an imbalance in the time spent creating teaching and learning resources, the teaching time and the time required to reflect and improve. Some staff argue that 50 per cent of their time is now spent on administrative work. The numerous changes to the different training packages and the changes to the requirements of <b>compliance</b> also contribute to the increase of administrative work required of the staff.	<b>Compliance</b>	<b>MN1</b>	In the recent years the changes discussed by the trainers, all seem to point towards the feeling of increased workload whether it be administration, resource development, counselling or keeping up with the advancement of technological changes. This increased in workloads have caused some anxiety among trainers, but it the most stressful change for the trainers is the fact that ongoing and Full time contract work are scarce and in some cases non-existent. All these changes can be related to the <b>policy changes</b> that have taken place in the recent years.	<b>Policy changes</b>
	<b>AB2</b>	With new <b>funding policies</b> opening up a competitive VET market in which private Registered Training Organisations and government Registered Training Organisations are competing for the same pool of potential students. Educational institutions are more focused on getting the students in and putting them through the course at a minimum cost to the institution, by minimising the number of ongoing staff and contract staff, and increasing the use of sessional staff. Some staff are being allocated classes because of their lower labour cost and their availability, but not on their subject expertise. Product diversification is a strategy used by the institutions and private RTOs to stay competitive, which have contributed to a further decrease in subject matter expertise. All these changes are aimed at increasing revenue, decreasing cost and maximising profitability.	<b>Policy changes</b>	<b>MN2</b>	Government <b>policy changes</b> can also be accountable to other changes occurred in recent years, the changes to the immigration policy have seen a drop in the international student numbers enrolling in courses such hospitality management and many others. This in turn has also contributed to the further decrease in full time contract work and making the ongoing positions a thing of the past.	<b>Policy changes</b>

<sup>2</sup> In this table AB and MN refer to the two institutes with which respondents were involved – AB = Andrew Barton Institute; MN = Matthew Nixon Institute; these two pseudonyms are introduced on p. 42. The numbers act as an identifier for individual respondents at each of the two institutes.

Question	TAFE	AB	Key Issue	TAFE	MN	Key Issue
	AB3	There is a large change in the <b>student profiles</b> , which can be attributed to the increase in age of the apprentices and the ever increasing tuition fees. There is also a worryingly low literacy and numeracy skills demonstrated by many students, to the extent It is affecting their ability to learn and to communicate in class. This has a roll-on effect on the quality and effectiveness of training in- and out-of-class: many of these students do not have the ability to follow written instructions and to understand what required of them when it comes to assessments.	Student profile	MN3	<b>Students</b> are also changing in their needs and motivations. Some students are there for the purpose of gaining centre-link payments, while others are there because they need a qualification but lack the need to learn while in school. All these changes has made it hard for new and experienced trainers to deliver the required training to produce an outcome Is desirable for employers, because students do not seem to be at school for the learning, but for the purposes mentioned.	Student profile
	AB4	Centre managers have a big influence in the work environment and culture of their perspective centres, and this is largely due to the increase in their responsibility for the performance of their centres. With this increase of responsibility, staff are sensing a <b>centralisation of decision making</b> process. Some would argue that there is now a remote decision-making process and that there is minimal communication between managers and staff.	centralisation of decision making	MN4	In the midst of all these <b>changes the style of management</b> have also changed to be more focused and central, to the point where most of their attentions are mainly placed on operational compliance and funding. Some staffs have seen this change as a negative outcome because they have lost that human contact with management, and are often confused with the directions of the centre in which they work.	change in management styles
<b>Q2: What have been the driving forces directing changes in industry in recent years?</b>						
	AB5	The three driving forces for the changes in VET are contributed by; <b>policy changes</b> , management and student interaction. With any policy changes there is a requirement for development of new teaching and learning resources, new administrative requirements, and all these changes contribute greatly to the increase time required to ensure compliance with the <b>policy changes</b> . The change in funding policies have contributed to a new competitive environment where every RTO regardless of whether it is public and private is competing for the same <b>funding</b> allocated to vocational education.	Policy changes	MN5	The driving forces that are causing the recent changes in Vocational Education and Training come from four main factors stemming the governmental <b>policy changes</b> . When the <b>funding</b> for Vocational Education and Training changed, TAFE institutes and private Registered Training Organisations were required to be self-reliant while competing for funds from the same pool.	Policy changes
	AB6	This new competitive environment, in turn, has contributed to changes in management styles; centre managers now, more than ever, have the responsibility of ensure the survival of their own centres. In order to stay competitive and make a profit, managers have shifted their focus onto <b>operational efficiency and profitability</b> and have lost sight of quality issues in training and learning. Some staff would argue that management decision-making processes are centralised to the point where they are no longer transparent. It could be argued, that a better balance between profits and quality is required.	Business driven	MN6	Management of both the government and private providers adopted a <b>business model</b> of management in which staff at all levels of these institutions were to be politically accountable; in particular, the teaching staff were to be educationally accountable in meeting the course demands of centrally-designed training packages while remaining <b>financially accountable</b> at the operational level.	Business driven
	AB7	The changes in student demand and diversity have posted many challenges at an institutional level down to the classroom level. New courses are being offered based on their potential to be profitable, students are choosing institutions or private RTOs based on their subject expertise rather than their location. In class, students may be more interested in social networking on	Students or clients	MN7	The new business operation model has resulted in a change of student and teacher relationship to a <b>client</b> and service provider relationship which the interview comments suggest may be a contributing factor to the diminishing student etiquette in TAFE institutes. By focusing on the profit and loss of the institutions, staff have become more diversified and less focused on students'	students or clients



Question	TAFE	AB	Key Issue	TAFE	MN	Key Issue
		their smart phones than being a client gaining experience: who is at fault here?			learning outcomes. Cost cutting has resulted in the 'dumbing down' of the curriculum, and has increased the appointment of less-experienced and lower paid staff.	

Q3: How have changes affected the day to day activities of VET practitioners?						
	AB8	The changes made as a result of new government policies, the implementation of the AQTF, internal management changes and the growth of a more multicultural student body have all contributed to an increase in the workloads VET practitioners. Issues arising from compliance needs are most prominent amongst the day-to-day activities of VET practitioners; these needs result directly as a result of senior management responses related to training packages that flow, via middle management, to frontline classroom staff.	Management	MN8	The changes in day-to-day activities arise from a number of factors: changes in management style, lack of clarity in terminologies used in the industry, multiskilling needs, and changes in student attitudes and to government policy changes. Management is now more focused on the operational profit and loss of the centre and has shifted its focus away from students' learning outcomes. Management is driven by cost cutting to the extent that they are willing to forego the experience of more expensive staff; instead, they are hiring to hire young, inexperienced and lower-cost staff.	Management
	AB9	Compliance has affected the development of new and innovative teaching and learning resources. Additional administrative activities are required to ensure that teaching and learning resources are identified accordingly to new resource packages. Monitoring all students' learning journey in VET has increased the amount of administrative work required. This has created an imbalance in time allocation to activities: teachers argue that there is more work put into compliance than there is work put into resource development.	Increased administration work	MN9	The many changes in government policies relating to the upgrading of training packages have contributed to an increase in the administrative work needed to be performed by teachers. This increase in administration work has adversely affected the development of teaching and learning resources; some would argue It has completely removed the time previously available for resource development.	Increased administration work
	AB10	Staff are feeling very nervous about their employment status; this is a direct result of the pressure being placed on the staff to be more productive: there is more pressure for staff to be multi skilled, to gain tertiary qualifications, to understand the different changes in the training packages and to deal with the increasing diversity in students.	Multiskilling	MN10	The institute, with its lack of clarity on industry standards, has contributed to a more confused focus in training students to the level Is required by the hospitality industry. There is also a lack of clarity in the roles that teachers are required fill in TAFE: there is a significant growth in the need for counselling skills over teaching skills. Students expect to have teachers who listen to, and understand their needs; as a consequence, teachers need to be subject experts as well as expertise in counselling. There is confusion over which one of these should be given greater priority.	Multi-tasking



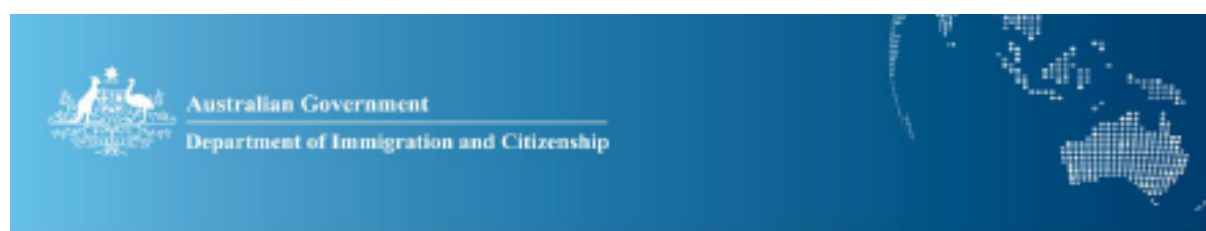
Question	TAFE	AB	Key Issue	TAFE	MN	Key Issue
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Q4: What power relationships have emerged between administrators, staff and students?						
	AB12	With the corporatisation of vocational institutions and the quest for <b>profitability</b> , centre managers now, more than ever, have a great responsibility to ensure that their centres operate at a profit. With this new responsibility, centre managers have become more self-reliant and powerful; this, in turn, has contributed to a decrease of cohesion within the centre and a loss of motivation and morale amongst the staff.	<b>Profitability</b>	MN11	It seems with the new focus of the institution being directed towards the <b>financial survival</b> in an increasing competitive environment, there is a number changes in the power relationships between the administrators (managers), teachers and students.	<b>Financial survival</b>
	AB13	The introduction of the <b>client</b> and service provider model has resulted in changing roles within the Vocational Education and Training institutions. Instructors do not have the influence they had when they were teachers rather than service providers. Students did not have the power they do now as the client to challenge both instructors and, sometimes, administrators. These power relationship shifts have resulted in a loss of cohesion amongst instructors and managers, students and instructors, and instructors and the institution.	<b>Clients</b>	MN12	Now that students have the awareness and understanding that they are the <b>clients</b> and teachers are there as deliverers their learning, the respect of students towards their teachers is constantly is diminishing. Students will not hesitate to voice their concern if they believe the teacher delivering their learning may not have the adequate knowledge or skills. Some students having knowledge of how the Vocational Education and Training system operates will manipulate the system in order to get the results or outcomes they believe they are entitled to.	<b>Clients</b>
	AB14	Some staff argue that profitability has now taken precedence over the quality of teaching and learning in the Vocational Education and Training industry. The changes in education policies have also contributed negatively to the quality of education in VET, because policies are created with a political <b>agenda in mind</b> ; in particular, it is the opinion of many staff this political agenda does not include quality of educational outcomes for the students in VET.	<b>Hidden agenda</b>	MN13	Centre managers are put under enormous pressure to perform; they now are responsible for the financial viability of their respective centres – for their operational profit and loss. This new responsibility has shifted some centre managers' style of management, communication and leadership. Some staff believe the style of management has changed to a <b>centralised style</b> of management; communication is a one-way flow; the leadership style is autocratic and is without transparency.	<b>Centralised</b>

Question	TAFE	AB	Key Issue	TAFE	MN	Key Issue
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Q5 What leadership skills are required to lead in this culture of change?						
	AB15	With the numerous changes in our national education system and the ever decreasing number of students in our Vocational Education and Training sector, both local and international students are now being enrolled. There is tremendous pressure for administrative level staff to perform well financially; unfortunately, this pressure is also being felt by all levels of staff without <b>fully understanding</b> what that pressure is or how they can contribute to its alleviation. This in turn has led to a decreased level of morale and motivation within the perspective centres.	Understanding	MN14	Whether it is situational or transformational leadership Is required in times of change, the one thing that stands out clearly is the need to communicate clearly and effectively. Centre managers and teachers alike need to <b>understand what the changes are</b> and how they need to be implemented, in order to have a full understanding of what the effects are after the change.	Understanding
	AB16	There is a need to know who are the institution's stakeholders in these times of change; a need to fully <b>understand the environment</b> in which one is to lead. The best way to carry this out is to be amongst the environment and the community of staff one is leading; by understanding the environment of changes and the community of staff, it is possible to form a holistic view of what is required to lead in these times of change.	Understanding the environment	MN15	Situational leadership requires all centre managers and teachers to <b>understand what changes</b> are taking place, communicate these changes throughout the centre in order to come to one consensus of what these changes mean to the centre as a whole. In the classroom teachers need to adapt the changing characteristics of their clients (students) and provide individualistic attention to achieve a positive learning outcome.	Understanding the changes
	AB17	To lead in a culture of change one must be flexible and adaptive to the situation at hand. Through the use of <b>open communication</b> one can begin to build a team of people who are also willing to adapt and be part of the process of change in their perspective centres. Staff want to belong but they will find it hard to belong if there is no <b>transparency</b> once transparency is established, staff will become more creative and innovative members of a team.	Open communication	MN16	<b>Good communication</b> skills are essential in times of change; especially, when they are needed to inform all stakeholders of what the changes are and how these changes affect them: this is an essential element for the best management of change. <b>Good communication</b> can overcome confusion and lead to an increase in individual productivity and success. <b>Transparency</b> , assisted by good communication in times of change, will be the key driver in any institution's quest to survive in the present and succeed in the future.	Communication and transparency
	AB18	To truly <b>transform</b> the staff to meet the needs of changes and reforms, some have highlighted the merits of a servant and a community model leadership style.	Transformation	MN17	<b>Transformational</b> leadership requires empathy, guidance, support and the utilisation of external expertise to ensure the training delivered is current and relevant to the industry. Empathy for managers can come in the form of a balanced approach when dealing with students and teachers. Allocating staff in the area of their expertise can also help transform and maintain individual's skills and knowledge, by providing Professional development and job security. Empathy for the teachers comes in the form of pastoral care to deal with the student's individual problems.	Transformation

## Appendix 3:



### Annual Update of Skilled Occupation List - 1 July 2012

#### The Skilled Occupation List (SOL)

The Skilled Occupation List (SOL) will change from 1 July 2012, with four occupations to be added to the list and four occupations to be removed. The SOL determines which occupations are eligible for independent and family sponsored skilled migration.

The updated SOL is based on expert advice from the independent body, Skills Australia. The list of occupations reflects the Australian Government's commitment to a skilled migration program that delivers skills in need in Australia. The SOL will continue to deliver a skilled migration program tightly focused on high value skills that will assist in addressing Australia's future skills needs.

#### Visa applications that will be affected by the updated SOL

The updated SOL will apply to all new independent (unsponsored) and family sponsored skilled migration applications lodged on or after 1 July 2012 unless they are from applicants eligible for transitional arrangements.\* Applications lodged before 1 July 2012 with a nominated occupation that is no longer on the SOL in effect from 1 July 2012 will continue to be processed. Priority processing arrangements may however change for certain applicants according to the Ministerial Direction on priority processing.

#### Summary of changes to the SOL

The following changes have been applied to the SOL.

##### Additions to the SOL

133513	Production Manager (Mining)
234912	Metallurgist
251411	Optometrist
263111	Computer Network and Systems Engineer

##### Removals from the SOL

234211	Chemist
252711	Audiologist
331111	Bricklayer
333411	Wall and Floor Tiler

\* The update of the SOL will not apply to applicants eligible for transitional arrangements which allow anyone who either held or had applied for a Skilled – Graduate (Subclass 485) visa on or before 8 February 2010 to apply for a permanent skilled migration visa on the basis of the SOL in effect on 8 February 2010.

Transitional arrangements also allow anyone who held a qualifying Student visa on 8 February 2010 to apply for a Temporary Skilled – Graduate (Subclass 485) visa on the basis of the SOL in effect on 8 February 2010. These transitional arrangements are in place until 31 December 2012.

### Occupations on the SOL (Schedule 1) from 1 July 2012

The updated SOL comprises 192 high value occupations, as listed below.

133111	Construction Project Manager
133112	Project Builder
133211	Engineering Manager
133513	Production Manager (Mining)
134111	Child Care Centre Manager
134211	Medical Administrator
134212	Nursing Clinical Director
134213	Primary Health Organisation Manager
134214	Welfare Centre Manager
221111	Accountant (General)
221112	Management Accountant
221113	Taxation Accountant
221213	External Auditor
221214	Internal Auditor
224111	Actuary
224511	Land Economist
224512	Valuer
231212	Ship's Engineer
231213	Ship's Master
231214	Ship's Officer
232111	Architect
232112	Landscape Architect
232213	Cartographer
232214	Other Spatial Scientist
232212	Surveyor
232611	Urban and Regional Planner
233111	Chemical Engineer
233112	Materials Engineer
233211	Civil Engineer
233212	Geotechnical Engineer
233213	Quantity Surveyor
233214	Structural Engineer
233215	Transport Engineer
233311	Electrical Engineer
233411	Electronics Engineer
233511	Industrial Engineer
233512	Mechanical Engineer
233513	Production or Plant Engineer
233611	Mining Engineer (Excluding Petroleum)
233612	Petroleum Engineer
233911	Aeronautical Engineer
233912	Agricultural Engineer
233913	Biomedical Engineer
233914	Engineering Technologist
233915	Environmental Engineer
233916	Naval Architect
234111	Agricultural Consultant

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234112	Agricultural Scientist
234113	Forester
234611	Medical Laboratory Scientist
234711	Veterinarian
234912	Metallurgist
234914	Physicist (Medical Physicist only)
241111	Early Childhood (Pre-Primary School) Teacher
241411	Secondary School Teacher
241511	Special Needs Teacher
241512	Teacher of the Hearing Impaired
241513	Teacher of the Sight Impaired
241599	Special Education Teachers nec
251211	Medical Diagnostic Radiographer
251212	Medical Radiation Therapist
251213	Nuclear Medicine Technologist
251214	Sonographer
251311	Environmental Health Officer
251312	Occupational Health and Safety Advisor
251411	Optometrist
251511	Hospital Pharmacist
251513	Retail Pharmacist
252111	Chiropractor
252112	Osteopath
252311	Dental Specialist
252312	Dentist
252411	Occupational Therapist
252511	Physiotherapist
252611	Podiatrist
252712	Speech Pathologist
253111	General Medical Practitioner
253211	Anaesthetist
253311	Specialist Physician (General Medicine)
253312	Cardiologist
253313	Clinical Haematologist
253314	Medical Oncologist
253315	Endocrinologist
253316	Gastroenterologist
253317	Intensive Care Specialist
253318	Neurologist
253321	Paediatrician
253322	Renal Medicine Specialist
253323	Rheumatologist
253324	Thoracic Medicine Specialist
253399	Specialist Physicians nec
253411	Psychiatrist
253511	Surgeon (General)
253512	Cardiothoracic Surgeon
253513	Neurosurgeon
253514	Orthopaedic Surgeon
253515	Otorhinolaryngologist

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253516	Paediatric Surgeon
253517	Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon
253518	Urologist
253521	Vascular Surgeon
253911	Dermatologist
253912	Emergency Medicine Specialist
253913	Obstetrician and Gynaecologist
253914	Ophthalmologist
253915	Pathologist
253917	Diagnostic and Interventional Radiologist
253918	Radiation Oncologist
253999	Medical Practitioners nec
254111	Midwife
254411	Nurse Practitioner
254412	Registered Nurse (Aged Care)
254413	Registered Nurse (Child and Family Health)
254414	Registered Nurse (Community Health)
254415	Registered Nurse (Critical Care and Emergency)
254416	Registered Nurse (Development Disability)
254417	Registered Nurse (Disability and Rehabilitation)
254418	Registered Nurse (Medical)
254421	Registered Nurse (Medical Practice)
254422	Registered Nurse (Mental Health)
254423	Registered Nurse (Perioperative)
254424	Registered Nurse (Surgical)
254499	Registered Nurse nec
261111	ICT business Analyst
261112	Systems Analyst
261311	Analyst Programmer
261312	Developer Programmer
261313	Software Engineer
263111	Computer Network and Systems Engineer
263311	Telecommunications Engineer
263312	Telecommunications Network Engineer
271111	Barrister
271311	Solicitor
272311	Clinical Psychologist
272312	Educational Psychologist
272313	Organisational Psychologist
272314	Psychotherapist
272399	Psychologists nec
272511	Social Worker
312211	Civil Engineering Draftsperson
312212	Civil Engineering Technician
312311	Electrical Engineering Draftsperson
312312	Electrical Engineering Technician
313211	Radio Communications Technician
313212	Telecommunications Field Engineer
313213	Telecommunications Network Planner
313214	Telecommunications Technical Officer or Technologist

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321111	Automotive Electrician
321211	Motor Mechanic (General)
321212	Diesel Motor Mechanic
321213	Motorcycle Mechanic
321214	Small Engine Mechanic
322211	Sheetmetal Trades Worker
322311	Metal Fabricator
322312	Pressure Welder
322313	Welder (First Class)
323111	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Avionics)
323112	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Mechanical)
323113	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Structures)
323211	Fitter (General)
323212	Fitter and Turner
323213	Fitter-Welder
323214	Metal Machinist (First Class)
323313	Locksmith
331112	Stonemason
331211	Carpenter and Joiner
331212	Carpenter
331213	Joiner
332211	Painting trades workers
333111	Glazier
333211	Fibrous Plasterer
333212	Solid Plasterer
334111	Plumber (General)
334112	Airconditioning and Mechanical Services Plumber
334113	Drainer
334114	Gasfitter
334115	Roof plumber
341111	Electrician (General)
341112	Electrician (Special Class)
341113	Lift Mechanic
342111	Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic
342211	Electrical Linesworker
342212	Technical Cable Jointer
342313	Electronic Equipment Trades Worker
342314	Electronic Instrument Trades Worker (General)
342315	Electronic Instrument Trades Worker (Special Class)
399111	Boat Builder and Repairer
399112	Shipwright
411211	Dental Hygienist
411212	Dental Prosthetist
411213	Dental Technician
11214	Dental Therapist

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**Appendix 4:****Annual Update of Skilled Occupation List - 1 July 2013  
Professionals and Other Skilled Migrants****The Skilled Occupation List**

The Skilled Occupation List (SOL) will change from 1 July 2013, with five occupations to be removed. The SOL determines which occupations are eligible for independent and family sponsored skilled migration.

The updated SOL is based on expert advice from the Australian Work force Productivity Agency (previously known as Skills Australia). The list of occupations reflects the Australian Government's commitment to a skilled migration program that delivers skills in need in Australia. The SOL will continue to deliver a skilled migration program focused on high value skills that will help to address Australia's future skill needs.

**Summary of changes to the SOL**

The following changes have been applied to the SOL.

**Occupations removed from the SOL**

<b>ANZSCO Code</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
251511	Hospital Pharmacist
251513	Retail Pharmacist
323111	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Avionics)
323112	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Mechanical)
323113	Aircraft Maintenance Engineer (Structures)

**Occupations on the SOL from 1 July 2013**

<b>ANZSCO Code</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
133111	Construction Project Manager
133112	Project Builder
133211	Engineering Manager
133513	Production Manager (Mining)
134111	Child Care Centre Manager
134211	Medical Administrator
134212	Nursing Clinical Director
134213	Primary Health Organisation Manager
134214	Welfare Centre Manager
221111	Accountant (General)
221112	Management Accountant
221113	Taxation Accountant
221213	External Auditor
221214	Internal Auditor
224111	Actuary
224511	Land Economist



## Appendices

224512	Valuer
231212	Ship's Engineer
231213	Ship's Master
231214	Ship's Officer
232111	Architect
232112	Landscape Architect
232213	Cartographer
232214	Other Spatial Scientist
232212	Surveyor
232611	Urban and Regional Planner
233111	Chemical Engineer
233112	Materials Engineer
233211	Civil Engineer
233212	Geotechnical Engineer
233213	Quantity Surveyor
233214	Structural Engineer
233215	Transport Engineer
233311	Electrical Engineer
233411	Electronics Engineer
233511	Industrial Engineer
233512	Mechanical Engineer
233513	Production or Plant Engineer
233611	Mining Engineer (Excluding Petroleum)
233612	Petroleum Engineer
233911	Aeronautical Engineer
233912	Agricultural Engineer
233913	Biomedical Engineer
233914	Engineering Technologist
233915	Environmental Engineer
233916	Naval Architect
234111	Agricultural Consultant
234112	Agricultural Scientist
234113	Forester
234611	Medical Laboratory Scientist
234711	Veterinarian
234912	Metallurgist
234914	Physicist (Medical Physicist only)
241111	Early Childhood (Pre-Primary School) Teacher
241411	Secondary School Teacher
241511	Special Needs Teacher
241512	Teacher of the Hearing Impaired
241513	Teacher of the Sight Impaired
241599	Special Education Teachers nec
251211	Medical Diagnostic Radiographer
251212	Medical Radiation Therapist
251213	Nuclear Medicine Technologist
251214	Sonographer
251311	Environmental Health Officer
251312	Occupational Health and Safety Advisor
251411	Optometrist
252111	Chiropractor
252112	Osteopath
252311	Dental Specialist
252312	Dentist

## Appendices

252411	Occupational Therapist
252511	Physiotherapist
252611	Podiatrist
252712	Speech Pathologist
253111	General Medical Practitioner
253211	Anaesthetist
253311	Specialist Physician (General Medicine)
253312	Cardiologist
253313	Clinical Haematologist
253314	Medical Oncologist
253315	Endocrinologist
253316	Gastroenterologist
253317	Intensive Care Specialist
253318	Neurologist
253321	Paediatrician
253322	Renal Medicine Specialist
253323	Rheumatologist
253324	Thoracic Medicine Specialist
253399	Specialist Physicians nec
253411	Psychiatrist
253511	Surgeon (General)
253512	Cardiothoracic Surgeon
253513	Neurosurgeon
253514	Orthopaedic Surgeon
253515	Otorhinolaryngologist
253516	Paediatric Surgeon
253517	Plastic and Reconstructive Surgeon
253518	Urologist
253521	Vascular Surgeon
253911	Dermatologist
253912	Emergency Medicine Specialist
253913	Obstetrician and Gynaecologist
253914	Ophthalmologist
253915	Pathologist
253917	Diagnostic and Interventional Radiologist
253918	Radiation Oncologist
253999	Medical Practitioners nec
254111	Midwife
254411	Nurse Practitioner
254412	Registered Nurse (Aged Care)
254413	Registered Nurse (Child and Family Health)
254414	Registered Nurse (Community Health)
254415	Registered Nurse (Critical Care and Emergency)
254416	Registered Nurse (Development Disability)
254417	Registered Nurse (Disability and Rehabilitation)
254418	Registered Nurse (Medical)
254421	Registered Nurse (Medical Practice)
254422	Registered Nurse (Mental Health)
254423	Registered Nurse (Perioperative)
254424	Registered Nurse (Surgical)
254425	Registered Nurse (Paediatric)
254499	Registered Nurse nec
261111	ICT business Analyst
261112	Systems Analyst

## Appendices

261311	Analyst Programmer
261312	Developer Programmer
261313	Software Engineer
263111	Computer Network and Systems Engineer
263311	Telecommunications Engineer
263312	Telecommunications Network Engineer
271111	Barrister
271311	Solicitor
272311	Clinical Psychologist
272312	Educational Psychologist
272313	Organisational Psychologist
272314	Psychotherapist
272399	Psychologists nec
272511	Social Worker
312211	Civil Engineering Draftsperson
312212	Civil Engineering Technician
312311	Electrical Engineering Draftsperson
312312	Electrical Engineering Technician
313211	Radio Communications Technician
313212	Telecommunications Field Engineer
313213	Telecommunications Network Planner
313214	Telecommunications Technical Officer or Technologist
321111	Automotive Electrician
321211	Motor Mechanic (General)
321212	Diesel Motor Mechanic
321213	Motorcycle Mechanic
321214	Small Engine Mechanic
322211	Sheetmetal Trades Worker
322311	Metal Fabricator
322312	Pressure Welder
322313	Welder (First Class)
323211	Fitter (General)
323212	Fitter and Turner
323213	Fitter-Welder
323214	Metal Machinist (First Class)
323313	Locksmith
331112	Stonemason
331211	Carpenter and Joiner
331212	Carpenter
331213	Joiner
332211	Painting trades workers
333111	Glazier
333211	Fibrous Plasterer
333212	Solid Plasterer
334111	Plumber (General)
334112	Airconditioning and Mechanical Services Plumber
334113	Drainer
334114	Gasfitter
334115	Roof plumber
341111	Electrician (General)
341112	Electrician (Special Class)
341113	Lift Mechanic
342111	Airconditioning and Refrigeration Mechanic
342211	Electrical Linesworker

## *Appendices*

342212	Technical Cable Jointer
342313	Electronic Equipment Trades Worker
342314	Electronic Instrument Trades Worker (General)
342315	Electronic Instrument Trades Worker (Special Class)
399111	Boat Builder and Repairer
399112	Shipwright
411211	Dental Hygienist
411212	Dental Prosthetist
411213	Dental Technician
411214	Dental Therapist

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