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Enhancing the capability of VET professionals project:

Final report

(incorporating Data analysis and Literature review)
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1. Executive summary
1.1 Background

This report summarises the findings of research and analysis on the current VET workforce in Australia, the likely workforce required for the VET sector in the future and trends in human resource development and management and workforce planning in Australia and overseas, both in the VET sector and other relevant industries. It also suggests a series of strategic directions for future national activity in workforce development and planning.

This project was established to 'support ANTA, State and Territory Training Authorities and other VET stakeholders to anticipate professional workforce training, development and management needs over the next five to ten years, for VET and the VET professional'.

The research was undertaken for a project entitled 'Enhancing the Capability of VET Professionals', managed by the Australian National Training Authority and overseen by a steering committee that included representatives of all jurisdictions and all VET sectors.

Implementation of the project included extensive consultation with States and Territories, RTOs and representative organisations; in-depth interviews with key informants in Australia, Europe, the UK and USA; workshops; review and analysis of available data on the current VET workforce; and an extensive review of research and policy literature relevant to workforce planning and development and to the future of the VET sector (the Literature Review component of this project is available as a separate report).

1.2 Workforce of the future

Current workforce

The search for reliable data about the profile and performance of the current VET workforce was disappointing, with data collection patchy and inconsistent across States, Territories, registered training organisations and national research centres. There is a lot of data available but it is neither collected nor organised in a nationally consistent or usable way. The first challenge for future strategies is to build a reliable national profile of the VET workforce and to establish mechanisms for this profile to be kept up-to-date. Refer to Section 3 for further comment on data collection issues and requirements.

What is known about the current VET workforce has been drawn primarily from quantitative sources. It describes a workforce characterised by – increasing casualisation; where a core-periphery model is evident (i.e. where a significant group of part-time/casual/sessional staff are supervised by and managed by a smaller group of full-time, highly skilled staff who work long hours); where work has intensified; where there are decreasing levels of job satisfaction; where a career in VET is not necessarily seen as being for life; where the workforce is ageing; where employees are expected to have a broader range of content and skills; and where the nature of learning has changed to a focus on work-based, informal learning in groups and teams.
determined at a national level, through advice provided by Industry Skills Councils. There is considerable national investment in research, and VET funding also has a substantial national dimension. In addition, there has been a long history of workforce development activity that has made a positive contribution at the national level, through initiatives like Reframing the Future and The Australian Flexible Learning Framework. These factors argue strongly for a national collaborative approach to workforce development and planning.

The scope of the national approach is, by agreement, limited to VET professionals working with RTOs, regardless of their mode of employment, who are involved:

- directly in the delivery of teaching, training and/or assessment programs (i.e. VET practitioners)
- in providing leadership, management and support for teaching, training and assessment activities.

In addition, the national approach applies to staff working in RTOs across sectors, including public, private, enterprise and community-based RTOs.

State and Territory jurisdictions and individual RTOs bear all the responsibility of employers in the VET system. However, there is broad agreement that national action would add value to the work of VET employers in three key areas:

1. **Workforce development and professional practice** – developing the skills and capabilities of VET professionals and improving and sharing good professional practice.
2. **Workforce capability**– supporting jurisdictions to develop high-performing organisations that can deliver against the agreed objectives of the national strategy and meet client needs and expectations.
3. **Workforce data** – developing the data and evidence bases to support State, Territory and RTO planning and to guide national strategic direction.

These are considered in turn and are followed by comment on possible national governance arrangements that, in the view of the consultants, would support a national approach to the VET workforce.

### 1.4 Workforce development and professional practice

These two elements are discussed separately.

**Workforce development**

Workforce development describes those activities which increase the capacity of individuals to participate in the workforce throughout their whole working life and which increase the capacity of firms to adopt high-performance work practices that support their employees to develop the full range of their potential skills and value.
The future VET workforce

Predicting future VET workforce requirements is challenging, although there appears to be considerable consensus about the environment in which VET professionals will work in the future – an environment characterised by increasing diversity in the client base; increasing sophistication in client expectations; change in products and expansion of options for training delivery; changes in employment, work roles, team structures and places of work; increasing competition and increasing demand; and globalisation of the training market.

This environment indicates that future VET professionals will require an extensive range of capabilities and an increasingly sophisticated mix of generic, professional and leadership skills.

The Australian VET system and the industries it serves will have many of the same challenges when recruiting, training and retaining staff, namely skills shortages of people with industry and technical expertise as well as leadership skills; retirement of a significant portion of its current workforce; and the special requirement for practitioners with a mix of pedagogical expertise and industry currency.

Research would suggest that employers in the VET system are likely to be trying to attract and retain staff who are – knowledge workers or leaders of knowledge work; industry experts often without existing skills, experience and training in education and training; highly flexible, mobile and accustomed to working in a wide range of settings; from older age groups and diminishing cohorts of young people; more difficult to attract and retain because of a competitive employment market and because of the current lack of a high-status brand of VET in the community; and who will articulate higher expectations of their employers.

The gap between current profile and future requirements provides some directions for workforce development and planning. But it is not a simple question of gap analysis – the Australian VET system also has a vision of a high-performance VET workforce that can deliver the strategic outcomes articulated in Shaping our Future: the National Strategy for VET 2004–2010.

1.3 A national approach

While there is no universal agreement, there is an emerging consensus that national action on workforce planning and development is appropriate when there is a public interest or public good at stake, as for example in the health sector. It is also valuable when there are opportunities for economies of scale, when national action can address key issues like skill or labour shortages, when development issues can be effectively addressed through national collaboration and when there is a need to consider the entire workforce across both public and private sector, as for example, in the VET sector.

While many aspects are determined and managed at a State, Territory or RTO level, the Australian VET system operates nationally, guided by a long-term national strategy. The products and services VET delivers are determined at a national level (for example nationally recognised qualifications and Training Packages), and industry and client needs are also...
determined at a national level, through advice provided by Industry Skills Councils. There is considerable national investment in research, and VET funding also has a substantial national dimension. In addition, there has been a long history of workforce development activity that has made a positive contribution at the national level, through initiatives like Reframing the Future and The Australian Flexible Learning Framework. These factors argue strongly for a national collaborative approach to workforce development and planning.

The scope of the national approach is, by agreement, limited to VET professionals working with RTOs, regardless of their mode of employment, who are involved:

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Workforce development describes those activities which increase the capacity of individuals to participate in the workforce throughout their whole working life and which increase the capacity of firms to adopt high-performance work practices that support their employees to develop the full range of their potential skills and value.
Existing take-up of workforce development strategies

To date, workforce development investment has been greatest in individual capability and skills development – at the employer level, through RTOs, States and Territories, nationally through programs such as Reframing the Future and the Australian Flexible Learning Framework and by individual VET professionals – and examples of creative and innovative approaches to workforce development are to be found across the system. Further, workforce development to date has focused most heavily on teaching staff, those in full-time roles, and on leaders and managers, with more recent emphasis on strategic and change management skills and knowledge work. In addition, government sponsored programs have been more heavily subscribed by public RTOs than by private providers, enterprises and community-based RTOs.

Despite this, evidence indicates that the VET system has under-invested in human capital – spending less than half the level of other high-performing industries and organisations – and that demand for funding for workforce development initiatives consistently outstrips supply of resources.

Emerging workforce skills and capabilities

The research for this project identified the following workforce skill and capability requirements for the near future:

- A broader range of skills for all VET practitioners, leaders and managers and support staff, such as:
  - ability to adapt to change and cope with uncertainty
  - client-focus skills
  - management and leadership capabilities
  - coaching, mentoring and networking skills
  - information and communication technologies (ITC)
  - knowledge work capabilities, i.e. the ability to access, create and use knowledge to add value to the business they are in.

- Also, the need for all staff to:
  - continuously upgrade their skills and knowledge
  - self-manage their own careers and development as they move across RTOs and within industry
  - accommodate identity shifts as they move across roles and organisations
  - learn to work in teams, across organisations and within networks
  - be prepared for more fragmented and specialised roles, such as in assessment.

and more specifically:

- For those directly involved in delivery – pedagogical expertise, learner focus and industry currency knowledge and skills.
For managers and leaders – transformative leadership which is the ability to build and communicate a vision and lead staff.

For support staff – the skills to become more directly involved in delivery and the greater capacity to work with clients.

**Suggested directions**

A national approach should build on what has already been achieved, and support workforce development initiatives at all levels. The following national approaches are suggested.

- **Continue to provide a coordination and knowledge-sharing function** to enable RTOs, individuals and jurisdictions to share good practice.

- **Continue to broaden engagement and participation**, including among part-time, casual and sessional staff, support staff, and staff of non-TAFE RTOs.

- **Increase investment in workforce development initiatives**, based on a quantitative and qualitative understanding of capability requirements and development needs.

- **Prioritise investment** according to where it is most needed.

- **Measure returns on investment in development initiatives**, for individuals, teams, RTOs, clients and the VET system.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations for workforce development focus on investing in initiatives to promote, facilitate and measure the impact of good practice and on options for maximising the return on investment from existing national workforce development initiatives.

**Professional practice**

Professional practice includes expert knowledge of the field, a deep understanding of underlying principles, accumulated experience in the practice of the profession, a familiarity with recent advances in the professional knowledge base, and mastery of the best available techniques and tools.

Investment in the professional standing and practice of VET practitioners will have a direct impact on the status of VET more broadly. If VET is widely perceived to be comparable to other sectors that require high standards of professional practice, this will improve the competitive standing of VET providers and increase client confidence. Importantly, it will also reinforce the pride and commitment of those currently working in VET, and help to attract new staff to a highly valued, high-status industry.

It is acknowledged that many VET professionals are members of other established professions, such as accounting, marketing and engineering and that many view their professional identity as independent of their role within the VET sector. These professionals who are primarily operating as members of a recognised profession are excluded from this discussion.
The report discusses how high standards of professional practice among VET practitioners - those directly involved in teaching, training and/or assessment - can best be achieved in the VET system in the context of workforce strategies. Research has shown that most VET practitioners have a dual identity - that of VET industry professional and educational professional. In this context, professional practice is about the achievement of high standards of educational practice that are matched by high standards of industry practice and currency.

The report goes on to discuss whether VET practitioners should be seen as members of a unique profession, in much the same way that school teachers and nurses are, but advises against the usefulness of this approach on the basis of the practice and diversity of VET teaching roles, the identity and desires of VET practitioners themselves, and issues such as eligibility for such a profession.

Rather, it suggests focusing on high-quality professional practice among VET practitioners and putting more emphasis on workforce development rather than professional membership in its own right.

**Suggested directions**

The following activities are suggested as part of a national approach to add value to professional practice within the VET sector:

- Capturing good professional practice in such a way that examples of good practice can be more widely shared.

- Identifying skills for key roles by drawing on research to develop a set of broad capabilities for key roles - such as novice, expert and master teacher/trainer, industry professional, manager and leader, and support staff - and guidance about how they might be used by professionals, practitioners, providers and industry.

- Reviewing relevance of university qualifications in teaching, focusing in particular on course content, effectiveness and standing of university qualifications, RPL mechanisms, articulation issues, and feasibility of establishing national consistency.

- Exploring standards, including initiatives across jurisdictions relating to professional standards, ethics and principles for VET practitioners; and identifying whether additional action is needed at a national level, for example to develop an agreed set of ethics and principles for VET practitioners.

- Exploring professional associations, including options for optimising the support and guidance for VET practitioners of the sort that are usually offered by a professional association.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations relate to convening an expert working group to undertake research, consult and advise on capturing good professional practice, skills for key roles, qualifications, standards and professional associations.
1.5 Organisational capability

Organisational capability is defined as the ability of an organisation to effectively meet its business objectives. The factors that contribute to capable organisations include the organisational culture and values, business processes and management systems, work organisation and the capability of individual employees.

In order to respond to the expectations of industry and other clients and to deliver on the agreed priorities outlined in Shaping our Future: the National Strategy for VET 2004-2010, the VET sector needs highly skilled VET professionals who are working in high-performing VET organisations.

Responsibility for the development of organisational (RTO) capability clearly lies with individual jurisdictions; to add value, national activity has to be designed to support jurisdictions in both the way they choose to work with RTOs and in the focus of that developmental activity.

High-performing VET organisations require managers and leaders who are skilled in traditional management; but they also need people who can respond effectively to changes in their environment, articulate a vision and motivate staff to achieve it. Progressive RTOs are taking more business-like approaches to the challenges presented by increasing competition, changing client expectations and meeting the demands of flexible delivery and Training Packages. They have also identified value in sharing information and best practice on issues like leadership, recruitment, retention and succession planning, approaches to remuneration and performance management.

Suggested directions

While developing and implementing effective workforce management strategies is clearly the responsibility of individual providers and State and Territory governments, there are certain activities that could usefully be carried out at a national level, both to achieve economies of scale and to provide more effective support to managers and leaders. These include:

- ** Continued national investment** in:
  - developing VET leaders and managers, including through strategic and change management and leadership development initiatives
  - seed funding, benchmarking, piloting new approaches, and clustering to develop leaders and managers and support strategic HRD.

- **National research, investigation and dissemination of information** on:
  - current HRD practice in RTOs and outside VET, including new trends and best practice approaches to managing sessional and casual staff
  - best practice models for specialised service delivery in VET and other sectors
  - new organisational models and structures in partnership with relevant national unions
  - best practice models and tools for measuring the impact of investment in workforce development at the RTO level on organisational performance and client satisfaction.
Recommendations

Recommendations for the development of organisational capability focus on increased research and investment in management and leadership capability, new programs for organisational development and development of research-driven models and measures for organisational performance.

1.6 Workforce data

Initiatives in workforce development, professional practice and organisational capability focus on the skills of individuals and organisations and are designed to improve the capability of these individuals and organisations. Such initiatives need to be supported by a good baseline data about the current capabilities and development needs of VET professionals and RTOs.

In addition, a consistent, accepted evidence base is required to inform planning and strategy development in relation to workforce capacity – the supply of workforce numbers and likely workforce demand. Lack of reliable data limits the capacity of the VET sector to plan effectively for workforce development or to ensure that the required numbers of people are available in the future.

Current arrangements

In recent years, several national reports have been produced on the issue of VET data collection. Findings noted that:

- one important area that is poorly served is data on the national VET workforce
- only two workforce fields are collected on a consistent basis, namely age and sex
- there are no consistent definitions of core concepts such as teacher and employee
- when information is collected through different mechanisms, there is a large disparity in such areas as numbers employed, employment status information, the qualifications of professionals and so on.

A regular national data collection

A regular national collection would help identify VET skill shortages and gaps and therefore contribute to satisfying future demand. It would also inform state training authority budgets on the allocation and expenditure of labour costs, which are estimated to be 68% of those budgets. A national collection would:

- inform understanding of flows in and out of the workforce, which would be a necessary platform for developing any workforce projections
- enable national or jurisdiction-specific needs to be identified, projected, planned for and addressed on a timely basis
enable national or jurisdiction-specific initiatives in workforce development or organisational capability to be monitored and evaluated

provide a benchmark for individual RTOs and jurisdictions to assess their profile against that of greater aggregates (e.g. type of provider).

Other data requirements include workforce projections, the need for a qualitative profile of VET professionals to inform initiatives designed to improve workforce satisfaction and retention, and research to identify the pool of professionals who would be attracted to the VET sector.

There is no question that a large amount of data exists on the VET workforce. This is mostly held by the human resource management systems of RTOs, but this information varies considerably in its detail and sophistication. The issue is not the lack of available data but the mechanism by which the data is compiled. In order to collect, analyse and disseminate reliable national data, there needs first to be national agreement on appropriate methodologies – what data needs to be collected, by whom, how often, in what form, approaches to analysis and synthesis.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations about workforce data and planning focus on working through existing national structures, including the National Training Statistics Committee (NTSC), to identify priorities for collecting both quantitative and qualitative data and to develop the base of evidence that can inform decisions on workforce planning.

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**1.7 Governance**

If there is national agreement to a national workforce development program that has both substance and long-term significance, it will need to be supported by a national governance structure that takes responsibility for coordinating national activity; guiding collaboration between States, Territories, the Australian Government and its agencies and individual RTOs; prioritising national investment in workforce development and related data collection and research; convening expert working parties; and evaluating the outcomes of the program and the impact of national investment.

**Recommendations**

Recommendations about governance focus on the establishment of a committee of the ANTA CEOs Committee, chaired by a member of the CEOs committee and including as members, senior representatives of ANTA, the Australian Government, NCVER and TAFE, private, enterprise and community-based RTOs.

The new national governance structure will also, as a matter of priority, consider identifying sources of funding and options for national data collection.
2. Report
2.1 Introduction

This national project was designed to 'support ANTA, State and Territory Training Authorities and other VET stakeholders to anticipate professional workforce training, development and management needs over the next five to ten years, for VET and the VET professional'. The brief specified that the project would 'collect and consolidate relevant national and international research and best practice information on human resource development and management appropriate to the Australian VET sector and the management of the future VET professional workforce' in order to answer questions about the profile of VET professionals, how they are currently managed as a professional workforce and how they could be managed and supported in the future.

In the last two decades, Australia has made a significant investment in reforming and reinvigorating the vocational education and training (VET) system. Much of that investment has to date focused on tangible assets – new national frameworks, new products such as Training Packages, systems and processes, new technologies and infrastructure, although it has also included investment in people.

**Strategic importance**

There is increasing recognition across corporate and public sectors of the strategic importance of developing and managing a workforce that can deliver on central business objectives, a workforce that has both the right capacity and the right capability to deliver, now and in the future, and that is effectively led and supported. In a post industrial, global economy, which is service oriented and rapidly changing and where value is generated more through innovation, knowledge creation, relationships, creativity and flexibility than through traditional production, organisations are increasingly challenged to define what 'right' means in workforce composition.

The report on the first phase of the *High Level Review of Training Packages* (Chappell et al. 2003a) paints a compelling picture of an environment for VET which is characterised by change; changes to jobs, patterns of employment and the ways people work both within and across organisations; changing and more complex expectations for employee skills, attributes and expertise; changes in the way people want or need to learn; changes in understanding how people best learn and changes in pedagogical practice; changing needs and expectations of clients; and changes in the links between different kinds of education and training experiences. These changes will impact on VET clients, the workforces being trained by VET professionals as well as VET's own workforce.

The VET workforce has to deliver, now and in the future, on three strategically important outcomes:

1. Assisting the VET sector to meet Australia's social and economic objectives as set out in *Shaping our Future: the National Strategy for VET 2004-2010*.

2. Meeting the needs and expectations of individual and industry clients and communities.

3. Delivering the products and services that have been developed for the VET system.

The long-term sustainability of the VET system depends on the ability of the workforce to deliver on these outcomes and that, in turn, depends on continuing investment in workforce development, management and planning. These outcomes also provide the broad measures by which the value of return on investment in the workforce can be assessed.
Leading practice

Across the developed world, organisations that are 'leaders in human performance are more likely to align their workforces with customers; see the HR (human resources) function, as well as HR and training activities as strategically important; measure the impact of HR and training investments against key business results; and use technology to improve workforce performance' (Cheese et al. 2003: 4).

These organisations not only expect to see direct impact on performance from their investment; they are also likely to invest more than others in workforce development. A range of available research indicates that high-performing organisations, including organisations structured around knowledge work, invest at least 3–4% of payroll in human capital development (Schofield 2002: 32).

People are the single biggest asset in the VET sector and the single biggest cost – workforce costs represent around 68% of current expenditure in VET (NCVER 2003). Despite the expenditure on employing people, it is currently estimated that investment (at State or registered training organisation level) in the development of people in the VET workforce is well below the high-performance benchmark, ranging between 1% and 2% of payroll (Schofield 2002, Harris et al. 2001)

Foundations

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

There is already much innovation and good practice in workforce development across the VET sector and a growing body of knowledge and experience about excellence in professional and vocational learning, both for VET practitioners and their learner clients. In the national interest, the challenge is both to build on this knowledge and experience and to share it across jurisdictions and among registered training organisations and VET professionals.

In other respects, the VET workforce is comparable to (if not the same as) other national workforces that deliver critical development services to Australians, for example in health or other sectors of education. These workforces face many similar challenges and are also developing a body of knowledge and experience about workforce development and planning on which the VET sector can usefully draw.

Workforce development issues are currently addressed at national, State, Territory and registered training organisation (RTO) levels and each has contributed to the total sum of investment. However, the focus of this project, and this report, is on possible future approaches at the national level only; to date, national investment has concentrated on funding development activity through two major programs – Reframing the Future and initiatives funded under the Australian Flexible Learning Framework.
National approach

The effort at national level has been largely characterised by collaboration between national, State and Territory jurisdictions and RTOs in planning, prioritising and managing staff development projects. It also features considerable tensions between the high level of demand for development activity and the relatively small amount of national funding available to meet that demand.

National approaches to workforce development considered in this project are designed to build on that foundation of collaboration and national investment, to do so in increments and to complement and extend the activities of individual jurisdictions and RTOs. The approaches draw on current thinking about strategic workforce management and focus on three key areas of activity: workforce development and professional practice; organisational capability; and workforce data and planning.

Some aspects of VET workforce development – for example individual professional development and organisational capability – have benefited from more substantial investment over the last decade and are well established and integrated. In these fields, the aim of coordinated national activity is to take a more strategic and sophisticated approach that will generate a greater return on public investment in terms of knowledge creation and service delivery. In other areas – particularly workforce data collection, analysis and planning, and professional practice – there is a less substantive body of evidence on which to build. In these fields, the aim of national activity is to establish a sound and reliable base of knowledge (through formative research and investigation) that can inform future strategy development and decision making.

Not all aspects of workforce development are appropriate for or amenable to national investment, development or planning and much responsibility rests with RTOs or State or Territory agencies. The decisions about what is included in a national approach to workforce development, and which elements have priority for national investment, will need to be made within the context of new national governance arrangements that have yet to be determined.

Previous reports have responded to the requirements of the project brief, providing – as far as available data allows – a profile of VET professionals, information about how they are currently managed and a review of the ways in which diverse organisations are planning for future workforce requirements. This document both summarises major issues identified through research and identifies options and suggested directions for addressing these issues. The report makes specific recommendations about possible future action in four areas – workforce development and professional practice; organisational capability; workforce data and planning; and national governance arrangements.

2.1.1 Definitions

Many terms are used in the VET sector to describe aspects of the VET workforce and initiatives to develop and manage it. However, these terms are open to a broad range of interpretation and there is no single set of definitions endorsed or agreed by all stakeholders. In order to ensure clarity in this report, the consultants have defined a number of key terms. However, the definition of these terms represents the consultants' view, based on literature and common usage and does not necessarily represent the view of members of the steering
committee or any VET organisation or authority. For the purposes of this report, key terms have been defined as follows:

- **VET practitioner** describes those staff of registered training organisations (RTOs) who are directly involved in delivery of teaching, training and/or assessment programs that are nationally recognised. VET practitioners are a subset of VET professionals.

- **VET professional** includes both VET practitioners and those staff who provide leadership, management and support for teaching, training and assessment within RTOs but who are not directly involved in delivery of nationally recognised training. VET professionals are a subset of the VET workforce.

- **The VET workforce** includes all staff of RTOs including VET practitioners and other VET professionals, together with staff working in generic, transferable roles such as accountants, marketing and maintenance staff. For the purposes of this project we have not included people who are working outside RTOs.

- **Workforce development** describes 'those activities which increase the capacity of individuals to participate in the workforce throughout their whole working life and which increase the capacity of firms to adopt high performance work practices that support their employees to develop the full range of their potential skills and value' (Schofield 2003). For the purposes of this document, the term workforce development is used to encompass those activities (or some aspects) that are often defined elsewhere as staff development or professional development.

- **Professionalism** includes the following characteristics: a strong motivation or calling, the possession of a specialised body of knowledge and skills ... control of standards, admission, career paths and disciplinary issues, autonomy in organising and carrying out their work, the need for the ongoing exercise of professional judgement and members accept and apply a professional code of practice (Senate Employment, Education and Training Committee 1998).

- **Professional practice** includes expert knowledge of the field, a deep understanding of underlying principles, accumulated experience in the practice of the profession, a familiarity with recent advances in the professional knowledge base, and mastery of the best available techniques and tools (Masters 2003: 46). In this report, the term ‘professional practice’ is deemed also to imply and include the concepts normally attached to the term ‘professionalism’.

- **Organisational capability** refers to the ability of an organisation to effectively meet business objectives. The factors that contribute to capable organisations include the organisational culture and values, business processes and management systems, work organisation and the capability of individual employees (Australian National Audit Office 2001: 19).

- **Workforce planning** aligns strategic planning and human resource strategies to deliver the right people, in the right place at the right time to achieve successful business outcomes (Australian National Audit Office 2001: 1). It describes the process of estimating the required workforce to meet future requirements and the development of strategies to meet that need. It may occur at many levels: international, national, state or regional and organisational (Australian Medical Workforce Advisory Committee 2003: 20).
2.2 Workforce of the future

The starting point for workforce development and planning strategies includes three key elements:

1. A reliable and sufficiently detailed picture of the current capacity and capability of the existing workforce and an assessment of the extent to which it delivers against strategic business or system objectives.

2. A reliable set of predictions (grounded on available evidence about trends in populations, work, markets and economic development) about the capacity, capability and supporting arrangements that will be required for the future workforce to deliver on future strategic objectives.

3. Analysis of any likely gap between current and future workforce capacity and capability and the options for addressing the gap.

The current VET workforce

It is a challenge for the Australian VET sector to develop a complete picture, as information about the current workforce is patchy and inconsistent. There is no reliable national profile of the VET workforce, nor of the subsets of VET professionals or VET practitioners; nor is there reliable quantitative data about the capacity (numbers) or capability (skills and attributes) of the VET workforce.

Qualitative data collected for development of the national strategy provides some indicators of the extent to which the workforce currently delivers against strategic objectives and the new National Strategy for VET 2004–2010 provides a further set of objectives and performance measures. Workforce specific data about performance is not collected nationally but is collected in various ways by States, Territories and RTOs.

This report makes specific recommendations about how this gap in essential data can be addressed (refer Section 7).

The future workforce

Making predictions about the future is risky business. From the review of available research it is possible to identify some of the main features that will characterise the work of VET professionals in the next decade. From this it is possible to describe some of the essential skills and attributes of future VET professionals (refer Section 5 for further information) and the challenges employers will face in attracting, retaining and developing these professionals.

Future work

Drawing on the work of Chappell et al. (2003a, 2003b), and others (refer literature review report), VET professionals in the future are likely to be working in a service characterised by:

- an increasingly diverse client base with equally diverse needs that includes groups of much younger clients (aged 15–19) and older clients (45+) as well as the traditional cohort of 19–25 year olds
- a more sophisticated client base that is accustomed to choice and has high expectations for the quality of learning and for products and services to align closely with personal or business objectives
a more diverse range of delivery options including more delivery in workplaces and online, less in classrooms and formal settings
multidisciplinary teams of staff, also working in partnership or collaboration across educational sectors or with external organisations
greater numbers of part-time, casual or portfolio workers
a broader range of products and services, including VET degrees, that are highly flexible and changing in response to market demand and innovation
a lesser investment in bricks and mortar and a greater investment in human capital
international demand for products and services which will also include competing and delivering in a global market.

Future skills and capabilities

This paints a changing and challenging picture of VET work in the near future. It also provides some clear indications about the range of skills and attributes that the future VET professional will need in order to work in high-performance VET organisations. They will largely be knowledge workers or leaders of knowledge work. Again drawing on the broad range of research reviewed for this project, it is likely that required capabilities will include a mix of generic, professional and leadership skills (described in greater detail in Section 5):

- Generic skills including problem solving, adaptability, working in teams, self management, client focus, relationship management, coaching, mentoring and networking and the ability to accommodate identity shifts, moving between roles or organisations.

- Professional skills including high levels of pedagogical expertise matched with high levels of current technical or industry expertise; learner centred; client relationship management; knowledge creation and management; knowledge and expertise in using new technologies and in delivering VET system products and services.

- Leadership skills including strategic and change management capabilities, entrepreneurial skills, a focus on performance and outcomes, human resource development as well as more traditional business management and administration skills. In addition, leaders will need to challenge and inspire other educators and maintain strong links with communities, industry and regional networks.

future workforce

The Australian VET system and the industry sectors it serves will share many of the same challenges when it comes to recruiting, retaining and developing a high-performance workforce for the future.

- Skills shortages are already widespread in many industries from applied health and market research to manufacturing and traditional trades, and the VET sector will compete with other industries for staff with high levels of technical or industry expertise.
Research also indicates a shortage of leadership skills and employees with sophisticated analytical, problem solving and conceptual skills. These will also continue to be in high demand in the VET sector.

A significant proportion of the Australian workforce, including a significant proportion of leaders in the VET system, will retire or leave full-time work over the next 10 to 15 years and this is an issue already facing many RTOs.

The special requirement of VET for a combination of pedagogical expertise and industry currency presents a further challenge to workforce capacity and capability.

Research reviewed for this project (refer literature review report) suggests that employers in the VET system are therefore likely to be trying to attract and retain professionals who are:

- from older age groups and diminishing cohorts of younger people from which replacement staff can be recruited, as the age profile of the Australian population increases
- changing their expectations of work and working life, not only to achieve greater work–life balance but also to achieve greater levels of independence, autonomy and career flexibility
- more difficult to attract and retain, both because of the competitive employment market and because VET is not yet repositioned as a service or employer brand with high status in the community (Quay Connection et al. 2003, Quay Connection and Research Forum 2002, Schofield 2002)
- articulating higher expectations of their employers, particularly in terms of the employer’s willingness to invest in individual learning and skills development and to provide a broad range of experience and learning opportunities
- industry experts, often without existing skills, experience or qualifications in education and training
- comfortable working for a number of employers without, necessarily, a dominant employment affiliation
- highly mobile, with expectations of working both across Australia and overseas
- experienced knowledge workers.

The gap between the current profile of the VET professional workforce and the required future profile (summarised in the literature review report) provides some directions for workforce development and planning in the VET sector. But it is not a simple question of gap analysis – the Australian VET system also has a vision of a high performance VET workforce that can deliver against the vision articulated in *Shaping our Future: the National Strategy for VET 2004–2010*. 
Within the confines of this project, our vision is for a VET system that:

- has high value and status
- delivers what it promises to clients
- has a workforce that enables it to do this.

**A high-status VET system**

We look towards a future in which VET has a status commensurate with its importance to the economy and to individuals, and to the role that it needs to play in the future.

In terms of VET capability, this will mean:

- VET teaching and leadership will be high-status occupations. They will be highly valued, and people will aspire to work in VET. The VET professional workforce will be widely understood to be working in a values-driven sector and VET will attract and keep talented staff
- there will be a strong sense of professional pride among VET professionals. Casual and sessional staff, support staff, and those working in industry, will share this professional pride, in part as a result of their membership of professional networks for VET professionals and practitioners.

Issues around the status of VET are not amenable to simple solutions: they will only be advanced by a long-term, concerted effort. And yet, if there’s one lever that is stronger than others, it is workforce capability.

However, there are two very different paths that might be followed. The first, the distinctive status of VET, positively portrayed, leads to the recruitment of able people, who either have the qualifications needed to exert leadership in the profession or are encouraged to acquire them; this in turn leads to a ‘sense’ of a profession (although a diverse one), which in turn leads to VET being perceived as a good employer brand, which in turn reinforces its status in the community.

There is, however, another road – a less desirable one – in which the status of VET, viewed negatively, results in recruitment difficulties for providers; in turn, qualifications are not seen to be as important as in other professions and the sense of a ‘profession’ is missing. Not surprisingly, under this scenario the employer brand is not particularly valued, which reinforces a ‘second-class’ status that makes recruitment difficult.

The challenge is to create the conditions that contribute to a ‘high-status road’ for the VET sector.

**VET that delivers what it promises**

The *High Level Review of Training Packages* emphasised that specifying work outcomes is not nearly sufficient to ensure quality delivery, and emphasised the critical importance of the quality of delivery. Without high-quality delivery and assessment, satisfactory outcomes are unlikely – as has always been the case.
A VET system that achieves high-quality delivery will be characterised by:

- innovation and flexibility that is found everywhere in the system. The workforce will be characterised by its adaptability and responsiveness

- client intelligence and market responsiveness that drives delivery at all levels. Outcomes for clients will be on par with or exceed the best of VET internationally

- human resource development (HRD) practice within RTOs that is on par with or exceeding best practice within Australia and overseas

- a strong and competitive employer brand. VET will be widely perceived to be a good place to work. VET employers will regularly win Employer of Choice Awards

- remuneration and employment conditions that are consistent with the principle of ‘decent work’. As importantly, levels of job satisfaction and morale will be high.

**A professional workforce that delivers all of this**

The VET professional workforce is extremely diverse – so diverse, in fact, that there may be no such thing as the ‘VET profession’. This diversity needs to be recognised as a strength rather than a concern, and the challenge will be to capitalise on the diversity rather than worry about it. This means aspiring to a situation in which:

- the nature, size and composition of the VET workforce will be well understood, and will inform workforce planning and strategic direction. There will be sufficient supply of skilled professional staff to meet demand for VET

- VET professionals will be highly skilled, with high levels of pedagogical skill and technical/industry expertise

- investment in the VET workforce – in planning and development – at the national, State and Territory and RTO level will be collaborative, support the work of VET professionals and ensure quality delivery.
2.4 A national approach: rationale and foundations

Many of the challenges ahead in developing and planning for the VET workforce of the future are common to other sectors and industries, both within Australia and overseas.

In Australia, different sectors take different approaches to managing these challenges. Some have in place national frameworks and governance arrangements, which include the ability both to plan for workforce capacity and to develop the capability of their current and future workforces. Others manage these issues at the level of the State or Territory jurisdiction, or the individual organisation.

There are commonalities and some lessons to be learned from comparable sectors where responsibility for the workforce is shared between employer organisations, States and Territories and the Australian Government. The health sector is one such example, where national structures are in place to plan for and develop the health workforce, including specific professional groups such as doctors and nurses.

National action in relation to workforce capability and capacity is considered to be appropriate when:

- there is a public interest or public good at stake
- a level of planning is considered to be preferable to a more competitive, market based approach to determining workforce numbers and skills
- there are opportunities to create economies of scale and efficiency, and to reduce duplication, through national action and collaborative activity
- workforce issues, such as shortages, are evident across jurisdictions
- workforce issues impact on outcomes in the particular sector
- there are opportunities for more effective negotiation of solutions at a national level
- there is a need to consider the entire workforce, including both the public and private sectors (Australian Health Workforce Officials Committee 2003).

While there is no hard evidence that skill shortages are currently a major issue in VET, many of these drivers apply to the VET sector – it delivers a public good, there are opportunities for collaboration at the national level, and a need to consider the entire workforce, across public and private RTOs.

The Australian VET system operates nationally, guided by a long-term national strategy. The products and services VET delivers are determined at a national level (for example nationally recognised qualifications and Training Packages), and industry and client needs are also determined at a national level, through advice provided by Industry Skills Councils. There is considerable national investment in research, and VET funding also has a substantial national dimension. In addition, there has been a long history of workforce development activity that has made a positive contribution at the national level, through Reframing the Future and The Australian Flexible Learning Framework.
There are two critical issues that need to be addressed in planning for and developing the VET workforce of the future. They are capacity (the numbers needed) and capability (the skills required) to deliver against the agreed objectives of the national strategy, deliver VET products and services, and to meet the expectations and the needs of industry and other clients. State and Territory and RTO action on these issues does not obviate the need for national attention to both capacity and capability requirements.

Consultations with States and Territories and the Australian Government revealed a broad consensus that national attention and action is appropriate to support and develop the capability and capacity of the future VET workforce. Jurisdictions also agreed that action at the national level would need to be collaborative and designed to enable, support and add value to the work of:

- States and Territories, that have responsibility for VET within their respective jurisdictions, as well as for the public VET workforce
- registered training organisations (RTOs), including TAFE Institutes, and private and enterprise providers
- individual VET professionals.

A description of the key platforms of activity and scope, and underpinning principles of the national approach follows.

**Platforms of activity**

There are three broad areas that require attention to develop the capability and capacity of the workforce and they form three key platforms of activity under the national approach, as follows:

- **Workforce development and professional practice.** This platform of activity is designed to build on work already being done to develop the skills and capabilities of VET professionals, and to support and improve professional practice, in particular for those staff of RTOs directly involved in delivery of nationally recognised programs.

- **Organisational capability.** This platform aims to support jurisdictions in their efforts to develop high-performing organisations capable of delivering against the agreed objectives of the national strategy, providing VET products and services and meeting the needs and expectations of industry and other clients.

- **Workforce data to support workforce development and planning.** This platform involves developing the evidence base to support State and Territory and RTO planning, and enable national workforce planning, should the evidence base identify that national action is required.

To date there have been different levels of investment in each of these areas, and there are different tasks ahead under each platform of activity. National action on some of these issues is relatively new. For this reason an incremental approach is proposed, building on current activity in those areas that are well established, such as workforce development, and increasing investment in those areas where work has begun, such as organisational capability.
In the areas of professional practice and workforce data, formative research is required to inform planning and strategy development. The three platforms of activity are described in more detail in the following sections.

New governance arrangements to direct and support these platforms of activity are described in Section 8 of this document.

**Scope**

The national approach applies to VET professionals within RTOs, regardless of their mode of employment, who are involved:

- directly in the delivery of teaching, training and/or assessment programs (i.e. VET practitioners)
- in providing leadership, management and support for teaching, training and assessment activities.

In addition, the national approach applies to staff working in RTOs across sectors, including public, private, enterprise and community-based RTOs. However, it is acknowledged that some strategies proposed under the national approach may apply to specific segments of the workforce, for example suggested activities under professional practice are particularly relevant to VET practitioners, while those under organisational capability relate to leaders and managers in RTOs.

**Principles**

The national approach to developing and supporting the capability and capacity of the VET workforce of the future will:

- align with and support implementation of *Shaping our Future: the National Strategy for VET 2004–2010*, enable delivery of VET products and services, and improve outcomes for industry and other clients
- support development and exercise of leadership across and at all levels of VET systems and organisations
- recognise and cater for the diversity of the VET workforce and supply strategies that cater for this diversity, including its presence in TAFE Institutes, enterprise, private and community-based training organisations, schools and universities
- provide a coordination function to capture, share and build upon good and innovative practice across the VET workforce and ensure that benefits of a national approach are shared by all parts of the VET workforce
- build on existing investment and funding to support the approach
- acknowledge and reflect the shared investment in the VET workforce between governments, employing organisations and individuals themselves.
Workforce development describes those activities which increase the capacity of individuals to participate in the workforce throughout their whole working life and which increase the capacity of firms to adopt high-performance work practices that support their employees to develop the full range of their potential skills and value.

Of the three broad platforms of activity included in the national approach, the initiative to develop the competence, attributes, skills and knowledge of VET professionals has been the area of greatest investment to date. This includes investment in workforce development by RTOs, States and Territories, and through nationally funded programs including Reframing the Future and Australian Flexible Learning Framework. It also includes substantial investment by individual VET professionals in their own development. While not all stakeholders subscribe to this view, there is an emerging consensus about the importance of a shared commitment to investment in the development of VET professionals between governments, RTOs and individual staff.

A lot has been learned over the past seven years about good practice in capability and skill development. Examples of creative and innovative approaches to workforce development are to be found across the system. At the national level, Reframing the Future and Australian Flexible Learning Framework have been instrumental in changing performance. At the State and Territory level there is a suite of initiatives in place, including strategies to support workforce development, professional networks, leadership programs, and research and dissemination activities to support good pedagogical practice.

However, it would be fair to say that the VET system has under-invested in human capital compared to investment in other more tangible assets such as infrastructure (Schofield 2002: 32). The national approach provides an opportunity to examine priority development needs and improve investment in the people who deliver VET products and services.

Workforce development is a critical platform of activity going forward. According to planning and evaluation reports from both national workforce development initiatives (Reframing the Future and Australian Flexible Learning Framework), there is considerably greater demand for workforce development activity to support the national training system than can be met from within existing resources. Recent research with VET practitioners identified that staff of RTOs continue to report skill gaps, including in relation to catering to a diverse client base, building and maintaining relationships, and networking skills. Even confident practitioners say they would welcome continuing skill development to help them to work with Training Packages, maintain industry currency, and customise learning approaches (CURVE and the University of Ballarat 2003).

To date, investment in workforce development at all levels has focused most heavily on teaching staff, those in full-time roles, and leaders and managers. In addition, government-sponsored workforce development has been more heavily subscribed by staff of public RTOs (Henry et al. 2002: 10, 12, Young 2002: 10). Demand for national funding, through national workforce development initiatives, continues to outstrip available resources; for example Reframing the Future reports that 44.5% of applications to the national program could not be funded in 2002 (Young 2002).
While there is plenty of qualitative research about current skill and capability gaps (see for example Wilson 2003, Rumsey 2002, and Harris et al. 2001), what is currently missing is a quantitative picture about the extent of current skill gaps and developmental needs, segmented by role, employment mode, industry sector and RTO sector. This can be supplemented through data collection to develop a more comprehensive profile of the workforce and current skills and capabilities.

In addition, the skills and capabilities that VET professionals require are changing rapidly, in response to the changing nature of their work, including:

- changing needs and expectations of a rapidly diversifying client base for VET
- changing location, mode and timing of delivery, which sees more and more delivery in the workplace and in flexible modes
- emerging thinking about VET practice, including development of a unique VET pedagogy
- new developments such as research on knowledge workers in VET and the skills and employment conditions they require.

Both Reframing the Future and workforce development initiatives under the Australian Flexible Learning Framework have evolved in line with changing skill and capability requirements. Examples include the introduction of the strategic and change management program in Reframing the Future, and research on knowledge work capabilities under the auspices of the Framework. It will be important to continue to build on this flexibility and responsiveness in future workforce development initiatives at the national level.

One of the most significant developments over the past seven years has been the use of work-based learning in VET as a key workforce development practice both within client and provider organisations. This has included ‘action learning and other forms of problem solving and self-managing teamwork. It has also included a range of other learner-centred development techniques like action research, and mentoring, coaching and project based learning’ (Mitchell et al. 2001: 41). The value of work-based learning is that it:

- develops the generic employment skills employers value
- allows organisations to customise their learning activity and decide what will be learned
- provides considerable flexibility to employer organisations and staff
- contributes to developing highly skilled staff and high-performing organisations, for example by developing knowledge within organisations
- develops teams as well as individuals (Mitchell et al. 2001).

Workforce development initiatives in VET will need to continue to develop experiential learning, share good practice and develop knowledge about ‘what works best’ for VET professionals engaging in development activity.
Future skills and capabilities

Looking forward, research (as summarised in the literature review for this project) identifies the following emerging skill and capability requirements:

- As boundaries between roles blur, it is likely that a broader range of skills will become common to VET practitioners, leaders and managers and support staff.

- Adaptability to change, ability to deal with uncertainty and constant upgrading of skills and knowledge – continuous learning and improvement – will be critical.

- Client-focus skills will become more important for all three groups, including the ability to build and maintain relationships, work across organisational boundaries, and provide consultancy and advice to client groups.

- All staff will need to possess management (project and administration) and leadership skills and capabilities.

- More and more staff will also need to self-manage their careers and their own development as they work across a range of RTOs, and within industry.

- The kinds of skills applied in HRD in enterprises will become more relevant for a wider range of VET practitioners – coaching, mentoring, networking, one-on-one advice and support, acting as a sounding board and learning consultant, demonstrating the impact of investment in training on organisational performance, for example.

- They will need to keep pace with rapidly changing information and communication technologies (ICT) and be highly skilled at using evolving ICT in their work.

- Professional identities will become more fluid and mobile, and VET professionals will need to be able to accommodate identity shifts as they move in and out of different roles and organisations.

- There will be more and more demand for all VET professionals to develop knowledge work capabilities – that is, the ability to access, create and use knowledge to add value to the business they are in, and to share and transmit knowledge to others in their organisation and networks.

- They will need to learn and work in teams, across organisations and within networks and partnerships, and engage in continuous reflection on practice and informal learning.

- While capabilities will broaden, roles will become more fragmented and specialised, for example it's likely that the pool of practitioners who specialise in assessment will increase.

In addition:

- For those directly involved in delivery, pedagogical expertise including the understanding and application of new pedagogical approaches, learner focus – the ability to promote and support self-directed learning – and industry currency, together with personal aptitudes such as a passion for teaching and learning will continue to be important.
For managers and leaders, key capabilities will include transformative leadership – the ability to build and communicate a vision and lead staff. Managers and leaders will require both traditional management and strategic management expertise – the ability to manage the organisational resources, and to respond proactively to the environment. As educational leaders, these staff will also need to be able to operate effectively within VET systems, establish and maintain strong relationships with clients and the community, and inspire and support their colleagues.

Support staff are likely to be required to become more directly involved in delivery, and will need technical skills in their area of expertise, together with the capacity to work with clients, and an interest in developing new skills, for example in teaching and training.

Suggested directions

In order to build on what has already been achieved, and support workforce development initiatives at all levels, it will be important for a national approach to:

- continue to extend what has already been learned, and provide a coordination and knowledge sharing function to enable RTOs, individuals and jurisdictions to share good practice as, for example, Reframing the Future has been doing to date
- continue to broaden engagement and participation, including among part-time, casual and sessional staff, support staff, and staff of non-TAFE RTOs
- increase investment in workforce development initiatives, based on a quantitative and qualitative understanding of capability requirements and development needs
- prioritise investment according to where it is most needed
- measure returns on investment in development initiatives, for individuals, teams, RTOs, clients and the VET system, in order to continue to build the business case for investment in developing the workforce.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the governance structure responsible for the national approach:

- Consider establishing and resourcing (or expanding) a national initiative to:
  - promote good practice, including by:
    - identifying, analysing and disseminating good practice
    - drawing on innovation in other sectors and exploring its application to VET
    - promoting an inclusive approach to workforce development that provides for broader participation across the workforce, regardless of mode of employment, individual role or type of RTO
    - undertaking international benchmarking activities, for example around effective practice in teaching and learning.
• facilitate good practice, including by:
  - piloting interventions
  - providing grants and seed funding
  - investing in workforce development at the RTO level
  - developing partnerships, for example between RTOs and industry
  - managing international exchange and scholarship arrangements.

• measure good practice, including by:
  - developing approaches to the measurement and evaluation of outcomes, for participants, teams, organisations and clients
  - demonstrating return on investment, for RTOs, clients, jurisdictions and the VET system
  - consolidating and making available to stakeholders results of appropriate indicators for the benefit of all jurisdictions, providers and the national VET system.

Consider options for the future management of the national workforce development programs, following reviews of Reframing the Future and the Australian Flexible Learning Framework, including how to obtain the best possible return on investment.

2.5.1 Professional practice

Professional practice includes expert knowledge of the field, a deep understanding of underlying principles, accumulated experience in the practice of the profession, a familiarity with recent advances in the professional knowledge base, and mastery of the best available techniques and tools.

All those who value the VET system agree on the need for high standards of professional practice. That much is not in question. The issue is more how – in the context of workforce development strategies – the sector can maximise the chances of such high standards being aspired to, achieved and maintained, and whether this would be helped by considering VET practitioners as members of a profession in the accepted sense of the word.

Many VET professionals, including VET practitioners, are members of other established professions (for example accounting, engineering, marketing) within which they have their own standing and have professional bodies to which they can belong, that recognise or accredit their professional qualifications and may even require a commitment to continuing professional development as a pre-requisite for continuing membership. This aspect of their professional identity is independent of their role or standing within the VET sector. For these reasons, VET professionals who are not practitioners and who are operating in their role as members of a recognised profession are excluded from the discussion that follows. The balance of this section of the report focuses on VET practitioners only.
This is an important distinction as it raises the question of the identity and role of the individual VET practitioner and the central importance of the quality of teaching and learning in the VET sector rather than on systems, structures and organisational approaches to excellence.

VET practitioners – those who are directly involved in teaching, training and/or assessment – have a dual identity, as both an industry professional and an educational professional. While workforce development strategies focus on a broad range of leadership, industry and education skills, the concept of professional practice is about the achievement and maintenance of high standards of educational practice – teaching, training or assessment – that are matched by high standards of industry practice and industry currency. This is the challenge for VET practitioners – achieving and maintaining high professional standards for both aspects of their dual identity.

Is it useful to think of VET practitioners as members of a unique ‘profession’?

A starting point is to explore the centuries-old concept of a profession. Professions nowadays are seen as generally having a number of connected elements, which together lead to members having a certain pride in belonging. From a range of research (Moser 2000, Mulcahy and Jasman 2003, Ingvarsen 2002, Ramsay 2000, Lassnigg 2001), we have synthesised the following five core features:

- **Perception**: a public perception that members have a specific expertise or knowledge base, and the capacity to make discretionary judgments, which are normally acquired by high levels of training.

- **Regulation**: by a self-organising body (which may also have statutory licensing powers) that has high regard for peer judgment.

- **Standards**: related to values, conduct, ethics, identity, language, and principles.

- **Entry**: minimum qualifications for entry, and sometimes other mechanisms that are intended to act as a barrier to entry.

- **Currency**: some requirement for currency of expertise – sometimes by specifying requirements for continuous development activity (often described as continuing professional development).

The practice of teaching in vocational education and training is not a profession in the way that school teaching, medicine or engineering are understood as professions. It is not self-regulating, there are no minimum qualifications for entry, VET practitioners do not share a common set of standards, and they do not have a regulatory body that could apply for membership of the Australian Council of Professions.

There has been much discussion as to whether VET practitioners should be members of a profession. Or as we would prefer to phrase it, would the clients of the vocational education and training systems be better served if they were?
There are some caveats around the idea of developing a VET profession, including:

- It assumes that the status as a professional is one that is desired by VET practitioners – whereas the reality of the situation is that many VET practitioners identify first with their industry or 'content' trade or profession, or in the case of VET-in-schools teachers, with the teaching profession, rather than with VET.

- It sets up a hierarchy of teacher-in-expert-role versus student, which ignores the importance of client empowerment and the reciprocal nature of learning (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

- It assumes that eligibility for such a profession is easily determined. However, the diversity of roles fulfilled by VET practitioners is such that, if there was an attempt to create a 'profession', the variation in regulation, entry, standards and currency would be so wide as to make the terms of the profession meaningless.

- VET practitioners, the environments in which they work, and the reward systems within which they work, have few similarities with, say, school teachers or university lecturers. Such analogies will not help us.

**How to enhance professional practice without membership of a unique profession?**

This does not mean, however, that we should not aspire to a VET system with high standards of professional practice, that is high standards of educational and industry practice. Clients have a right to expect some quality assurance around VET practitioners, the organisations in which they learn, and the qualifications that they receive – and this will become more compelling as RTOs begin to offer higher-level qualifications, try to enhance the image and standing of the sector and attract new staff.

High standards of professional practice are essential, but the most effective way to achieve this could be to leave aside those elements of a profession that do not recognise the labour market realities of VET practitioners or are inappropriate for such a wide range of activities, specifically:

- restricted entry

- mandated standards. (Although there has been much debate recently on the potential role of mandated standards, at the present time more benefit is likely to accrue from the development of approaches which support the intention of many RTOs and VET practitioners to achieve high standards of professional education practice.)

At the same time, our advice is that we should take and adapt those elements of a profession that are useful, including:

- expectations that qualifications and experience be 'fit for purpose' (whatever the role)

- expectations of continuous learning and currency

- expectations of shared values

- expectations related to professional practice
... and add to them the particular characteristics that will ensure VET practitioners with a future orientation:

- a focus on the characteristics that are appropriate for different roles
- acknowledgment of the 'dual identity' of VET practitioners
- an understanding that in fact the sector often shows a preference for expertise in industry and industry credibility over formal education or teaching credentials
- a better integration of many aspects of teaching, learning and skill development:
  - pedagogical versus subject and content issues
  - occupational competence versus underpinning knowledge
  - theory versus practical application
- a focus on a capacity to research and innovate
- an emphasis on client awareness and flexibility.

Overall, we are suggesting a shift of emphasis from 'VET teaching practice as a profession' to the application of 'high-quality professional practice among VET practitioners' – and as a result, putting more emphasis on workforce development than on professional membership in its own right.

This is an area in which research is needed so that all involved can move forward with confidence to create a situation in which VET practitioners are able to have pride in their professional practice and the high standards of practice are recognised and valued. This suggests an approach that is based on development and aspiration rather than compliance, and which is conceived as, ideally, a shared responsibility between VET practitioners, their employers and governments.

**Suggested directions**

A national approach can add value by facilitating some or all of the following activities:

- **Capturing good professional practice.** There is much excellent practice to be found among VET practitioners. There are also many projects which seek to document good practice in VET. What is needed now and in the future, is to incorporate an additional focus into such projects so that such work captures examples of good professional practice in such a way that they can be more widely shared.

- **Skills for key roles.** Based on research conducted for this and other projects, develop a set of broad capabilities for key roles, and guidance about how they might be used by professionals, practitioners, providers and industry:
  - novice, expert, and master teacher/trainer
  - industry professional
  - managers and leaders
  - support staff.
Qualifications. Undertake a project that builds on existing research to review the range of university qualifications currently offered in teaching, focusing in particular on:

- content of courses
- effectiveness and standing of university qualifications
- maximising the use of mechanisms for recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- articulation between the Training and Assessment Training Package and university qualifications
- feasibility of establishing national consistency (having regard for the independence of higher education course approvals processes).

This could inform a discussion as to whether a nationally consistent approach is appropriate, or whether the arrangements between States or Territories and individual universities adequately meet the needs of the sector. Any national action relating to qualifications will also need to be supported by up-to-date evidence about current qualification levels among VET practitioners. This will be a priority for the data platform of activity.

Standards. Investigate initiatives across jurisdictions relating to professional standards, ethics and principles for VET practitioners, and identify whether additional action is needed at a national level, for example to develop an agreed set of ethics and principles for VET practitioners.

Professional associations. Examine options for optimising the support and guidance for VET practitioners of the sort that are usually offered by a professional association. This could be done by first examining the current professional associations open to VET practitioners to see whether there is a gap that needs to be filled. If it is decided that there is, two options that could be considered are:

- An 'association of associations', with various organisations (Australian Institute of Training and Development (AITD), Australian Human Resource Institute (AHRI), Australian VET Research Association (AVETRA), etc.) which currently serve some of the professional needs of VET practitioners acting in concert
- A new association with a specific remit to cover the roles of VET professionals (including VET practitioners), which would enable consideration to be given to different levels of membership – associate, affiliate, full member, linked to qualifications and experience. For the reasons given earlier, such a model would need to be a membership/self-regulation model, not a registration/statutory model.

We see a need for any developments, like those suggested above, to be subject to wide consultation within the field, and oversight by an expert working group, to be convened by new governance structures discussed in Section 8.
Investment in the professional standing and practice of VET practitioners will have a direct impact on the status of VET more broadly. If VET is widely perceived to be comparable to other sectors that require high standards of professional practice, this will improve the competitive standing of VET providers and increase client confidence. Importantly, it will also reinforce the pride and commitment of those currently working in VET, and help to attract new staff to a highly valued, high-status industry.

**Recommendations**

That the new governance structure responsible for the national approach:

- Convene an expert working group to undertake research, and consultation with the field, about the following:
  - capturing good professional practice
  - skills for key roles
  - qualifications
  - standards
  - professional associations.

- Determine, on the advice of the expert working group, what national action may be required to support and improve professional practice, once an evidence base is established.
Organisational capability is defined as the ability of an organisation to effectively meet its business objectives. The factors that contribute to capable organisations include the organisational culture and values, business processes and management systems, work organisation and the capability of individual employees.

This section addresses issues around the capability of providers to respond to the expectations of industry and other clients by delivering VET products and services – and in particular, to deliver the agreed priorities in *Shaping our Future: the National Strategy for VET 2004–2010*. Responsibility for the development of RTO capability clearly lies with individual jurisdictions; to add value, national activity has to be designed to support jurisdictions in both the way they choose to work with RTOs and the focus of that developmental activity.

In order to deliver agreed national priorities, RTOs (and the individuals within them) will need to have:

- a clear vision of their purpose, and how (or whether) the services that they occupy are distinctive
- values and behaviours which ensure that employment relationships within the organisation are characterised by confidence, trust and commitment of employees
- organisational structures and systems that support a high standard of service delivery.

Although the above list applies to organisations in general (and is partly adapted from a Business Council of Australia (BCA) report (BCA 2000)), what we have heard from RTOs, through consultations for this project, would suggest that it applies equally to them.

This requires managers and leaders who are skilled not only in traditional management – managing an organisation and its resources – but who are also able to make strategic decisions about how an organisation will respond to its environment, and to develop a vision and to motivate staff to achieve it.

A number of initiatives have been introduced to develop these skills in managers and leaders of RTOs and it would be valuable to build on these, for example *Reframing the Future* strategic and change management program and leadership development programs in Victoria, NSW and Tasmania. Given the extent of change within the sector and the unique staffing arrangements of many RTOs with a high proportion of part-time staff, it would be worth exploring best practice organisational models and approaches to workforce management.

We take our cue from what providers have told us – both directly and through the research literature – about the challenges that they face posed by the evolution of job roles within RTOs as a result of flexible delivery, competition, Training Packages, and higher expectations of client service. Progressive RTOs are moving forward on these issues by making more use of business-like approaches to their performance, and many commented favourably on the recent focus on strategic change management in *Reframing the Future*.

Leaders in RTOs say, however, that they would benefit from support in managing their workforce; while many of the key issues are governed by State and Territory regulation, they are interested in sharing information about best practice approaches to:

- developing their own leaders and managers
- recruiting and retaining staff
- succession planning
performance management
approaches to remuneration.

RTOs particularly value the opportunity to share experiences and learn from the ways in which others have met various challenges. We know that such support, often from their peers or from the relevant jurisdiction, would be valued.

While developing and implementing effective workforce management strategies is clearly the responsibility of individual providers and State and Territory governments, there are certain activities that could usefully be carried out at a national level. There are two reasons for this.

Firstly, pure economies of scale: many providers operate within essentially similar environments in a nation with a small population. But more importantly, the rationale is based on research (McNicke and Cameron 2003; Schofield 2002; key informant report for this project 2004) that suggests that much of HR practice continues to be reactive, focused on current problems, rather than future focused. A national workforce development program or service, drawing partly on best practice in various jurisdictions, could help to remedy this.

There is a strong case for including responsibility for supporting leadership and management initiatives in a national program for workforce development, although a prescriptive national approach to any of these matters is clearly inappropriate. The kinds of capabilities that would usefully be focused on include:

- the ability to build and communicate a vision
- the ability to take a strategic view of future trends and business needs
- the ability to deliver on the promise and achieve outcomes
- change leadership
- efficient use of resources
- personal development and mastery
- business and entrepreneurial skills
- the ability to develop and empower people.

(Guthrie and Callan 2002).

Many of these are generic business and leadership skills. As well as capturing the expertise within the VET sector, it will be important to also look at best practice outside the sector to inform initiatives.

**Suggested directions**

While it will be up to the new governance structure to determine priority actions and initiatives to support jurisdictions, it is suggested that support could take the form of national activities which would develop RTO capability in the following ways:

- Continued investment in developing VET leaders and managers, including through strategic and change management and leadership development initiatives.
National research on current HRD practice in RTOs and outside VET, including new trends and best practice approaches to managing sessional and casual staff.

National investment in seed funding, benchmarking (against national and international best practice), piloting new approaches, and clustering to develop leaders and managers and support strategic HRD. For example:

- Broker partnering between RTOs. Two different RTOs could partner up together, with the partnership initiated at CEO level, over a period of time, to share expertise in strategic and change management, and workforce planning, development and management. These people could then form nodes in communities of practice. Private, university and enterprise RTOs would be included.

- Benchmarking and sharing of good practice in relation to issues identified by RTOs related to workforce management (see above list).

- Investigate best practice models for specialised service delivery in VET and other sectors and make this information available to RTOs.

- Investigate and pilot new organisational models and structures in partnership with relevant national unions.

- Explore and disseminate best practice models and tools for measuring the impact of investment in workforce development at the RTO level on organisational performance and client satisfaction; e.g. commission the NCVER to develop organisational performance measures.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the new governance structure responsible for the national approach consider:

- Increasing investment in development of leadership and management capabilities under existing national programs.

- Commissioning national research on current Human Resource (HR) practice in RTOs, and best practice approaches to HR in VET, and in Australia and overseas, and make this available to RTOs.

- Including in the national program for workforce development, a stream of activity with the specific objective of developing organisational capability, which would:
  - facilitate benchmarking of good practice between RTOs on approaches to leadership, management and strategic HR practice
  - broker partnering arrangements between RTOs for benchmarking purposes
  - collect and disseminate information about best practice approaches to the issues RTOs have indicated as priorities
  - investigate best practice approaches to specialising in VET and other sectors
  - investigate new organisational models, in consultation with unions, for VET organisations.

- Commissioning the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) to develop organisational performance measures and models and providing these to RTOs for their use.
2.7 Workforce data to support workforce development and planning

Strategies identified in the workforce development and professional practice, and organisational capability platforms are designed to support and improve the capability of VET professionals and VET organisations (i.e. the nature and quality of skills available in the workforce). These platforms of activity need to be supported by good baseline data about the current capabilities and development needs of VET professionals, and RTOs. In addition, a consistent, accepted evidence base is required to inform planning and strategy development in relation to workforce capacity – the supply of workforce numbers (i.e. the right numbers of people with appropriate skills to fill specific roles) and likely workforce demand.

The third platform of activity under a national approach therefore involves establishing the evidence base on capacity required to provide a foundation for future planning and decision making at the RTO, State and national level.

This platform is the least well developed and further data collection and research is required to establish a consistent evidence base. Lack of reliable data limits the capacity of the sector to look forward, plan effectively for workforce development, and ensure that the required numbers of people are available to meet future demand. It also limits current efforts to support and improve workforce development and organisational capability: with incomplete evidence about current capabilities and development needs, it is difficult to quantify skill and capability gaps and allocate resources where they are most needed and will be most effective.

Looking forward, good baseline data will be invaluable for understanding the workforce from a national perspective, and to inform State and Territory and RTO decision making. It will:

- inform planning for workforce development and support organisational capability at all levels
- support workforce planning at the State and Territory and RTO level, and potentially at the national level, should the recommended governance structure responsible for the national approach decide this is needed
- support national approaches to workforce development and inform national level decisions particularly as they relate to funding and issues of national significance.

Current data collection arrangements

A 2002 joint report by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and NCVER found that the VET sector was relatively well served with statistical information. However, six areas were identified as poorly served, one of which was data on the national VET workforce.

Since that time, two national reports have been produced on this topic. The first was produced by NCVER for the National Training Statistics Committee. State training authorities were asked to complete pre-specified tables on the TAFE workforce employed in their jurisdiction as of June 2002. From this exercise it was established that there were only two fields collected on a consistent basis across all jurisdictions: age and sex. On all other fields there was some inconsistency, particularly surrounding employment status and qualifications held. Most importantly, there were no consistent definitions of core concepts such as ‘teacher’ and ‘employee’.

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The second report was produced by NCVER (as part of the Quay Connection consortium for this project), entitled 'Enhancing the Capability of VET Professionals'. That report used two different ABS sources, the Census and the Survey of Education and Training, to profile VET professionals. Across the three different sources there was enough commonality in the findings to give a broad analysis of the characteristics of VET professionals, and to distinguish between those employed in TAFE and in other sectors. Several weaknesses were, however, identified:

- a very large disparity in the total numbers employed as VET professionals (e.g. between 17,400 and 71,300 in TAFE), and in the VET workforce as a whole (e.g. between 39,000 and 90,400 in TAFE)
- unreliable data on employment status (i.e. self-employed/contractor, permanent employee, temporary employee)
- lack of consistent data on the qualifications of VET professionals, with ABS survey data suggesting large proportions without post-school qualifications against smaller-scale studies suggesting much lower proportions
- almost no understanding of the 'psychological contract' that people in the VET workforce have with their employers (i.e. job satisfaction, organisational commitment, career goals)
- all of the above found within jurisdictions as well as across jurisdictions, even in those where some effort has been devoted to filling this data gap (e.g. Victoria).

There is, in fact, no shortage of data on the VET workforce. The problem is that it is held as part of the human resource management systems of individual RTOs, and varies considerably in detail and sophistication. In this sense, the issue can be seen in the same light as the poor quality of national data on training activity prior to the introduction of the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) in the mid-1990s.

**Regular national data collection – the business case**

Any business case must start from the premise of what is to be gained from having national data, which is accurate, consistently defined, and which is therefore capable of enabling comparisons to be made over time and across different providers or different parts of the country.

As highlighted above, the issue is not the absence of data, but the absence of a mechanism by which available data is compiled. In this sense, the VET sector is no different from several other niche sectors of the economy. That it is a niche sector is an important distinction, as existing ABS data on the labour market by industry and occupation provides a useful foundation for many industries.

There are at least two generic reasons why a national collection would be valuable.

- The first is that it is a strategically important industry where the absence of workforce planning initiatives (based on reliable data) creates a risk that the industry may be unable to satisfy future demand because of skill shortages or skill gaps in the existing VET workforce. Where deemed important, either by governments or by industry or professional associations,
efforts are made to close the data gap. In other industries, it often takes a skill shortage to precipitate action – Information Technology (IT) specialists being an example from the 1990s, and nursing a current example. For workforce planning purposes, it would obviously be desirable to have information that enabled a crisis to be averted. In the VET sector, the existing data analysis suggests no current problem of labour supply, but an expected high number of people retiring from the TAFE workforce in coming years given its age structure.

- The second reason for a collection is that VET delivery, in common with some other service industries, is highly labour intensive, i.e. wages and salaries form a very high proportion of recurrent costs. It is estimated, for example, that 68% of state training authority budgets in 2002 were spent on wages and salaries (NCVER 2003), much higher than the all industries share (ABS 2002). Knowing more about what that money is buying may improve how it is allocated and spent.

A regular national collection would:

- inform understanding of flows in and out of the workforce, which would be a necessary platform for developing any workforce projections
- enable national or jurisdiction-specific needs to be identified, projected, planned for and addressed on a timely basis
- enable national or jurisdiction-specific initiatives in workforce development or organisational capability to be monitored and evaluated
- provide a benchmark for individual RTOs and jurisdictions to assess their profile against that of greater aggregates (e.g. type of provider).

What would a collection entail?

Workforce data, like any data, can be gathered in a variety of different ways. The choice of method is determined by identifying the level of precision required of the results, the character of the data sought, and the costs (including the compliance costs) of obtaining it.

We can broadly distinguish between data that arises out of the by-product of an administrative system or data that is freshly generated via a survey. We can also distinguish between data that is obtained from employers or from members of the VET workforce. This gives rise to three possibilities (an administrative collection from employees is not applicable) the advantages and disadvantages of which are spelt out in the table overleaf. This suggests that the two main competing options are an administrative collection through the human resource management systems of RTOs or a survey of employees. The choice of one over the other would be determined by the desire for accuracy (an administrative collection) over the demand for more subjective data on attitudes to work and a lower cost (an employee survey).
## Options for a VET workforce data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of collection</th>
<th>Kind of data collected</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Administrative – employer</strong>&lt;br&gt;RTOs would download an extract of records from in-house HR system, to some prescribed standard, and submit this data to the data collection agency.</td>
<td>Basic demographics: age, sex, disadvantaged groups.&lt;br&gt;Employment characteristics: working hours, nature of contract, tenure, and pay.&lt;br&gt;Qualifications.&lt;br&gt;Skill development activity in recent period.&lt;br&gt;Attitudes to work and career.</td>
<td>Data is at individual employee level which offers the maximum opportunity for analysis.&lt;br&gt;Extremely useful for monitoring workforce flows, and analysing determinants of quits.&lt;br&gt;Subject to RTO compliance, data would be highly accurate.</td>
<td>Expensive to mount, mostly in initial set-up costs.&lt;br&gt;Compliance costs could be high, at least for RTOs with unsophisticated HR systems.&lt;br&gt;Information about employees limited to basic demographic and employment characteristics.</td>
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<td><strong>Survey – employer</strong>&lt;br&gt;The data collection agency would ask a series of questions of RTOs, most likely in the form of a postal questionnaire, as responses would require recourse to records.</td>
<td>Pre-specified tables showing workforce composition by basic demographic and employment characteristics, e.g. age by sex, sex by full- or part-time.</td>
<td>Inexpensive to mount.</td>
<td>Compliance costs could be as high as above, i.e. the type of data being sought may require RTOs to produce reports from their HR systems to answer the questions.&lt;br&gt;Data would be aggregated at RTO level, and would be much less amenable to a range of analyses (i.e. can only give the same level of breakdown as used in the survey questions).</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Survey – workforce</strong>&lt;br&gt;The data collection agency would survey individual employees, most likely by a postal questionnaire, though a telephone survey might also be suitable.</td>
<td>Basic demographics: age, sex, disadvantaged groups.&lt;br&gt;Employment characteristics: working hours, nature of contract, tenure, and pay.&lt;br&gt;Qualifications.&lt;br&gt;Skill development activity in recent period.&lt;br&gt;Attitudes to work and career.</td>
<td>Data is at individual employee level which offers the maximum opportunity for analysis.&lt;br&gt;Relatively inexpensive to mount, though more expensive than a survey of RTOs as there would need to be a two-stage sampling process of working through the RTOs to identify employees to be surveyed.</td>
<td>Compliance costs for RTOs lighter, though would need to be a conduit for sampling employees.&lt;br&gt;Non-response likely to be considerably greater than for an administrative collection, particularly in publicly funded sector.&lt;br&gt;Some of the data items would be captured with less accuracy than through an administrative collection, especially employment characteristics.</td>
</tr>
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Other data requirements

In addition to baseline data collection and analysis, the following data and research is also required:

- workforce projections, using different scenarios, to predict workforce supply and demand and identify potential skill shortages
- a qualitative profile of VET professionals, to inform initiatives designed to improve job satisfaction and retention, and to support change management activities within RTOs
- research to identify the potential pool of professionals, including where they are likely to come from and what would attract them to work in VET.

Workforce planning

There has been considerable investment in workforce planning at the RTO and State and Territory level. However, to date, there has been no agreement or structure in place to support national attention or action in relation to workforce supply and demand.

The Australian National Audit Office identifies the following benefits of workforce planning at the organisational level (2001: 5):

- strengthening capability to support achievement of business outputs and outcomes, now and in the future
- encouraging a rigorous understanding of the workforce profile, based on a thorough analysis of workforce data
- facilitating rapid and strategic responses to change
- assisting in the identification and management of people with the knowledge critical for effective and efficient operations
- providing a mechanism for directly linking expenditure on people to organisational outputs and outcomes.

At a national level, a different set of drivers applies. The Australian Health Workforce Officials Committee (2003) identified the following advantages of national workforce planning:

- National health workforce structures can improve coordination and collaboration needed to address health workforce issues and policy development.
- The capacity to undertake strategic planning and rethinking about future workforce skill requirements and strategies to manage future health workforce shortages.
- The ability to address workforce problems and issues evident across jurisdictions, such as shortages or over-supply.
- The capacity to develop common data definitions and improve the national minimum data set for workforce-related data items.
- The ability to develop a framework for national coordination and action on health workforce issues.
In VET, some of the issues that may require attention at a range of levels include:

- the ageing of the VET workforce, in particular in TAFE, and implications for succession planning and recruitment of new staff
- possible skill shortages as competition for skilled staff increases, including among the school, VET and university sectors, and between RTOs and industry.

However, the new governance structure responsible for the national approach will decide what requires national attention and action, once a more consistent evidence base is available to support decision making.

**Recommendations**

Once an appropriate methodology for data collection and analysis has been determined, it is recommended that the new governance structure responsible for the national approach:

- Identify key priorities for data collection about the workforce, in consultation with the National Training Statistics Committee (NTSC).
- Determine other research to be conducted in addition to quantitative data collection, including workforce projections, qualitative profiling and research on the potential pool of VET professionals.
- Consider whether to establish an expert group to begin work on developing a common language to describe VET professionals and their job characteristics.
- Determine what action is required in relation to workforce planning, and at what levels, based on existing and new research.
2.8 Governance

To fully support the national approach to the VET workforce described in the previous sections, the governance model will also need to operate with national effect.

The features of the proposed national governance model are:

- a coordinated national program for the VET workforce
- a national committee for the VET workforce.

An investment by Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) CEOs, the ANTA Board and ANTA Ministerial Council in a governance model in this form is predicated on their agreement to a national program of substance and long-term significance.

**Coordinated national program**

The objective of the coordinated national program would be to build the capability and capacity of Australia’s VET workforce to:

- assist in the delivery of the objectives for Australia’s social and economic development, set out in *Shaping our Future: the National Strategy for VET 2004–2010*
- meet the needs and expectations of the clients of VET
- deliver the products developed for the VET system.

The objective of the national program will be achieved by:

- building on work already being done to develop the skills and capabilities of VET professionals and to support and improve professional practice, in particular for those staff of RTOs involved directly in delivering nationally recognised training
- developing high-performing organisations capable of delivering against the agreed objectives of the national strategy, providing VET products and services and meeting the needs and expectations of industry and other clients
- developing the evidence base to support State and Territory and RTO planning, and enable national workforce planning, should the evidence base identify that national action is required.

As the program will not represent the entirety of current and future initiatives in relation to the Australian VET workforce, and is therefore not a fully integrated program, there will be a strong emphasis on coordination with related programs or frameworks, such as the *Australian Flexible Learning Framework*.

The elements of the coordinated national program will comprise:

- the various activities to implement the three platforms of activity
- an evaluation framework and performance measures for the program.

The coordinated national program will need to be developed having regard to the national program for VET research and evaluation, the arrangements for national data collection and performance management and the relevant action plan for *Shaping our Future: the National Strategy for VET 2004–2010*.
**National committee**

It is proposed that a high-level committee, the Committee for the VET Workforce, would be responsible for overseeing the strategic direction of the coordinated national program and for the implementation of the initiatives under the program. The committee would be a driver of, and advocate for, the program.

It is proposed that the committee be a committee of the ANTA CEOs Committee, chaired by a member of the CEOs Committee. An arrangement in these terms will:

- provide the necessary credibility and profile for the program in the VET sector
- reinforce the emphasis on sharing jurisdictional best practice, exploring ‘cutting edge’ ideas and testing models at the local level as part of a coordinated national approach
- maximise the opportunity for collaboration at the State and Territory level, where the conditions for the success of a national approach will be determined
- ensure that leverage in relation to State and Territory initiatives is exercised through the national program.

The committee would have a clear responsibility to ensure the coordination of the national program with related programs and frameworks.

The committee would provide advice to the ANTA CEOs Committee on the direction and operation of the program, including:

- the priorities under the program
- the allocation of funding under the program
- the evaluation strategy and performance measures for the program
- the outcomes and implications of formative research and consequent proposed activities
- the convening of such expert working groups to advance specific issues as required from time to time.

The committee would, through the ANTA CEOs Committee, provide an annual proposed program of work to the ANTA Board and ANTA Ministerial Council for consideration, incorporating for the second year of its operation and beyond a consolidated report on progress against the annual program for the year past.

**Membership**

In addition to the Chair, it is proposed that membership of the committee include:

- ANTA
- the Australian Government
- all States and Territories wishing to take up membership
- representatives of TAFE, private, enterprise and community based RTOs and of the peak industry associations (including employer and employee associations)
- NCVER Executive Director.
Members of the committee would be senior personnel who could speak with authority on behalf of their jurisdictions/constituencies.

**Committee secretariat**

There are a number of options for the location of the secretary and secretariat for the committee, including within ANTA or Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) or by way of a contracted service entered into with a State or Territory or some suitable organisation. The secretariat would manage and coordinate the coordinated national program and would be appropriately resourced for this purpose.

**Priority tasks**

Based upon the platforms of activity described in Sections 5–7, the initial priority tasks for the committee might include:

- establishing and resourcing (or expanding) a national initiative to promote, facilitate and measure good practice
- considering options for the future management of the national workforce development programs, following reviews of *Reframing the Future* and the *Australian Flexible Learning Framework*
- convening an expert working group to undertake research, and consultation with the field, about options to support and improve professional practice
- commissioning national research on current HR practice in RTOs, and best practice approaches to HR in VET, and in Australia and overseas, and make this available to RTOs
- including in the national program for workforce development a stream of activity with the specific objective of developing organisational capability
- commissioning the NCVER to develop organisational performance measures and models and providing these to RTOs for their use
- identifying a preferred option for data collection and key priorities for data collection about the workforce, in consultation with the NTSC
- determining other research to be conducted in addition to quantitative data collection, including workforce projections, qualitative profiling and research on the potential pool of VET professionals.

**Funding**

Funding for the national coordinated program and secretariat will need to be considered in the first instance by the ANTA CEOs Committee. The initial step in determining potential sources of funding would involve mapping existing sources at the national (Australian Government and ANTA) level and State and Territory levels related to what is the agreed content of the national program. For example, for the workforce development platform this would involve consideration of funding for *Australian Flexible Learning Framework* and *Reframing the Future*. 
2.9 References


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3. Data analysis

Getting the measure of the VET professional
3.1 Tables and figures

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Currently there is a gap in what is known about people employed as VET professionals. There are studies that have looked at various jurisdictions, notably Victoria, or limited surveys focusing on a particular issue. However, there is to date no national profile of the VET workforce available. This study has examined a variety of sources including past studies and two ABS surveys – the Census of Population and Housing, and the Survey of Education and Training, both of which provide a national picture. The key findings are highlighted in bold. (Note that definitions of the terms VET professional and VET practitioner are provided in Box 1 of this report.)

**The work of VET professionals is broadening.** They are involved in a range of ‘direct’ activities, specifically delivery, development, and review and assessment of courses or modules. Over the period 1997–2001 VET professionals became more involved in direct activities, and less involved in indirect activities such as administrative support, marketing programs and management, with an overall effect of greater multi-tasking.

**VET professionals are mostly VET practitioners.** The direct activities that most VET professionals are involved in also form the core activity of VET practitioners. As a qualification to this however, outside of TAFE, most VET practitioners spend little time on direct provision. Indeed, a clear majority of VET practitioners employed by other organisations providing education and training spend very little time on direct activities. The implication is that these VET practitioners are not employed primarily to provide VET.

The age profile of VET professionals has shifted upward over the period 1997–2001, with 34% of these people aged 45 years or older in 2001. **VET professionals are no older than the workforce at large.** However, **VET teachers in TAFE are on average much older** than VET professionals taken as a whole (61% aged 45 years or more). They have a similar age profile to that of teachers in the higher education and schools sectors – partly due to the time needed to acquire the skills and experience to teach.

There are roughly equal numbers of male and female teachers in TAFE. The Census also indicates that **a majority of TAFE teachers work part-time,** though this is not the case for males, a majority of whom work full-time. **Most TAFE teachers are employed on a non-permanent basis.** It also appears to be the case that this is not confined to the TAFE sector, and that the trend is towards greater use of both part-time and non-permanent staff.

**More than two out of three VET professionals have a post-school qualification.** Professionals in TAFE are more likely to hold a post-school qualification (eight in ten) than other VET professionals (two in three). Professionals in TAFE are also more likely to hold a VET related qualification, while those outside TAFE are slightly more likely to hold a bachelor degree or postgraduate qualification. However, **most VET practitioners do not have qualifications in education or training** – a situation which is being remedied, for permanent staff at least, in some jurisdictions.
These findings have important implications for workforce planning for VET professionals, particularly teachers in the TAFE sector. Three in five teachers who are employed in the TAFE sector as their main job are aged over 45, almost double the average for the Australian workforce as a whole. They mostly enjoy permanency and are well-qualified. Their jobs are broadening. At the same time, the sector is making increasing use of part-time and non-permanent staff, most of whom do not have formal qualifications in education and training. These now make up a majority of professionals employed in the sector.

Outside the TAFE sector the implications of ageing for workforce planning are less immediate. At the same time, the findings do raise questions about whether VET professionals are sufficiently well-accredited to be delivering training – nine out of ten do not have any qualifications in education or training. Any investigation of this issue must however take into account that most VET professionals outside the VET sector are not primarily employed to provide VET.

The findings must be partly qualified by difficulty in gaining data on the number and characteristics of VET professionals, a situation exemplified by the fact that there is no definitive count of the number employed. Better data would go some way towards improving the ability of the sector to engage in workforce planning.
Vocational education and training is a substantial industry in Australia. There is a large, publicly funded system, mostly made up of TAFE Institutes, and a growing private system. The private system constitutes organisations whose main activity is the provision of education and training, most of which are registered training organisations, and other businesses that provide some training as an adjunct activity, such as product suppliers. Employers, too, are major providers of training to their workforces, and some of these are also registered training organisations.

Information on the VET system varies across these provider types, and also by the kind of information sought. We know most about students undertaking VET in the public system. We know, perhaps, least of all about those who are employed by VET providers. Certainly, at a national level, it has hitherto not been possible to present a profile of the VET workforce. This deficiency was identified as one of six major gaps in national VET statistics in a joint ABS and NCVER report for the National Training Statistics Committee last year. Arising out of that process, NCVER undertook a national study of the TAFE workforce (Blythe and Stanwick 2003), in part to test the boundaries of what information could be gathered nationally. While the report contains much useful information, a key finding was the lack of consistency in how information is compiled and reported – only two data elements, age and sex, were nationally consistent.

There have been various studies done which examine one facet or another of the VET workforce, some national in focus – for example, the study by Harris et al. (2001) on professional development. There are also several studies that have been undertaken within jurisdictions, notably in Victoria, where the TAFE system has been the focus. Even when narrowed to this scope, the problems which beset the collection of national data – lack of consistency in information collected and how defined – are evident. Malley et al. (2000: 12), in one of the Victorian studies, comment:

Most Institutes required special data runs to supply what might be considered as basic human resource information. The absence of data on sessional and casual staff was common. But so too was a general capacity to provide periodic reports and analyses on basic human resource variables.

For this study we have examined the full range of publicly available past studies to draw out consistent findings.1 We have also identified two ABS primary sources – the Census of Population and Housing, and the Survey of Education and Training – which do provide nationally consistent information on the VET workforce. More details on both are contained in the appendix, including caveats regarding their use. The main caveat is that neither source is especially useful for examining job characteristics, such as working hours and employment status. What these sources are valuable for, however, is providing a nationally consistent demographic profile of the VET workforce, and how that varies across different types of providers. We can also obtain highly valuable information on what it is that those working in VET do. Box 1, overleaf, summarises the concepts and terms used in this report.

To sum up, there is a range of primary and secondary sources that can be used to draw together a profile of the VET professional. There is good national data on personal characteristics, and it can be broken down by different kinds of providers. There is much less good information on job characteristics, which means we need to rely more heavily on secondary sources in this area. It is also not possible to produce an accurate count of the number of people working as VET professionals.

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1 We set more store by national studies than State-specific studies in this report, as the State-specific studies are limited to Victoria and findings may not be applicable in other States – Blythe and Stanwick (2003), for instance, show significant variation in TAFE workforce composition across jurisdictions.
Box 1: Concepts and terms used in the report

This report is part of a larger project on the future of the VET professional, defined in the project as staff employed in delivery and staff providing leadership, management and direct support, and therefore a sub-set of the larger VET workforce. This box explains how we have matched existing research and data sources into this definition.

Operational definitions of VET professionals and VET practitioners

For already published reports, we are limited to the definition used by the researchers, and we must judge how well it matches. For the two primary sources, we examined the questions asked and have used them in such a way as to get the best approximation to our definition. The Census identifies VET teachers, but not other VET professionals (e.g. industry liaison managers). It is, therefore, more aligned with the project definition of a VET practitioner — lecturers, teachers and trainers. The Surveys of Education and Training cover the entire VET workforce, and we can narrow the scope to VET professionals by examining the range of activities people say they are involved in. These are:

- development of courses/modules
- delivery of courses/modules
- assessment of courses/modules
- management of education or training
- development of plans
- administrative support
- marketing programs

We have defined a VET professional as those involved in any of the first five activities listed above. This means that those who said they were only involved in administrative support or marketing programs lie in the VET workforce, but are not a VET professional. The first three activities listed, which the survey calls direct activities, are used to define a VET practitioner.

Employers of VET professionals and VET practitioners

Most of the secondary sources are limited to the TAFE sector. The Census has as its scope VET teachers in the education industry, employed in TAFE or outside TAFE. The Surveys of Education and Training are not limited in scope. For that source, we group the employers of VET professionals (and practitioners) into the following categories:

- TAFE
- non-TAFE training organisations (ACE, Skill Centres, business colleges, other private training organisations)
- other organisations that provide training (professional or industry association, product manufacturer or supplier), but not as their main business
- enterprises that provide in-house training for their employees

The first two provider types are those whose main activity is education and training, and that can reasonably be assumed to be registered training organisations. Most of their delivery is likely to be nationally recognised training. Some of those working for the other two provider types are also likely to be involved in providing nationally recognised training, but this is unknown. Some staff may be employed by more than one different kind of provider, though this was not canvassed in the survey, and our assumption is that the likely incidence of this is low.
3.4 Activities of VET professionals

The work of VET professionals is broadening

From the Surveys of Education and Training, we obtained information on the kind of education and training activities that VET professionals are involved in. These can be sub-divided into direct and indirect activities, with direct activities constituting the development, delivery and assessment of courses/modules.

Figure 1 details the activities undertaken by VET professionals, comparing 1997 with 2001. Most VET professionals are involved in a range of activities, with an average of three of the seven activities selected. The most common activity is delivery of courses or modules, the least common is marketing programs.

Between 1997 and 2001, the focus of activities undertaken by VET professionals has changed, with individuals now considerably more likely to be involved in direct activities than they were in 1997. Conversely, they are less likely to be involved in indirect activities. The best illustration of this is the fall in the proportion involved in management of education or training, which ranked as the most common activity in 1997 and fell to third in 2001. The overall conclusion, therefore, is that the job of the VET professional broadened over the period.

Figure 1: Activities undertaken by VET professionals, 1997 and 2001


While the role has broadened, it has also become more challenging, as the study by Harris et al. (2001) shows. Their Delphi survey of teachers/trainers and key stakeholders identified the main challenges facing VET professionals, almost all of which were to do with responding to change in the external environment, whether market driven (competition, Training Packages, responsive to industry), technology (flexible delivery, IT) and the changing nature of work (job security).
VET professionals are, mostly, VET practitioners

In Figure 1 we showed how VET professionals were more involved in direct VET activities in 2001 than they were in 1997. Involvement in direct VET activities – delivery, development and assessment of courses/modules – is the core activity of VET practitioners.

Using this definition, most VET professionals are involved in one form or another of these direct VET activities – in other words, VET professionals are also largely VET practitioners.

Figure 2 breaks down the percentage of VET professionals involved in direct activities by the kind of training provider that had employed them. The figure shows that VET professionals employed in TAFE or with non-TAFE training organisations, both of which provide education as their main activity, are more likely to be involved in direct VET activities than individuals employed in other organisations providing training or enterprises, whose main activity is not the provision of education.

**Figure 2: Per cent of VET professionals involved in direct activities, by type of training provider, 2001**


Reinforcing the finding from the previous page about the broadening role of the VET professional, a comparison with 1997 reveals the proportion who were involved in some direct activities to have increased from 80% to 88% in 2001.
Outside of TAFE, most VET practitioners spend little time on direct provision

As well as asking about the kind of activities they were involved in, the Survey of Education and Training asks VET practitioners how much time they spend per week on delivery, development or assessment of courses/modules. By relating this to how many hours they are employed in total each week, we can derive the proportion of time they spend on these direct activities. We then categorised this measure into ‘very little’ (less than 10% of their time), ‘up to half’ (between 10% and 49%), and ‘half or more’.

Using this measure, Figure 3 shows the amount of time spent by VET practitioners on direct activities by provider type. It very clearly shows that it differs markedly according to the kind of provider that the work has been done for. Among VET practitioners employed in a TAFE organisation, around one in two spend at least half of their time on direct activities, while three in ten spend ‘very little’ time. The sharpest contrast is with VET practitioners working outside the education industry. A clear majority of these VET practitioners, those employed by other organisations providing training and enterprises, spend ‘very little’ time on direct VET activities, while only around one in ten spend at least half of their time. A clear implication of this is that these VET practitioners are not primarily employed to provide VET. It is a sideline to their main tasks.

Figure 3: Fraction of working time spent by VET practitioners on direct activities, by type of training provider, 2001

3.5 Ageing of VET professionals

The age profile of VET professionals matches the Australian labour force

It is well known that the Australian population is ageing. The current median age of the population is 34 years, and it is expected to reach 45 years by the middle of this century. Many industry sectors are conscious of both the ageing of their own workforces, and the likely heightened competition for younger talent in coming years, as the number of young people entering the labour market begins to shrink.

In line with other industry sectors, Figure 4 shows the age profile of the VET professional shifted upwards between 1997 and 2001. Just over one in three (34%) were an 'older worker' (aged 45 and over) in 2001. There does, however, remain a significant percentage of individuals aged up to 35 (42% in 2001). These figures match almost exactly those for the Australian labour force as a whole with 43% under 35 years and 33% over 45 years in 2002 (ABS, 2002a).

Figure 4: Age profile of VET professionals, 1997 and 2001

VET practitioners in TAFE are, on average, older than VET professionals as a whole

We can use the Census data on VET teachers (or practitioners) in TAFE to look at their age structure, bearing in mind that a high percentage of VET professionals are VET practitioners (Figure 2).

The data indicates that TAFE teachers have an older age profile than is the case for VET professionals as a whole; and, therefore, they are also an older workforce than the Australian workforce at large. In 1996, 48% of VET practitioners were aged 45 or over. By 2001, this had increased to 61%, with 16% aged 55 or more.

**Figure 5: Age profile of VET practitioners in TAFE, 1996 and 2001**

![Age profile of VET practitioners in TAFE, 1996 and 2001](image)


This is consistent with other studies. For example, a recent study of the Victorian TAFE teacher workforce found that 63% were between 41 and 60, and 4% were 61 and over (OPE, 2002). A 1999 survey of 686 teachers and trainers across 394 registered training organisations found that about 45% of teachers and trainers were in their forties, and 11% were 55 years of age or more. (Harris et al., 2001).

While TAFE teachers have an older age profile, so too do teachers in other education sectors. In higher education, 38% of academic staff are 50 or over, while just 6% are under 30 years of age (DEST, 2003b). In the schools sector, approximately 30% of school teachers are under 35, while 42% were aged 45 years or more (ABS, 2002b). The median age of school teachers was 34 in 1986 and had risen to 43 in 2001 (DEST 2003a). This older age structure in education is, in part, a reflection of the time required to gain the skills and experience needed to be employed as teachers.²

² In New South Wales, for example, full-time teachers employed in TAFE Institutes are required to have both a degree and at least three years of industry experience.
Older VET professionals are concentrated in the TAFE sector

The finding that TAFE teachers are older than VET professionals as a whole is also borne out in Figure 6. This compares the proportion of VET professionals aged 45 years or more by the kind of provider that employed them. It clearly shows that the percentage of older VET professionals in TAFE is considerably higher than in all other provider types. Indeed, for these provider types, fewer of the people employed as VET professionals are older workers than is found in the Australian workforce as a whole.

To the extent that ageing is an issue for the VET system in the context of workforce planning, it is one that is very much more pointed in the TAFE sector.

Figure 6: Older VET professionals by type of training provider, 2001

3.6 Employment status of VET professionals

Permanent TAFE teachers have long tenure

One of the reasons why the TAFE teaching workforce has an older age profile is that many staff have long tenure. The NCVER study on the TAFE workforce reported length of service of teaching staff by permanent/non-permanent status for four States. For all four States, around half of permanent teachers had 15 or more years of service (range of 41%-56%). In most States, only around one in ten permanent staff had 5 or less years of service (range of 1.9% to 12.3%). Unsurprisingly, length of service for non-permanent staff was much lower. For the three states that reported this, around two in three non-permanent staff had 5 or less years of service (range of 59% to 79%).

The Victorian study on the TAFE workforce (OPCETE, 2000) provided data on length of service for teaching staff with ongoing contracts, and for non-sessional teachers. The data indicated that teachers with ongoing contracts had been with their current Institute for an average of thirteen years. For males the average was higher than for females, 14 compared to 10 years. A quarter of males had been with their current organisation for twenty or more years, 41% fifteen or more years, and two-thirds ten or more years. For females, 17% had been with their current organisation for fifteen or more years, and 42% ten or more years.

Data for non-sessional teachers indicated that they had been with their current employer for an average of nine years. For males, the average was eleven years, and for females seven years. The average for staff in metropolitan areas was ten years as compared to eight years for staff in regional areas. When looked at in terms of field of study, the highest average length of employment was for engineering (fourteen years), building (twelve years), and visual/performing arts (eleven years).

A survey by Harris et al. (2001) examined years of employment of teachers and trainers with their current organisation. Overall, half had been with their current employer for five years or less, with 17% being with the current employer for over fifteen years, and 27% over ten years. However, when divided into provider type, TAFE staff were found to be far longer serving than their private sector counterparts. Unsurprisingly, longer serving staff were also more likely to be permanent. Longer serving staff were also more likely to be male, and shorter serving staff female. In terms of field of education, teachers in IT and service/hospitality tended to have less years of service.

There are roughly equal numbers of male and female VET practitioners in TAFE

Table 1 provides data on the proportion of TAFE practitioners by gender and employment status from the 2001 Census. It shows that there are slightly more male than female VET practitioners in TAFE (51% compared to 49%). The NCVER study came up with near identical figures, 51% female and 49% male (excluding Tasmania).
The 2001 Survey of Education and Training, however, indicates that there are significantly more male than female VET practitioners in TAFE (61% compared to 39%) – though this is based on a relatively small sample, and we regard the Census and NCVER figures as more plausible.

Table 1: TAFE practitioners by gender by employment status, 2001

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Full-time</th>
<th>Part-time</th>
<th>Not stated</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>29.3</td>
<td>21.0</td>
<td>0.8</td>
<td>51.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>48.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45.7</td>
<td>53.0</td>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>100.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2001 Census of Population and Housing, unpublished data.

More TAFE teachers are employed part-time than full-time

The Census also indicates (Table 1) that around 46% of TAFE teachers were employed on a full-time basis in 2001, while around 53% were part-time. It must be noted here that the Census only identifies TAFE teachers where that is their main job. The Census figures are, therefore, certain to understate the true proportion of part-time employees in TAFE, because some people whose main job is in another field, and who teach with TAFE on a casual basis, will not have been captured. Nonetheless, the finding from the Census that a majority of TAFE teachers work on a part-time basis is a highly significant one. It compares with an overall proportion of 30% in the Australian workforce (ABS, 2002a).

This finding is supported by the NCVER study, which shows that there are more teachers who are part-time than full-time in all states except the Northern Territory and Queensland (very narrowly, with 49% part-time). New South Wales has, by far, the highest proportion of non-full time teaching staff with 78%.

Both the Census and the NCVER study also indicate that overall there is a greater proportion of males than females in full-time positions. Consequently, there is a greater proportion of females than males in employment that are part-time.
Most TAFE teachers are employed on a non-permanent basis

The NCVER study also categorised staff as being permanent or non-permanent. This is conceptually distinct from working hours (i.e. full- or part-time). It is possible to work full-time and not be employed permanently, and vice versa. In practice, however, working part-time on a non-permanent basis usually coincide.

The study found that a clear majority of TAFE teachers were employed on a non-permanent basis. This trend was consistent across States and Territories, and ranged from about 56% of staff being non-permanent in the Northern Territory, to 77% in NSW. The data also indicated that, apart from the Northern Territory, non-permanent staff tended to be employed on a non-full time basis. In contrast to this, permanent staff tended to be employed on a full-time basis.

In terms of gender, and across all States and Territories that reported this data, there was a much greater proportion of males employed on a permanent full-time basis than females. Consistent with this, more females than males were employed on a non-permanent non full-time basis across all States and Territories that reported this data.

Most other studies support these findings, and also show that the clear trend is towards hiring greater numbers of part-time and non-permanent staff.

Data from the Victorian TAFE workforce indicates that 54% of TAFE teachers are male and 46% female, while 49% of teachers were full-time and 51% part-time. In addition, while more males were either ongoing or contract teachers, more females were sessional teachers. In comparison, in 1993, 61% of Victorian TAFE teachers were male, and 39% female, while 59% of the teaching staff were full-time, and 41% part-time. While there was a much greater proportion of males than females who were ongoing teachers (79% as compared to 21%), there were more females than males employed as contract or sessional staff (Davies and Gribble, 2002b). An earlier 1998 study on the Victorian TAFE workforce (OPCETE, 2000) showed similar trends, with 53% of teaching staff being classified as permanent, 33% contract, and 14% sessional. More males than females were classified as permanent (62% of males and 38% of females).

The use of part-time workers, mostly contract/sessional or otherwise casual, is not confined to the TAFE sector. The 1999 survey of 394 RTOs found that of 11,084 teachers and trainers reported on, 40% were permanent staff, 25% contract, 30% casual, and 5% self-employed contractors (Harris et al., 2001). While more males were permanent, contract, or self-employed, more females were employed as casual/sessional staff.

Similarly, a 1998 study on staff training in the commercial sector of Victorian VET found that over 70% of teaching staff in the commercial organisations surveyed were either sessional or part-time staff. One explanation for this is that many teachers employed in the commercial sector derive income from other sources (Fawcett, Parrott and Strachan, 1998).
A high proportion of VET professionals are self-employed

The 2001 Survey of Education and Training indicated that close to 18% of VET professionals working in TAFE were self-employed, closely followed by those in private training organisations (17%) and other training organisations (16%). Only 10% of VET professionals working in an enterprise were self-employed (Figure 7). Self-employment status refers to a person's main job, which may or may not be as a VET professional, so this should be regarded more as an individual attribute rather than a job attribute. Indeed, what it suggests is that many VET professionals are employed on a casual or sessional basis to teach in the area of expertise which constitutes their main job.

**Figure 7: VET professionals who are self-employed, by type of training provider, 2001**

3.7 Qualifications of VET professionals

More than 2 out of 3 VET professionals have post-school qualifications

Figure 8 shows the proportion of VET professionals holding particular qualifications by the type of training provider employing them. These are sub-divided into postgraduate, bachelor degree, and other post-school (or VET) qualifications.

VET professionals in the TAFE sector were much more likely to hold a post-school qualification than all other VET professionals, roughly eight out of ten, compared with two out of three. They also had the highest proportion with VET qualifications, more than half. VET professionals working outside TAFE were slightly more likely to hold a bachelor degree or post-graduate qualification.

VET professionals are significantly more qualified than the workforce as a whole. In 2001 around half of the Australian workforce (aged 15–64) held a post-school qualification, with 18% with a degree or higher, and 31% with VET qualifications.

Figure 8: Qualification of VET professionals by type of training provider, 2001

Most VET practitioners do not have qualifications in education or training

The Survey of Education and Training asked VET practitioners whether they held a qualification in education or training. The very clear finding is that most do not. Outside of VET practitioners working in TAFE, where it is around one in three, only around one in ten have a qualification specifically in the field of education or training.¹

Figure 9: Education and training qualifications of VET practitioners, by type of training provider, 2001

Other studies tend to suggest a higher level of VET professionals have education related qualifications, though an important qualifier here is that it is very closely associated with employment status.

Data on the qualifications of VET providers was gained from a survey undertaken in 1999 of 651 teachers and trainers employed across 394 RTOs (Harris et al., 2001). The qualifications were segmented both by type of RTO and mode of employment. Teachers and trainers employed by TAFE had a greater proportion of trades related qualifications than those employed by private RTOs (17% as compared to 6%), and teaching awards (89% as compared to 58%). A greater proportion of teachers and trainers in private RTOs had non-teaching postgraduate qualifications than in TAFE (25% as compared to 15%), and workplace trainer assessor/training qualifications, notable the Certificate IV in workplace training (62% as compared with 43%).

¹ One explanation offered for the relatively low incidence of educational qualifications in TAFE is the operation of a quasi-RPL system where post-school qualifications coupled with a range of relevant VET experiences are deemed equivalent, for the purposes of delivery and assessment, to the requirements of the Certificate level IV in Workplace Training (NSW correspondence).
Differences were also found among teachers employed under different modes of employment. In particular, a greater proportion of permanent staff were found to have completed:

- post-graduate qualification other than in teaching (21%, as compared to 12% for contract staff and 17% for casual staff)
- trade certificates (14% of permanent, as compared to 10% of contract, and 8% of casual staff)
- bachelor degrees in education (20% of permanent, as compared to 16% of contract and 9% of casual)
- teaching diplomas (24% of permanent, as compared to 10% of contract, and 15% of casual staff).

Other data on qualifications was obtained in 1999 from a survey of 174 industry RTOs in Victoria (Auscorp Marketing & Strachan Research, 2000). Based on the survey results, the main type of qualifications teaching staff held in these RTOs were:

- an education/teaching qualification (23% of providers employed full-time teachers qualified to this level, 21% part-time and 19% sessional)
- a certificate IV in workplace training and assessment (16% of providers employed full-time teachers qualified to this level, 13% part-time and 11% sessional)
- a CAT I and CAT II workplace trainer and assessor qualification (14% of providers employed full-time teachers qualified to this level, 10% part-time and 22% sessional)
- a bachelor degree other than in education (14% of providers employed full-time teachers qualified to this level, 22% part-time and 13% sessional).

A recent Victorian study of human resource records from seven Institutes and survey of 1675 teachers showed that 83% had an educational qualification, most commonly a diploma (27%) or a post-graduate qualification (26%). This study may, however, be influenced by the employment status of the teacher, that is, whether they are employed on a full-time/part-time or permanent/non-permanent basis.

These findings suggest differential employment requirements may be used in hiring staff in TAFE systems, with greater emphasis placed upon qualifications in general, and educational qualifications in particular, for permanent staff.
3.8 Conclusion

This report has drawn on several previous studies of the VET workforce and original analyses of ABS data from the Census and the Survey of Education and Training to provide a statistical profile of VET professionals. Several caveats attend the use of the ABS data, notably that it is largely unsuitable for examining job characteristics, such as working hours. One point which neatly illustrates the inadequacy of existing data sources is that it is not possible to produce a reliable count of the number of people working as VET professionals.

The character of the VET professional workforce reflects changes affecting the workforce at large. Over the past couple of decades the main changes have been greater participation by women, substantial growth in part-time and casual employment, and increasing educational attainment. Any workforce planning must acknowledge and accommodate itself to these wider changes.

With data caveats in mind, it is nonetheless clear that there are looming workforce planning issues facing the VET sector. These can broadly be divided into two kinds: those facing TAFE systems, and those facing other training providers.

Within TAFE systems, the major immediate issue confronting workplace planners is the ageing of the workforce. Three in five TAFE teachers are aged 45 or more, including 16% who are aged 55 or more. This means the sector is facing disproportionately high levels of workforce attrition over the coming decade. The second issue facing TAFE systems is the apparent cleavage in employment status between permanent qualified teachers and non-permanent teachers who are considerably less well qualified. The first of these groups is also the one where older teachers are concentrated. The second group is in the ascendancy and is growing relative to the first group.

Outside the TAFE sector, the issue of workforce ageing is less pressing - that is, no more so than for those interested in workforce planning in other industries, bearing in mind that the median age of the workforce as a whole is increasing. The more immediate issue here is the credentials of VET professionals. Around one in three have no post-school qualification. Around nine in ten do not have any formal qualifications in education or training. It is a legitimate question to ask, what is it that defines these people as 'professionals'? In delivering any policy response to that question it must also be recognised that most VET professionals working outside the TAFE sector are not primarily employed to provide VET.

Finally, for ongoing monitoring, evaluation and planning purposes, we note the desirability of improving the available data on the VET workforce. This is probably best done through periodic workforce surveys than an administrative collection. The first has the advantage of being flexible, and therefore adaptable to topical issues, and it would be relatively cheap to mount. An administrative collection would provide more accurate data on the basic elements of a workforce profile, such as gender, age and qualifications, but it would be expensive to maintain, and would not easily lend itself to more qualitative issues relevant to workforce planning (e.g. job satisfaction).
3.9 References

Auscorp Marketing & Strachan Research 2000, *Staff training and development in the industry sector of the State training system* (draft), State Training Board of Victoria.


Davies W & Gribble I 2002a, *The 1993 TAFE workforce at a glance*.

Davies W & Gribble I 2002b, *The 2001 TAFE workforce at a glance*.


3.10 Appendix: Primary data sources

Census of Population and Housing, 1996 and 2001

As the Census gathers information on occupation, and as VET teachers are a discrete occupational group (in the classification used for these purposes), it is possible to isolate this group, and create a profile of them based on other Census information – such as sex, age, and highest educational attainment.

There are two caveats to using the Census. Many individuals provide insufficient information on the Census form to allow their occupation to be classified down to such a fine level as a VET teacher. This means that there will be an under-count of the true number. It also means that we must assume that those who did provide sufficient detail generally have similar characteristics to those who did not. A more important caveat is that the Census only obtains the occupation of people’s main job. For those who have more than one job, only the main job counts. This is a significant qualifier in VET where we know from other studies (e.g. Blythe and Stanwick 2003) that there are very large numbers of contract/sessional teachers employed in the system. Those who are employed on this basis, and who have other jobs which account for a greater proportion of their working time, will not be included in the count. For this reason, the Census data is not very useful for discussing employment status (e.g. full- or part-time working).

Survey of Education and Training, 1997 and 2001

These surveys included a block of questions of people who said they were involved in education or training activities as part of their job. Based on who they provided the service for, it is possible to identify people working in VET. For these individuals, information is available on demographic characteristics, job characteristics, the kind of VET activities they are engaged in, how many hours they spend in delivering VET, and whether they hold qualifications in education and training.

This source also has limitations. As a sample survey, it is subject to sampling error and, as the number of respondents who said that they worked in VET is relatively small, the capacity to ‘drill down’ is limited. This is especially the case for those working in the TAFE sector. A second limitation is that the job information only relates to an individual’s main job and it is not possible to tell from the survey whether that job is in VET.

The table below summarises how the two primary data sources match to the project definitions and scope.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VET practitioner</th>
<th>Education is main activity</th>
<th>Education is not main activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Census and SET</td>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>SET only</td>
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<tr>
<td>SET only</td>
<td>Non-TAFE</td>
<td>SET only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SET only</td>
<td>Other organisations providing training</td>
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<td>SET only</td>
<td>Enterprises</td>
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Enhancing the capability of VET professionals: Data analysis
4. Literature review
4.1 Introduction

In the last decade, the vocational education and training (VET) sector has been transformed from a large supply driven bureaucracy into a leaner market focused service industry.

As with other service industries, VET's primary asset is its people – the skills, expertise and experience of VET staff to deliver to individual and enterprise clients the kind of vocational education and training they want, value and need.

VET staff are not only the major asset but also the major expense to the VET budget – at the level of the registered training organisation (RTO), three dollars out of every five are spent on staff (Burke 2003: 33). Despite changes in staffing structures, employment conditions and delivery of services, that overhead seems unlikely to reduce further in the near future. However, investment in the development of the people asset is relatively low by other industry standards – on average, an estimated 1–2% of payroll is spent on professional development¹.

Two central questions arise:

- Is the VET workforce made up of the right kind of people with the right mix of skills and attributes to meet the needs of clients, the expectations of the community and the demands of a changing economy?
- What mix of people, skills, experience and attributes will be required to meet future needs and how can they best be acquired, developed, retained and managed and at what cost?

This literature review is one of several reports prepared for the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) as part of a research and strategy development project designed to address those questions.

The review summarises the available, relevant research and policy literature to provide the project team and ANTA with an agreed base of understanding about:

- the current trends (within and outside VET) that are impacting on the VET workforce
- what it means to be a VET professional
- what is happening in workforce planning and development in VET in Australia and in comparable systems overseas
- the major features of a best practice approach to workforce development and planning.

The review includes a summary of key messages and emerging themes but is not designed to interpret the research extensively or develop the questions that need to be addressed in future policy or strategy development. That work will be undertaken in a subsequent stage of the project.

There are inevitably some gaps in the literature base. Policy and research papers demonstrate a preoccupation with the past and the present; there is little or no work that takes a future focus. There is little nationally consistent data about the Australian VET workforce and a major gap in information about staffing in private training organisations. There is a considerable body of research about the VET client market and the skill and experience needs of VET professionals.

¹ According to Schofield (2002) expenditure averages 2%, Harris et al. (2001) indicates 1–6% and unpublished Victorian data suggests less than 1%.
to respond to the market. While research also tells us a lot about the experience and response to change of the ‘internal VET market’ of staff, less is known about staff motivations for entering, staying in or leaving the VET workforce.

The strengths in the literature demonstrate the depth of interest in the impact of training reform and how changes in the economy and industry generally play out within the VET sector. There is also evidence of a keen interest in changing professional practice in RTOs and the resurgence of interest in pedagogy, particularly how VET professionals can enhance their teaching and learning skills and their capacity for mentoring, coaching and learning facilitation.

The report reviews and summarises the literature sourced for this stage of the project as it relates to these key themes and questions. It is divided into the following sections:

- Part One looks at external and internal drivers for change in the VET sector and their impact on the VET workforce and the role of VET practitioners and professionals. It examines the changing business of VET, changing practice in RTOs, the changing expectations of clients about what VET professionals will deliver, and what this means for the VET workforce and the current and future role, skills, and capabilities of the VET professional.

- Part Two looks at current approaches to workforce planning and development, including current professional development and human resource management activity and outlines key features of best practice identified in the literature reviewed.

4.1.1 Key messages

There is clear consensus in the literature reviewed about drivers for change both within and beyond the VET sector, as well as broad agreement about the way that these trends are impacting on the VET workforce, and the role of the VET professional. These are briefly summarised below:

**VET experiences the same workforce trends as other industries, and faces many of the same challenges. However, these trends play out in specific ways in VET.**

- People’s experience and expectations of work are changing rapidly. Young people no longer expect that they will have a career for life.

- More and more people are working as free agents or portfolio workers, and choosing working lives that help them to achieve greater work–life balance.

- Access to learning opportunities and continuing development is a key factor in job satisfaction and retention for many of these workers.

- Most industries are experiencing problems with matching employees to required skills and capabilities, and recruiting and retaining new talent.

- As the pool of skilled workers contracts and demand for skilled workers increases, VET employers will increasingly have to compete to attract a skilled workforce.

- The image of VET, together with aspects of employment in VET, is likely to make it difficult to attract skilled staff.
Within RTOs a core/periphery model is evident, with a cohort of full-time, permanent and highly skilled staff supporting a significant and growing group of part-time, casual and sessional teachers and trainers.

Many VET practitioners are moving between several employers, as freelancers or self-employed workers.

VET has to understand these trends to effectively serve its client industries and meet the needs of a changing client base.

VET has to adopt a dual focus – keeping one eye on serving the workforce, and the other on planning for the impact of these broad trends within the VET sector.

**There are higher and different expectations of VET.**

- Across the board, clients have higher expectations of VET and what VET can deliver – higher end services, partnerships, innovation, flexible delivery and customisation are required.

- The client base is changing and diversifying rapidly, and this has implications for VET practitioners and professionals, including for the range of skills needed to meet the needs and expectations of different client groups.

- Each client group has different expectations of VET professionals and VET practitioners (see section 1.3 for a definition of these terms).

- The skills and capabilities that are most valued by clients depend on their standpoint. This leads to an ambiguity of expectation across different client groups.

**The business of vet is diversifying enormously.**

- The main game of VET is shifting, from nationally recognised qualifications delivered in registered training organisations, to training that takes place at work, often without the end goal of getting a qualification.

- More of the business of VET is happening in workplaces, delivered by people who do not identify as VET professionals.

- Client demand is resulting in more and more work-based, flexible, customised delivery.

- These trends are reflected in emerging thinking about the important role VET has to play in facilitating development of tacit knowledge, in context, through practice and application.

- Stronger relationships with industry, in particular at the local level, are a feature of the new VET, as is a more active role in building the capacity and resilience of communities.

- An area of current policy focus is higher participation and retention among young people. This means VET can expect to continue to serve a growing cohort of young people. An adult pedagogy is unlikely to be appropriate for many of these young people.

- In the longer term, demographic trends point to fewer young people moving through education systems. VET will increasingly need to cater for older workers, mature aged job-seekers, and people re-entering the workforce or changing career.
The nature of work in VET is also changing.

- There is a clear emerging consensus about the impact of these changes on the role of the VET professional and the VET workforce.
- All literature reviewed to date reports significant expansion in work roles across the workforce. This results in stress, time pressure, and lack of self-confidence among staff about their capability to meet new requirements, and impacts on job satisfaction and staff retention.
- Flatter structures within RTOs result in less career options and pathways, with implications for succession planning, as well as for the workload of staff at higher levels.
- New roles for VET professionals and practitioners include brokering training and acting as consultants to industry, facilitators of learning, change agents within VET RTOs and salespeople for training.
- Some literature questions whether training as a teacher adequately prepares staff to take up this range of roles, and whether the aptitudes teachers have are the right ones given their emerging responsibilities.

There are significant gaps in data and research.

- Best practice is founded on a sound research base. However, there are significant gaps in available data about the VET workforce, for example, research about the private sector workforce.
- National agreement about how these gaps will be filled is required.
- This has implications for this project, and the review report needs to be read with this caveat in mind.

The focus has been on understanding the impact of change, and on how best to respond to change.

- Much of the literature reviewed is focused on the recent past, and on the present.
- This reflects a preoccupation with the pace and impact of change in the VET system. The focus has been on understanding what has been happening, and how to cope with change, rather than looking forward.
- This translates into a lack of future focus, and has implications for the way the sector manages change in the future.
- Significant tracking research has not been a feature of this focus on the impact of change – for example, research that would track the impact of investment in professional development on client satisfaction.

There has been an emphasis on the role of the full-time teacher.

- Much of the literature reviewed reveals an emphasis on the role, identity and experience of ongoing teachers in public RTOs. However, it appears likely that the bulk of the workforce will not be in these roles in future.
This also translates into a lack of focus on non-teaching, and non-full-time staff – managers and leaders, but also staff in supporting roles, such as librarians, IT and student support staff.

While the experiences and attitudes of the internal market of staff – in particular teaching staff, but more recently leaders and managers – are well documented, their motivations for entering, staying in or leaving the VET sector are less well understood.

There has been a focus on professional development to the exclusion of other workforce strategies.

Voluntary participation in professional development has been the workforce strategy for managing the impact of change.

While recent initiatives are beginning to address change management, and skills to manage change, there is not a lot of attitudinal or behavioural change activity going on.

Professional development investment does not yet appear to be meeting the needs of industry.

Systemic factors and other workforce management issues such as job design, the casualisation of the workforce, and funding arrangements have received less attention.

There are limits to what can be achieved by relying on voluntary participation to bring about systemic change.

National involvement in and funding of professional development has been incredibly significant.

The national professional development programs have been incredibly significant and successful. Without these initiatives, there would have been significantly less professional development activity designed to support VET practitioners and professionals to come to grips with system change.

To date, it has been a national approach with a restricted focus, on the Training Package system and flexible delivery, whereas the next national strategy is actually broadening the focus.

There is emerging thinking about who is prepared to pay for professional development, and what the balance should be between the system, the RTO employer, and individual staff. Initial or performance related professional development is seen as the responsibility of the system and employer; the more ongoing the PD, the more individual responsibility comes into play.

There is a resurgent interest in teaching and learning.

There is a robust debate about the need for balance between technical relevance and generic skills, industry currency and pedagogical expertise.

There is a new emphasis on facilitation, coaching, and mentoring skills, not just instruction, consistent with a new interest in developing work-based, tacit knowledge.
There is a clear view about the challenges ahead in managing this diverse workforce.

- These challenges include knowledge sharing, team building, succession planning, recruitment and retention, leadership and innovation.
- There is not a lot of information about how RTOs are currently addressing these challenges.
- Workforce management is primarily the province of RTO employers and State and Territory governments.
- However, there are aspects of workforce planning and development that may be best supported by a national approach, including data collection, research and dissemination of best practice principles and approaches.

4.1.2 Review methodology

As the scope of the literature review was reasonably wide and the project team was working to a relatively tight timeline, it was necessary to put some parameters around the material to be reviewed. These were as follows.

- The review was restricted to material published since 2000.
- The focus of the review was primarily on research conducted within, and around the VET sector in Australia (at the national, State and Territory and RTO level), and in comparable sectors in the UK, Europe and America. Within these parameters, the review team looked widely across available literature about key trends in VET, the VET workforce, professional development (including current initiatives), the needs of VET clients, future skills and training needs, pedagogy, standards, qualifications and so on.
- Recent research on workforce issues in nursing and school teaching within Australia, and literature on workforce trends and the future of work, as well as current trends in HRD was also reviewed.

Literature for the review was sourced from:

- two independent literature searches conducted by the NCVER and provided to the review team, one on the TAFE workforce, and a second, conducted in June 2003, on the VET professional
- a bibliography of relevant material provided to the project team by ANTA
- material supplied or recommended by members of the project steering committee – including States and Territories, national professional development programs, and peak bodies
- additional literature searches conducted by the project team using key education and training databases such as VOCED, ACER and AEI, relevant journals, and the Internet
- key meta-analyses such as those developed for the National Strategy for VET 2004–2010.
The bulk of the literature reviewed was gathered during September–October 2003. An initial list of references was provided to the project steering committee in October 2003 to allow members to identify any gaps or additional relevant material.

All material sourced was logged in a database, and rated according to its relevance to the project questions.

Key themes identified in early discussions with ANTA and the project steering committee were used to provide an initial framework for sorting the material and prioritising the reading and review tasks. As the review progressed, emerging themes from material reviewed were tracked against the key questions. These key themes were then used to code findings from the literature.

Given the breadth of material available, a ‘meta-analysis’ approach to reviewing and reporting on the literature was adopted – key themes and messages were identified and synthesised, and are presented in this report.

4.1.3 Definitions

The terms VET professional and VET practitioner are used widely throughout the literature, sometimes interchangeably. In addition, the same kinds of positions are described in different ways across States and Territories, for example, deans are also known as heads of schools or teaching centres, teaching staff are sometimes called faculty.

A detailed definition of the scope of the VET workforce is presented in Rumsey (2002: 6), and his distinction between direct and indirect delivery roles is adopted here. For the purposes of consistency the following definitions are used throughout this report:

- **The VET practitioner** refers to those professionals working within the sector who are responsible for *direct delivery of training or assessment*. This includes lecturers, teachers, trainers and assessors, permanent, full-time, and casual and sessional staff, across schools, ACE, TAFE, private RTOs and enterprises, who are delivering nationally recognised training.

- **The VET professional** is used to describe a broader group including VET practitioners, together with staff who provide leadership, management and support for learning within RTOs, but whose primary role is *not direct delivery*. This includes heads of school and departments/teaching centres; senior and middle managers; knowledge managers; product program and resource developers; learning support staff; industry liaison, policy and planning staff.

- **The VET workforce** describes people in the above two categories, and those people working in ‘generic’ roles such as accountants, marketing and maintenance staff.
4.2 Part one: The VET workforce & VET professional

4.2.1 Drivers for change

There is clear consensus in the literature about the key drivers for change, both external to and within the VET sector, and the way that these trends are impacting on the VET workforce, and the role of the VET professional.

Key drivers are extensively discussed in the literature reviewed, most recently and cogently in the OVAL report for the High Level Review of Training Packages (Chappell et al. 2003). A detailed review of external drivers is not included here as our main interest is in the way these trends are playing out in and impacting on the VET workforce. However, they are restated briefly in order to frame the discussion that follows:

- Working life in Australia is changing dramatically. These changes include increasing numbers of part-time and casual jobs and fewer full-time positions, together with an increase in non-standard work and work intensification across many industries and sectors. This is accompanied by a hollowing out of the labour market, with highly skilled and qualified workers and low-skilled workers in demand and a concurrent loss of middle level skilled positions (Cully 2003, Lansbury 2003, Watson et al. 2003).

- Several authors also note a shift to a core/periphery model in managing workforces across sectors: a full-time, permanent core of highly skilled staff is supported by a larger body of casual, sessional and part-time workers, and supplemented by outsourcing and labour hire arrangements (Chappell et al. 2003, Chappell and Johnston 2003).

- People's experience and expectations of work are changing rapidly. This includes the rise of the free agent or portfolio worker – people who focus on developing employability skills rather than a role in any single organisation. These people are more likely to be young, working in ICT (Information and Communication Technologies) or as high potential workers in their industry. Access to learning opportunities and continuing development is a key factor in retention of these workers (Opengart and Short 2002).

- Young people's expectations of work and life have changed dramatically, shaped in part by their experience of the contemporary workforce. The expectation of young (and increasing numbers of older people) is that they will not commit to a career for life, but will work in several careers, and across employers – over time and even simultaneously. Younger people are also much more interested in being self-employed, partly because they do not trust that employers will look after them (Lansbury 2003, Quay Connection 2002a):

  Many younger people are now making career decisions on the basis of quality of life and family responsibilities, rather than merely financial rewards and status. Moreover, new visions of careers are developing, whereby a job is no longer seen as a lifetime commitment, particularly now that there are more career opportunities for people with high-demand skills (Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education 2003: 79).
At the same time, research shows that levels of job satisfaction are falling, in particular among those people working the longest hours (Watson et al. 2003). For those working longer hours, control over hours and other conditions of employment appears to be more critical to job satisfaction than wages (Watson et al. 2003, Bearfield 2003). A substantial proportion of Australians appear to be actively choosing to work less, in favour of improved work–life balance (Hamilton and Mail 2003). At the same time, many people working on a part-time or casual basis report that they would prefer more paid work (Watson et al. 2003).

The workforce is ageing, with waves of retirement due over the next decade and beyond. While there is some debate about the timing and degree of impact of these demographic changes (Cully cited in Government of South Australia 2003: 19), there are indications that some industries will face a crisis in succession, in particular at senior and leadership levels.

Research in Australia and overseas suggests that employers will face a 'war on talent', with competition for skilled workers becoming more acute (ASTD 2003). A strong employer 'brand' is critical to attract and retain a shrinking pool of expert workers:

Many industries are experiencing difficulties associated with the attraction of new workers or the retention of existing workers. Some industries highlight the poor perception of the industry as a career choice, particularly in the face of emerging industries and occupations (ANTA 2003c: 8).

The content of jobs and skill requirements is also changing rapidly. The impact of ICT, the rise of 'knowledge work', and increasing emphasis by employers on generic skills are all part of this trend. Cully has questioned the extent to which there is real demand for knowledge work, finding only a small percentage increase in the knowledge/skill levels required in current employment (2003: 19). However, the shift to knowledge work, however small, is not confined to industries like ICT, but is evident across a range of sectors, including traditional trades (Chappell et al. 2003).

Importantly for the VET sector the literature also reports changes in the way employment related learning is taking place and is understood. Increasing emphasis on tacit knowledge, and on learning that happens in the workplace, in teams, and across supply chains is identified across the literature reviewed (Noonan 2003, Chappell et al. 2003, ANTA 2003a).

4.2.2 The VET workforce

The VET workforce, and VET employers, experience the same workforce trends as other industries, and face many of the same challenges. It is critical that the VET sector understands these trends in order to effectively serve client industries and meet the needs of a changing client base. At the same time, the sector also has to plan for the impact of these broad workforce trends within the VET workforce (Mitchell et al. 2003, Schofield 2002).

A detailed analysis of the profile of the VET workforce is the subject of a separate report, prepared by the NCVER (Cully et al. 2004). However, it should be noted that there are considerable gaps in existing available data about the VET workforce (Burke 2003, Schofield 2002, VTA 2001a). States and Territories do not collect this data uniformly for public providers, and information about private sector RTOs is even scarcer. The following information is therefore drawn primarily from qualitative sources.
Casualisation

The shift to casual work in the VET sector is well documented in the literature. Employment in the VET sector is increasingly part-time, casual and sessional and the proportion of full-time, permanent roles is diminishing:

- The Victorian study of workforce trends conducted in 2000 found that between 1993 and 1998 the proportion of casual and sessional staff rose from 41% of equivalent full-time staff to 48% of EFT staff positions. Full-time employment fell by 8%, while part-time employment increased by 44% (PETE 2000: 33, 36). Recent Victorian data provided to the project team, and reported in Cully et al. (2004) identified that 44% of teachers were ongoing, 23% were on contract, and 32% were sessional.

- In its analysis of national expenditure on staffing in the publicly funded sector (TAFE), the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET) notes that expenditure on staff fell, and the proportion of staff employed on casual and part-time contracts rose between 1997–2001 (Burke 2003: 35).

- Data analysis by the NCVER found that 53% of Australian TAFE teachers were working part-time, with more women employed on a part-time basis and more men employed in ongoing positions (Cully et al. 2004). Men dominate in full-time ongoing teaching positions, and in executive roles, while women predominate in casual, sessional and administrative positions (PETE 2000: 45).

- While there is less available literature on private sector RTOs, research has identified a similar trend towards greater use of part-time, sessional and casual staff (Auscorp Marketing & Strahan Research 2000).

In line with national trends, a substantial number of teachers would like to increase their part-time hours or work full-time (Kronemann 2002). While part-time work suits some people, others end up stitching together a full-time pay packet across several employers (Watson et al. 2003).

In order to contain this trend, some States and Territories are mandating that a certain percentage of TAFE staff will be employed on a full-time basis. Moves to convert casual and part-time positions to full-time, ongoing roles are also reported (Palmieri 2003: 13).

Core-periphery model

The core-periphery model is evident in VET (Chappell and Johnston 2003, VTA 2001a, Shah 2000). A significant and growing group of part-time staff are employed on a casual or sessional basis, often with Certificate IV as their minimum qualification, and are supervised and managed by a smaller core group of full-time highly skilled staff who are highly paid and work long hours (Chappell and Johnston 2003: 8).

The core group are more likely to be managers, working for one RTO full-time, while those on the ‘periphery’ are more likely to work anywhere in VET, across ACE, industry, TAFE, schools, private providers or universities, often for more than one employer at a time (Chappell and Johnston 2003: 8). Others on the periphery combine casual work in VET with a primary role in industry, although there are some suggestions that this is changing as teachers combine jobs across several RTOs (Stehlik et al. 2003):
While many teachers/trainers are casual or sessional workers who still retain some direct involvement in workplaces related to their teaching speciality, increasing numbers of teachers/trainers are combining a number of such teaching jobs to make up full-time hours and are therefore not working in industry (Dumbrell 2003: 6).

Work intensification

Work intensification is a common theme across the literature reviewed, for all roles in VET – practitioners, professionals, and those in the broader VET workforce.

Efficiency cuts have resulted in flatter management structures, with fewer middle and senior managers. At the same time, the roles of practitioners and other staff have broadened considerably, with both positive and negative impacts. As in other sectors, full-time staff are also working longer hours. For example:

- A recent study for the Australian Flexible Learning Framework found that the impact of flexible delivery on both managers and teaching staff has been significant, with staff travelling long distances to provide assessment and conduct workplace visits, responding to emails from students seven days a week and undertaking general administration. The role of non-teaching staff has also expanded to include direct student support (McNickle and Cameron 2003).

- Several studies also note that the workload of managers, and in particular head teachers, has been intensified by recent changes (McNickle and Cameron 2003, Rice 2003, Lorrimar 2002). McNickle and Cameron note that head teachers have experienced considerable pressure on their role, have much greater responsibilities and are required to balance the competing demands of teachers, and of the Institute. Similarly, in a small study of head teachers, Rice found that that workloads for head teachers have increased enormously and that they are undertaking more administration with less support:

  ... the middle and frontline management positions in educational institutions are bearing the brunt of changes in their systems while also being expected to successfully implement the changes necessary to ensure their institutions remain viable providers of education. (Rice 2003: 8)

- A recent Australian Education Union (AEU) study of TAFE teachers found that they were stressed and overworked, and reported being unable to achieve a work–life balance (Kronemann 2002, 2001). Similarly, AEU research on teachers delivering VET in schools found that they were experiencing excessive workloads including teaching, administrative, compliance, student supervision and support and coordination requirements (AEU 2002: 29–30).

Of course, these trends are consistent with what is happening in other professions – such as school teaching and nursing, discussed below. However, they have implications for retention of VET practitioners and professionals, in particular when coupled with relatively low salary rates in comparison to other industries. The trade off between money and time that can be achieved in some highly paid industries and jobs does not appear to be as readily available in VET.
A career for life?

VET is not a long-term career for many employees. In research conducted by Harris et al. (2001), 28% of teachers and trainers had been employed for less than two years, 22% for only 3-5 years. Staff working in private RTOs are particularly likely to have been employed for a short period of time. Full-time, permanent staff in TAFE Institutes are the longest serving employees (Harris et al. 2001, Harris and Simons 2000a).

For many VET professionals, VET is not their first career (Chappell and Johnston 2003: 14). They are also likely to move in and out of employment in VET. The NCVER data analysis reveals that a growing proportion of people employed in the VET workforce say they are self-employed. This group – around one in eight – is employed on a casual or sessional basis in VET, while their main occupation is in industry (Cully et al. 2004).

Given that VET employers focus on recruiting staff with industry experience, young people are unlikely to enter a career in VET early in their working life. They are also less likely to want to stay in VET for a substantial part of their career. As the Victorian workforce study notes:

Talented young staff with both industry credibility and teaching experience are very difficult to retain. With the confidence and experience gained in TAFE they are attracted by more money and opportunities in private enterprise and tend not to stay in teaching (PETE 2000: 75).

Job satisfaction

The literature also reports reduced job satisfaction and motivation, and decreased morale among those employed in VET organisations (OTTE 2002, Lorrimar 2002). For example, in a study of staff in two WA TAFE colleges, Lorrimar notes that senior and executive staff express high levels of satisfaction, while those on limited tenure arrangements, and working in administrative roles report low levels of satisfaction. Both men and women express genuine concern about their inability to balance work and family life successfully (Lorrimar 2002). Those in senior roles, exposed to new learning opportunities, or who have the chance to develop new skills, report higher levels of job satisfaction (Lorrimar 2002, McNickle and Cameron 2003).

This is consistent with recent research on job satisfaction which found that full-time professionals (including teachers) are very satisfied with the interesting nature of their work and access to skill development opportunities, but very dissatisfied with their hours of work, workload and the pressure they experience at work (Bearfield 2003).

Ageing workforce

The VET workforce, in particular in TAFE, is ageing. As noted in Victorian research, 60% of executive staff in TAFE are likely to retire over the next decade, leaving a significant gap in internal capability (OTTE 2002: 7-8). The NCVER data analysis report indicates that in 2001 61% of VET practitioners were aged 45 or over, and 16% were 55 or over (Cully et al. 2004).

It is not so much retirement, but the narrowing pool of staff to replace those who are leaving, including staff who can move into senior and executive roles, that is of concern to the VET sector.
'War on talent'

In part as a result of demographic change, most industries are experiencing problems with matching employees to required skills and capabilities, and recruiting new talent (Cheese et al. 2003). This is also an issue for the VET sector. As the pool of skilled workers contracts and demand for skilled workers increases, VET employers will increasingly have to compete to attract a skilled workforce (VTA 2001a: 18, 21). The ‘second-class’ image of VET compared to other education sectors, together with aspects of employment discussed above, is likely to make it difficult to attract skilled workers:

The current cohort of teachers is aging and significant numbers will retire in the next ten years at the same time time as the overall workforce size shrinks. Competition for skilled and experienced workers will be intense in all sectors, including education. It will be difficult for VET to attract high-quality applicants (especially from industry) to a service that continues to have low status in the community (Quay Connection et al. 2003).

Growing national and international competition for highly skilled personnel will favour those occupations which can present themselves as highly attractive and rewarding to talented, hard-working professionals (Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education 2003: 117).

Changing job content and skills

Related to work intensification is a requirement for VET practitioners and professionals to have a much broader range of skills and aptitudes than in the past (Chappell and Johnston 2003, Harris and Simons 2003, Rumsey 2002). VET practitioners act as consultants to or within enterprises, as brokers ‘selling’ training to industry, as career advisers and counsellors to students, as knowledge creators and managers, as subject practitioners and pedagogical experts (OTTE 2002, Rumsey 2002).

Managers and administrative staff are also required to develop a broader range of skills and capabilities. Librarians and IT staff are increasingly required to provide direct support to students (McNickle and Cameron 2003). Managers may also be teachers, and must balance policy and systemic imperatives, organisational requirements, and the needs and interests of staff and clients (Guthrie and Callan 2002, Mitchell and Young 2002b).

Within enterprises, HR and training staff are acting as consultants and mentors, cultural change agents, evaluators and facilitators of independent learning (Johnston and Chappell 2001).

One of the impacts of these changes, as noted in the literature, is that personal attributes become increasingly important – including adaptability and flexibility, relationship-building skills, and the capacity to tolerate uncertainty. As Chappell and Johnson note:

This new working self is constructed as a particular kind of self, one that is flexible, autonomous, motivated, self-regulating and oriented to lifelong learning – in short a self that is comfortable in the current context of change and uncertainty (Chappell and Johnston 2003: 7).
In addition, research on knowledge work suggests two emerging cohorts of workers in the knowledge economy – experts, who have ‘deep’ knowledge in a specific area – and knowledge workers who locate, digest, synthesise and share knowledge with others (BDO Kendalls 2003). These workers are characterised by:

The speed with which they can learn and share learnings; ability to access relevant information and differentiate it from less relevant information; and a high degree of adaptive problem solving ability associated with technology and with people (2003: 6).

One of the interesting questions raised by this research is the extent to which, if teachers are required to be subject ‘experts’, with in-depth technical and pedagogical expertise, they are also able to be knowledge workers. It may be that a different set of aptitudes and capabilities is required of those who produce knowledge and those who disseminate it.

Changing learning

An emerging focus on work-based, informal learning in groups and teams is evident in literature about learning in VET. For example, research by Reframing the Future and Australian Flexible Learning Framework programs stresses the importance of shared learning (via communities of practice), mentoring, reflective practice, and informal learning. Similarly, the importance of tacit, informal knowledge and learning in VET practice is emphasised in research in Australia and overseas – and by VET practitioners and professionals themselves (Mitchell et al. 2003, Bierbaum and Karthigesu 2003, Noonan 2003, Dryen 2003a, Chappell and Hawke 2003).

Workforce projections

A recurring theme across the literature reviewed is the need to plan ahead for, and understand, likely skill shortages and skill gaps in the VET sector. This issue is flagged in recent State and Territory reports in particular in relation to succession planning (Schofield 2002, OTTE 2002, VTA 2001a, Rumsey 2002), in AEU literature (Kronemann 2002), as well as in research on the VET professional (Rumsey 2002).

However, to date, Victoria is the only State that has considered likely skill shortages in any detail, at least in published research. The Victorian TAFE workforce trends report suggests that as 40% of permanent male teachers, 30% of permanent female teachers, and 60% of executive staff are over 50 and likely to retire over the next 5–10 years, a significant replacement gap will be created. The report notes that the fields of engineering, tourism and hospitality, building and construction, and some areas of business and administrative studies, and visual and performing arts are likely to be most affected (PETE 2000: 90–91).

Given the lack of data about the current VET workforce (Cully et al. 2004), it is not possible to develop workforce projections at the national level. Any analysis of skill shortages (as opposed to gaps in the capacity of the current workforce to deliver against organisational and systemic goals) must be informed by good, nationally consistent data.

Other education sectors and overseas experience

The VET experience is broadly consistent with other sectors, such as school education and nursing, and vocational education and training (or its equivalent) in other countries examined for this review.
Predicted skill shortages and changing employment conditions are well documented in school teaching in Australia:

- Research for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) suggests that as the proportion of young people in our population is declining new demand for school teachers is unlikely to be driven by school enrolments. Instead demand is being driven by retirement and resignation of teachers, 20% of whom are due to retire between 2008 and 2012. Shortages of 20,000–30,000 teachers are anticipated within the decade – increasing competition for the pool of interested and qualified candidates across education sectors (Mills 2003: 4–5).

- Interestingly, the MCEETYA report notes that 31.8% of people with a teaching qualification are working outside education (Mills 2003: 7). There may be some potential for VET employers to recruit from this pool of people – with the added advantage that they will have industry experience as well as a teaching qualification:

  This group offers the potential for a large additional supply of teachers, although the extent to which persons in this group with established career paths can be enticed to either re-enter teaching or commence teaching is open to question (Mills 2003: 8).

However, there is likely to be competition from the school sector, which is experiencing significant shortages in subjects such as mathematics, science and ICT.

- Similarly, the hollowing out of teachers in the middle age ranges in VET noted in Victorian research is also evident in the school sector. There is a pool of older and younger teachers, but fewer teachers in the middle age range, with consequences for recruitment and development of the next generation of management in school and VET organisations (VTA 2001a: 11).

- Both school and VET teaching offer highly contracted salaries. There is an estimated $15,000–$20,000 difference in school teaching salaries from entry level to experienced teacher (Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education (CRTTE) 2003: 76). The Victorian TAFE Institute report found less than $5000 difference between the salaries of entry level TAFE teachers and those who have been in the job for 15–20 years (PETE 2000: 55).

- However, unlike teaching in VET, rates of full-time work in school teaching continue to be high – around 80% of teachers are full-time and permanent, although younger teachers are more likely to be employed on a contract basis. This is an important factor in recruitment and retention of school teachers (CRTTE 2003: 77).

- UK research on teachers’ reasons for staying or leaving the profession identified that workload was the single most important factor in deciding to leave, followed by the school situation, including discipline problems, and pay rates. However, an increased salary would have induced only a quarter of leaving teachers to stay, whereas 43% would have considered staying were their workload reduced (Smithers and Robinson 2003).

Of course, the experience of education professionals is not unique. The health sector, in particular nursing, is experiencing similar trends to VET and school education – increasing casualisation, loss of full-time work and work intensification:
As with teachers, the population of nurses is ageing. Numbers of nurses under 35 fell from 50% in 1987 to 30% in 2001. A gap in supply of 40,000 nurses is predicted to occur by 2020. Even if the number of nursing graduates were to double, population ageing would still result in a gap between supply and demand (Karmel and Li 2003, Shah and Burke 2002).

The core-periphery model is also evident in nursing – the number of nurses working part-time has increased, as has the number of nurses working more than 45 hours a week, while the number of staff working standard working hours has decreased (Karmel and Li 2003).

The impact of changes on nursing professionals has been extensively reported in the media, and Federal and State governments have focused on recruitment and retention of nurses. One of the most significant factors in attrition is work intensification, and the feeling among nurses that they are overworked and undervalued. Significantly, while pay is a factor in low levels of satisfaction, it is not the deciding factor when choosing to leave, or stay in, the profession (Buchanan and Considine 2002, Johnson and Preston 2001):

“They leave the profession because they are no longer prepared to put up with the conditions of shift work, with frequent changes of schedule and inability to plan their own days and weeks satisfactorily. They are tired of being overloaded with work and with emotional stress. Low pay is an extra irritant, not a primary motive (Johnson and Preston 2001: 5).”

Nursing also shares some of the ‘brand’ or ‘image’ difficulties experienced by school education and VET (Buchanan and Considine 2002: 30). The difference is that much more attention has been given to recruitment and retention of school teachers and nurses than VET teachers and non-teachers, both within Australia and overseas.

While there are significant differences in vocational education and training structures and systems in the UK, Europe and the US, there are common trends and themes in relation to workforce issues:

A recent study of the post-compulsory education and training workforce across higher education, enterprise based training, adult and community education and further education (FE) found that further education comprises around 16% of the total P–16 sector, with work-based training representing 34%, and adult education 10%. Around 170,600 people work in FE, and 37% work part-time (Williams and Maginn 2002: 22).

Employment is expected to grow most quickly in the work-based learning and training sector. However, severe shortages are predicted for the FE sector in particular, in part because of difficulties in ‘buying in’ new talent (Williams and Maginn 2002: 34). Current skill shortages in FE include IT, engineering, construction and accounting lecturers, and course/program leaders, and core skills support. In addition, earnings in FE are reported to be below those in secondary schools, and this is a source of considerable discontent in the workforce (Williams and Maginn 2002: 51).

Staff in the FE sector are also ageing, with 30% of staff over 50 (Williams and Maginn 2002, Brookes and Hughes 2001). Succession planning and recruitment are identified as issues across the four sectors, in part because they recruit from one another.
The United States is experiencing a chronic shortage of teachers across sectors, in particular in public schools. The American Association of Community Colleges reports that the sector is facing a leadership crisis. The average age of community college presidents is 57, and 45% expect to retire over the next six years. Not only are presidents retiring, so are the staff who would have traditionally taken up their roles, including senior administrators and faculty staff (Shults 2001).

While demand and supply of career and technical education teachers varies from State to State, the workforce is ageing - more than 40% of CTE teachers are aged 51-60 - and it is estimated that there will be a shortfall of around 6000 teachers by 2006 (Bruening et al. 2002, 2001).

As the literature discussed in this section demonstrates, the VET sector is not alone in the problems it is currently grappling with in regard to the workforce. It will therefore be important to look outside the sector for solutions which may be relevant to the VET experience, or which may usefully be adapted to suit the VET context.

4.2.3 Client expectations of VET

The client base for VET is changing and diversifying rapidly. As the literature demonstrates, this has implications for the work of VET professionals and practitioners, and the skills and capabilities they will need in order to deliver against the needs and expectations of different client groups.

Interest in clients is relatively recent – and growing. For example, Shaping Our Future, the next National Strategy for VET 2004–2010 (ANTA 2003f) articulates a clear focus on client needs and interests as a distinguishing feature of the new strategy document:

This national strategy is more clearly focused on clients, and aims to make vocational education and training fully client-driven. It will enable vocational education and training to better respond to the multiple and diverse needs of businesses, individuals, and communities and will provide the basis for innovation and more customised services and products in the context of a rapidly changing world (ANTA 2003f: 4).

In the past many VET professionals, in particular those working in TAFE, would have said that their primary clients were students and that meeting the learning and developmental needs of students and achieving positive outcomes for individual learners was the most important factor in successful, quality delivery. Indeed, many teachers still feel this way (Mitchell and Young 2001). However, the literature documents a significant shift towards a much broader identification of client groups (Chappell et al. 2003), reflected in a growing body of research and greater interest in client needs and expectations.

VET providers now see themselves as catering to a wide range of clients, with complex and sometimes competing needs. Coupled with this is a much more sophisticated understanding of who clients are, and what they are looking for from the VET system. For example:

A WA market segmentation identified seven cohorts of VET students, each with a different reason for studying in VET: apprentices and trainees, those who want to start their own business, those who are in VET to get a job, established workers seeking to upgrade their
skills, those using VET to articulate into another course or program, people training for interest or personal reasons, and those training to change career. The NCVER is now using this segmentation to report on student outcomes (NCVER 2002).

- As a number of reports note, a new cohort of younger people is entering VET and ACE, and this trend is set to continue, given the policy emphasis in a number of States and Territories on retention of young people, including via VET and VET in school arrangements (Government of SA 2003, Wilson 2003b, Department of Education and Training Victoria 2002, Tannock 2002). Many of these young people bring with them a set of complex learning needs and behavioural issues – often because they are not able to complete their schooling, or find that school does not cater to their needs and interests. Teaching these young people is proving to be a challenge for practitioners, not least because research has identified that an adult pedagogy is not always suitable for this group (Dryen 2003a).

- VET RTOs are also catering for a much broader age range – including people changing careers, updating their skills, or completing a vocational qualification after their university degree. Several papers suggest that older workers are set to become a much more important client group for VET as the population ages and employers need to re-skill existing workers rather than recruit entry-level employees (ANTA 2003c).

- VET providers also continue to deliver against a broad social policy mandate which includes supporting disadvantaged learners (Noonan 2003, Chappell and Hawke 2003). These learners include those on low incomes, Indigenous students, and people with a disability, as well as young and mature aged unemployed people looking for a bridge into employment. As Mitchell et al. note:

  Catering for individual differences in the VET arena is a significant undertaking. It means that teaching and training staff need to move beyond their own habitual or acquired personal and professional learning styles to satisfy the diversity of student cohorts. These cohorts can range from 15–19 year olds, to Indigenous students, to mature aged students, to busy professionals with limited time, to parents returning to study after raising a family (2003: 32).

- Industry has always been an important client of the VET system. However, there are significant differences between the needs of industry at the national level and on the ground. Industry peak organisations have had a considerable degree of influence on the national training agenda, and continue to do so through industry arrangements and the Training Package system. Enterprises, including SMEs, report feeling out of touch with processes that allow industry views to feed into the training system, and identify quite different needs and expectations for example relating to their immediate business objectives (Quay 2002a, Chappell et al. 2003).

- At the same time, research on an industry led VET system found that the strongest relationships between providers and industry are currently occurring at the local level – indicating a greater degree of responsiveness in VET at the organisation-to-organisation level (Chappell and Hawke 2003).

- Communities are also emerging as an important client group for VET (Noonan 2002). Billet and Hayes identify the need for VET to contribute to outcomes for both individuals and businesses within regions (2000). Similarly, research conducted by the Centre for Research
and Learning in Regional Australia identifies the central role of VET in meeting the needs of communities in relation to accessing employment, increasing participation in education and training, and in building social trust and cohesion (Guenther et al. 2002).

Client expectations of VET are changing. Clients have higher expectations of what VET can deliver and are becoming more demanding (VTA 2001a). For example, focus group research for the next National Strategy for VET 2004–2010 (Quay Connection et al. 2002, Quay Connection and The Research Forum 2002a,b) found that:

- For individuals, the expectation is that VET will deliver practical outcomes – a job or a career, and will also help them to achieve their aspirations: insurance against unemployment, the capacity to self-manage their own career, a second chance at learning and employment – in other words, a future.

- Parents’ expectations of VET are also important because they are a significant influence on young people’s choices – and parents also expect that VET will deliver their children a job.

- Enterprises, including SMEs are looking for a much greater capacity to mix and match training courses, more just in time training, and advice and consultancy to help them to navigate the complex training system.

- Communities view VET as having a significant role to play in building community resilience, including by providing opportunities for young people to stay in their community rather than move away.

The diversity of client groups is important for this project because each client group has a different view or vision about what VET teaching – and everything that supports it – needs to deliver. The priority skills and capabilities for VET professionals and practitioners are partly a function of standpoint:

- Individual learners expect a combination of subject expertise and teaching skill – current industry-based expertise, together with the ability to make the learning experience engaging and interesting. They value ‘a positive learning environment created by warm friendly teachers who [are] both expert in their industry area and good communicators’ (CURVE and University of Ballarat 2003: 45).

- Industry is looking for VET professionals and practitioners who can deliver nationally consistent training and qualifications, and transferable skills, who offer a collaborative approach, are able to customise training products and delivery to meet industry needs, and are adaptable and responsive – able to change quickly to meet shifting demands (Hendy 2003).

- SMEs, like other customers, also value VET practitioners and professionals relationship-building skills – they want and expect to be treated as clients, and value advice and consultancy, brokerage, and problem-solving skills (Quay Connection et al. 2002).

- Communities increasingly value the ability of VET professionals to work in partnership with other sectors to solve local problems, and tackle the tough issues communities face, such as youth unemployment (Quay Connection and The Research Forum 2002b).
As the High Level Review of Training Packages Phase One report points out:

VET providers increasingly operate within a world of difference created by the varying needs, expectations and priorities of industries, enterprises, local employers, learners, differences between national, regional and local training needs and finally variations in the goals and purposes set for the Australian VET system (Chappell et al. 2003: 4)

Understanding and balancing these sometimes competing needs and demands, together with the demands of the changing VET system, and RTO employers (discussed below) is a challenge for the system, and for VET professionals, now and in future.

Significantly, there are some indications in the literature that the VET system is beginning to identify another broad client group – VET professionals and practitioners themselves. This view is based on the understanding that teachers and other VET practitioners are not neutral conduits for system change, they are participants, target audiences, and clients – for example for professional development initiatives – whose involvement and enthusiasm cannot be assumed, but must be actively fostered and supported (Mitchell et al. 2003):

Attempts to 'teacher proof' the system ignore the reality of the change process….far from being 'neutral conduits' through which training reforms flow unhindered, VET practitioners are active participants in the change process and their experiences of the change process are necessarily individualised and involve 'heads, hearts and hands' (Harris and Simons 2003:11).

A client-focused view of VET professionals – which takes into account their needs, preferences, attitudes and values, and shapes initiatives accordingly – is needed to inform successful strategies for skilling the current VET workforce, and for attracting and retaining new staff.

4.2.4 Changing business of VET

As the client base broadens, the business of VET is also diversifying enormously. A considerable proportion of the literature reviewed is devoted to discussion and analysis of these changes, and their impact on the current VET workforce is well documented. However, as the literature indicates, there are ongoing tensions in implementing each of these key changes with implications for the capacity and capability of the staff required to deliver them.

- While some international studies suggest that vocational education and training providers have always operated in a competitive environment – for example when students choose between VET and university (Lassnigg 2001) – competition within the Australian VET sector has clearly intensified (including between public providers) with the introduction of user choice and fee for service arrangements. However, the effects of competition are uneven and are affected by thin markets and capping of funding allocated to private providers for apprenticeships and traineeships in some States and Territories (Hendy 2003).

Nevertheless, public providers, in particular, perceive this as a major change with significant implications for their work and the skills and capabilities they require.
Moves to competency based training, crystallised in the introduction of Training Packages have constituted perhaps the most significant shift, at least from a provider point of view. Phase three of the High Level Review of Training Packages identifies ongoing issues to do with Training Package implementation among stakeholders, including questions about whether they should be the driving mechanism for change in VET delivery (Schofield and McDonald 2003). Similarly, recent CURVE research with practitioners suggests continuing demand for skill development among even experienced and confident practitioners to work with Training Packages (CURVE and University of Ballarat 2003).

Also significant from a practitioner point of view has been the impact of flexible delivery – including work-based, online and other forms of customised training provision. Flexible delivery has evolved in part as a response to demand among clients for learning that is 'interactive, collaborative and personalised to match individual needs and circumstances' (ANTA 2003d). VET professionals and practitioners have generally been very positive about this development, in particular because it facilitates accessibility and greater client focus – and is also perceived to contribute to cost-efficiency (although evidence about this is somewhat mixed). Although widely embraced and a driving factor in innovative practice, there are signals that implementation of flexible learning continues to be uneven, and constrained by institutional, individual, and infrastructure capacity (Schofield 2003b, ANTA 2003b, Henry et al. 2002).

National quality and consistency requirements embodied in the Australian Quality Training Framework have been generally well received by VET providers, in particular in the public system. Indeed, all stakeholders report strong support for a quality framework to drive nationally consistent and transferable qualifications. However, these requirements are also felt to be onerous, in particular by smaller RTOs (Quay Connection and The Research Forum 2002a & b). In particular as they relate to teaching standards and qualifications, they are also viewed as embodying minimum requirements, rather than standards for excellence and expert achievement, and are therefore seen to diminish rather than contribute to teacher professionalism (Brennan and Smith 2002, AEU 2002).

Demand for employability skills is the new catchcry of the 21st century. There are strong indications in the literature that employers are now more willing to recruit for general aptitude and capability and provide detailed technical or content training on the job (Cheese et al. 2003, Dumbrell 2003). The specific content of generic skills is the subject of ongoing debate, and there are also questions about the capacity of education and training to develop these skills among learners (Chappell et al. 2003: 36, Government of SA 2003: 21). However, the focus on generic skills will also be important to shape the way VET professionals and practitioners receive initial training and ongoing professional development, as well as for job design and recruitment within the sector.

An emerging issue throughout the literature reviewed for this project is the impact of funding arrangements. Cost-efficiency demands have been a significant driver in the reconstitution of the VET workforce along core/periphery lines – expenditure on staff in the TAFE sector fell from 62% to 60% in 1997–2001 in part as a result of use of sessional and casual staff (Burke 2003: 35). At the same time, funding arrangements based on teacher-student contact hours appear to bear less and less relationship to the reality of teaching practice (McNickle and Cameron 2003). Several studies also note that funding arrangements, in particular annual funding cycles, place considerable constraints on the ability of RTOs to effectively plan for and manage their workforces (OTTE 2002).
One notable emerging trend found in the literature is that the business of VET appears to be shifting significantly. This is evident both in Australia and overseas and has significant implications for this project.

More and more training is being delivered outside the nationally recognised training system, driven by the needs of industry. Both TAFE and private providers are delivering this type of training, and for private providers it represents a substantial proportion of their business (Chappell and Hawke 2003: 8, Noonan 2003, Schofield 2002). Several international authors suggest that it is this part of the VET system that is most likely to grow in future (Williams and Maggin 2002, Lassnigg 2001).

This is consistent with emerging thinking about the important role VET has to play in developing tacit knowledge – knowledge developed in context, through practice and application – in other words, at work (Dryen 2003a, Noonan 2003). Some studies suggest that the most important role for teachers in this context is to facilitate reflection on practice – to provide opportunities for learners to articulate their thinking about what they are doing (Dryen 2003a: 19).

Coupled with varying levels of employer and employee interest in training which leads to a formal qualification, this trend has significant implications for the nationally recognised training system, for practices such as recognition of prior learning, as well as for the kind of work VET professionals and practitioners are likely to be doing in future.

4.2.5 Changing practice in RTOs

In addition to the systemic and workforce changes discussed above, the literature reports changing practice at the RTO level, with implications for human resource management, professional development and the skills and capabilities VET professionals and practitioners require – now and in future.

- There is evidence that practice – mode and style of delivery, content, and customisation of training – is evolving far too rapidly in RTOs for industrial agreements, job design, and funding arrangements to keep pace. One of the results of this, noted in the McNickle and Cameron study, is that RTOs are having to get around workplace agreements to provide the level of flexibility required, and work – hours, type, and location – bears little relationship to job descriptions, teaching awards, or funding arrangements:

  Existing definitions of what constitutes teachers’ work and the agreed formulas for measuring teachers’ time were seen as outdated and almost irrelevant by managers responsible for educational delivery who required diverse tasks to be undertaken by their staff (McNickle and Cameron 2003:8).

- As noted in section 2.2 of this report, work roles of VET practitioners and professionals are changing rapidly. There is also considerable evidence of blurring boundaries between teaching and non-teaching roles, and teaching and management roles. Teachers are increasingly required to take on managerial responsibilities, while non-teaching staff are working directly with students (McNickle and Cameron 2003, Rice 2003).
Linked to this trend is a move towards softer organisational boundaries – RTOs are increasingly working in partnership with other agencies, and with communities. They act as de facto HR departments for enterprises, and deliver into schools. The bulk of their work may be in someone else’s workplace – or in cyberspace. Boundaries are also blurring between VET, schools and higher education, as the qualifications delivered by each sector increasingly overlap (Chappell and Hawke 2003).

At the same time, devolution in a number of States has seen more responsibility for determining strategic directions, including workforce management, placed on the RTO, rather than at the State or national level. However, it should be noted that there are moves to reverse this trend – for example in South Australia, following the Kirby report (Kirby et al. 2002). Even in Victoria, where TAFE and university based VET are highly autonomous, there is also a strong central role for example in relation to staff development initiatives.

RTOs are, understandably, focused on organisational imperatives, and this shapes their commitment and capacity to implement human resource management and professional development strategies. This means staying viable in the face of external demands and pressures, sometimes at the expense of a longer-term view of priorities. For example, the introduction of the Australian Quality Training Framework has brought with it a focus on compliance, including compliance-related staff development and training. Similarly, the impact of competition has resulted in an increased focus on marketing and relationship-building skills in particular among public RTOs. While there is considerable evidence of growing innovation and strategic planning among RTOs (Mitchell 2003b, Mitchell and Young 2002d) their capacity to focus on future planning or broader systemic imperatives can at times be limited, and implementation uneven.

4.2.6 What does it mean to be a VET professional?

Interest in the identity and role of VET practitioners and professionals is a dominant theme in the literature reviewed. There has been extensive research on the experience and perspective of practitioners and professionals, including their experience of trends discussed above, the impact of change on their working lives, their qualifications and continuing professional development, job satisfaction, the skills and capabilities they feel confident about and those they are keen to improve. While much of this research is focused on staff working in public providers, some key studies (Harris et al. 2001, Harris and Simons 2003, Chappell and Johnston 2003) also look at staff in private providers and industry.

A great deal of this material is qualitative, or based on reasonably small quantitative samples. Much of it is focused on the VET practitioner – those with direct delivery roles in training and assessment, with a newer emerging stream that deals with managers and leaders. To date, there has been less focus on non-teaching administrative and support staff, with some recent exceptions (McNickle and Cameron 2003, Reed and Reed 2003).

Some of the key emerging themes in the literature around the VET professional and practitioner are discussed below.
**Professional identity**

There is a clear interest in the 'professional identity' of the VET professional/practitioner—what it means to be a VET professional, how this has changed and where the boundaries around the profession need to be drawn.

As a number of authors note, VET teachers and trainers have a dual identity—they are both industry and pedagogical specialists (Mulcahy and Jasman 2003: 3). However, research suggests that the primary identity of many VET teachers and trainers is located in their industry specialisation—at least until they have been in an RTO for some time, and have developed a second identity as professional teachers. Certainly those practitioners who work across several RTOs or in industry and as teachers appear to maintain a strong sense of professional identity relating to their industry specialisation (Chappell and Johnston 2003, Lassnigg 2001).

Chappell and Johnston also note a difference between the identity of teachers working in public and private RTOs. Public identity appears to be constructed around the idea of social good, whereas for teachers in private RTOs the focus is more individualistic—on the development of individual students (Chappell and Johnston 2003). VET's contribution to individual development, educational access, second chance learning, and social and economic progress has also been important in shaping how public sector VET teachers understand their role (Chappell et al. 2003: 35). Indeed, many practitioners in public RTOs would identify as TAFE teachers, not VET practitioners. Similarly, many teachers and trainers in other sectors do not identify as VET practitioners or professionals. This is particularly true of those teachers and trainers working within enterprises (Johnston and Chappell 2001: 3).

As discussed above, there is considerable evidence that as the role of VET professionals and practitioners continues to expand and diversify, professional identities are increasingly fragmented (Chappell and Hawke 2003, Lassnigg 2001: 52). This is clearly of concern to many practitioners, and to their representative bodies, who identify trends such as employment of increasing numbers of casual and sessional staff, and the shift to requiring Certificate IV as the minimum qualification, as diminishing the professionalism of the VET practitioner.

European research on professional identities also suggests that increasing flexibility and mobility results in looser commitment, loyalty and identification with an employer, occupation, or workplace, in particular among highly qualified and less skilled workers in unstable employment (Kirpal 2003). This is a key issue for VET, given that the proportion of casual and sessional employees is much higher than in other Australian industries. At the same time, research suggests that some flexibility in occupational identity is desirable, as employees:

> increasingly [need] to develop multi-dimensional (individual and collective) occupational identities that can be adjusted according to socio-economic and technical change (Kirpal 2003: 16).

As several studies note, professionalism can act as a boundary to keep people out, as well as to reinforce professional standards and expertise and raise the standing of the occupation. Lack of entry-level boundaries can contribute to the low status of an occupation, while clear occupational boundaries that reinforce the status of a profession are an important factor in attracting and retaining staff (Robson 2002, VTA 2001b).
From the point of view of existing practitioners, moves to establish teaching standards and higher-level qualifications are a way of shaping and preserving the professional identity of VET teachers and trainers. From the point of view of providers and governments, these standards and qualifications are necessary to ensure a skilled workforce able to meet the current and future demands on the VET system. The challenge is to ensure that qualifications and standards, if adopted, are flexible enough to accommodate change, while still preserving quality – and promoting excellence and achievement.

Qualifications

In many countries there are ongoing discussions as to whether the emphasis of teacher training for professional subjects should be placed more on the pedagogical or on the practical-occupational side (Lassnigg 2001: 42).

Most teachers and trainers in the Australian VET system tend to have a qualification in their industry specialisation, and acquire a teaching qualification either on the job, or in order to gain or keep employment in the VET sector (Mulcahy and Jasman 2003). This is similar to the system in England where minimum teaching qualifications have only recently been introduced. Other European countries, such as Germany, require VET teachers to have industry and teaching qualifications before they start work. In the US, the focus is on initial teacher training and certification – via formal qualifications, or staff development leading to certification.

In Australia, there has been broad recognition of the importance of teaching qualifications for VET practitioners, but less agreement about the form these should take, and the minimum skills and capabilities required. As the Victorian TAFE Association notes:

While the technical skills of VET teachers have been and still are crucial to quality teaching, so too is their ability to actually teach them. This is arguably more important given the importance of transferable skills which one would think the teacher must possess themselves to be able to teach them effectively (VTA 2001b: 10).

Data analysis conducted for this project by the NCVER found that most practitioners do not have a qualification in education or training – one in three in TAFE, one in ten among other practitioners (Cully et al. 2004). However, recent research in Victoria found that 83% of TAFE teachers had a qualification – 20% the Certificate IV; 44% had more than one educational qualification (Seddon et al. 2003).

As noted above, and in many reports reviewed for this project, the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment (soon to become the Certificate in Training and Assessment (Practice)) has become the de facto minimum qualification for the Australian VET sector, both in RTOs and within industry (Harris et al. 2001, NAWT 2001, VTA 2001b). At the same time, many VET teachers within and outside TAFE are acquiring higher-level qualifications, often in their own time and at their own expense (Harris et al. 2001).

It is also worth noting that several studies suggest that TAFE Institutes are willing to employ staff without a teaching qualification and allow them to become qualified at work, while private providers prefer to employ staff who already have a qualification – often this will be the Certificate IV. One of the ramifications of this trend is that TAFE is effectively subsidising development for the VET sector as a whole (Bierbaum and Karthigesu 2003).
The review of Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment found that the existing qualification was far too narrow and did not recognise the breadth of roles VET practitioners currently undertake across different sectors including schools, enterprises and community settings (NAVVT 2001: 33):

_Policy and organisational shifts have effectively transformed the scope of this Training Package from a fairly narrow definition of the work role/skill set for workplace trainers and assessors, to one which supports the breadth of roles and expectations carried out by a range of VET practitioners operating in a range of training environments (NAVVT 2001: 7)._ 

The review report also found considerable variation in the quality of the Certificate as it is currently delivered – a finding supported in other recent research (NAVVT 2001). It is also worth noting that a number of TAFE Institutes have arrangements in place with universities to deliver teaching qualifications to their staff in response to their concerns about the lack of focus on teaching and learning in the current Certificate IV. These include undergraduate and postgraduate qualifications (Palmieri 2003: 23, Seddon et al. 2003). Indeed, the perceived inadequacies of the Certificate IV have been one factor prompting a resurgence in interest in teaching and learning, discussed below.

The new qualification will include the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment and the Diploma of Training and Assessment. These qualifications are currently with ANTA for review. An Advanced Diploma is still under development and will be submitted for endorsement later this year².

The draft Certificate IV (ANTA 2004) groups competencies required into eight broad fields as follows:

- **Learning Environment** – including operating within the work environment, and the broader VET system
- **Learning Design** – involves the design of both products and delivery, including development of e-learning resources.
- **Delivery and Facilitation** – includes different approaches to individual learning, group learning, e-learning, workplace learning and action learning.
- **Assessment** – includes gathering evidence, assessing competence, and validation techniques.
- **Training Advisory Services** – includes providing advice and consultancy services.
- **Coordination, Management and Quality of Training/Assessment Services** – includes policy development, evaluation and team leadership.
- **Specialist Language Literacy and Numeracy Practice**.
- **Imported Units** – including relevant units of generic competence from other Training Packages.

Standards

Codifying knowledge allows for the certification and credentialling of knowledge which, in turn, facilitates the drawing of boundaries around occupational groups. In these ways, status may be protected and enhanced (Robson 2002: 96).

An emerging area of interest identified in this review is the development of standards for teaching in VET. The United Kingdom introduced standards for teachers, managers and other staff working in Further Education in 2001. The FE teachers' standards include a requirement for staff to have teaching qualifications (Bailey and Robson 2002).

In research for the Victorian Office of Training and Tertiary Education, Mulcahy and Jasman (2003) reviewed approaches to developing teaching standards in Australia and overseas. They argue strongly for an approach to standard setting which is grounded in professional practice and provides standards that reflect developing levels of expertise, from novice to expert status, rather than simply listing the minimum competencies required of VET teachers. While conventional competency standards list teachers' duties and are commonly used as a performance management tool, professional practice standards are detailed and descriptive: they outline what teachers need to know and be able to do to fulfil their role, are designed to increase teachers' professionalism and are developed in consultation with teachers themselves (Mulcahy and Jasman 2003: 4). Mulcahy and Jasman identify three broad approaches to developing teaching standards:

- Conventional competency approaches which are used as a way of measuring outcomes and performance.
- Professional competency models which combine descriptions of professional expertise with generic competencies for performance management purposes. The UK FENTO standards are an example of this approach.
- Professional certification, which includes detailed and descriptive standards. This is the approach taken in the US Career and Technical Education Teaching Standards.

While Mulcahy and Jasman advocate the third approach as one which is grounded in teachers' experience and expertise, there are systemic objectives which VET needs to deliver, and against which RTOs are required to perform. It therefore seems reasonable that standards for VET teaching, if developed, incorporate descriptions of teacher practice which support their continuing professional development as well as standards which reflect the needs and requirements of other stakeholders including RTOs and clients.

A number of papers reviewed stress the need for a national approach to developing teaching standards (Bierbaum and Karthigesu 2003), in part to ensure consistency and transferability. This will be an important issue for the capability project to consider.

The approach adopted by the Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education may be relevant when considering a national approach to developing standards for VET practitioners. The Commonwealth took a broad approach, developing a framework for teaching standards suitable for adaptation by States and Territories. The framework describes four career dimensions for teachers – graduation, competence, accomplishment and
leadership. Each of these dimensions is defined by the professional knowledge, practice, values and relationships required at each stage. MCEETYA has agreed that the framework will be used to guide a nationally consistent approach to teacher standards (Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education 2003: 114).

Another approach identified in the literature suggests that the AQTF includes quality benchmarks, which might include benchmarks for the VET workforce and provider capability (Noonan 2003). These would clearly need to be maximum standards – standards for excellence – not the minimum standards currently described in the AQTF.

Of course, the risk in introducing teaching standards in the VET sector is that they reproduce the one-size fits all approach criticised in the current Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment. As Bailey and Robson point out in the UK context, teaching standards can lead to inflexibility, and an inability to recognise the multiplicity of roles required of VET practitioners:

A teacher in a college may have a schedule of teaching, which includes teaching 14–16 year olds and adults, and the teaching could be at GCSE and degree levels. Which of the standards should he or she be required to meet: those of the TTA [school], FENTO, or the ILT [university]. Is all post-16 teaching and learning broadly the same or are there important differences between teaching 16–19 year olds and adults? (Bailey and Robson 2002: 339).

Critically, the requirements of different teaching standards in higher education, school education and VET may hinder portability and transferability. Given the recruitment challenges ahead, it is clearly desirable that teachers and trainers are able to move reasonably freely across all three sectors, as well as in and out of industry and enterprises.

Re-emerging interest in teaching and learning

Related to debates about professional identity, minimum qualifications and teaching standards is a resurgent interest in teaching and learning in VET. The recent Blue Skies project funded by ANTA is one example, and VET practitioners reportedly welcomed the opportunity – and permission – to reflect on teaching and learning, and pedagogical practice (McDonald and Figgis 2002).

A lack of focus on teaching and learning has been attributed to the introduction of competency based training and Training Packages. The current interest in pedagogy can therefore be seen, together with renewed interest in generic skills, as an understandable readjustment following extensive concentration on technical competency and assessment. Australia is not alone – getting the right balance between technical and generic skills, and competency based versus pedagogically driven approaches to training is a preoccupation of all the systems reviewed (Lassnigg 2001: 42, Bartlett 2002, McCaslin 2002, ILO 2003).

Of course, VET practitioners have always possessed pedagogical expertise. As Chappell et al. point out:

The successful implementation of VET programs relies on learning specialists who have expertise and a pedagogical orientation that they are able to deploy to meet the increasingly diverse requirements of clients (2003: 13).
At the same time, renewed interest in pedagogy is being driven by new understandings about how people learn and a widespread view that the most effective vocational learning takes place in practice, at work, and involves learning that develops in teams and groups (Noonan 2003, Chappell et al. 2003, Dryen 2003a). As a literature review for the TAFE NSW pedagogy project (Dryen 2003a) points out, a VET pedagogy that supports this kind of learning needs to:

- take account of the way people learn, including the difference between adult and young people’s learning
- shift from a focus on the teacher, to a focus on learner directed learning where the teacher is one of a number of resources available to the learner
- enable continuous engagement with learning over the life-cycle and support ‘learning to learn’
- facilitate the acquisition of tacit as well as codified knowledge through situated learning, learning in context, and in teams, for example using modelling, mentoring and coaching, as well as collective learning techniques such as communities of practice
- develop an evidence-based approach to practice which documents what works and develops a body of practice-based knowledge.

This research suggests that it may be the techniques currently employed in enterprises to mentor and coach staff, as well as in flexible delivery, that will need to form the core of VET practice and capability in future and inform approaches to professional development for VET practitioners and professionals themselves.

**Leadership and management**

In addition to a focus on teaching and learning, there is an emerging concern with leadership and management in VET. As Guthrie and Callan (2002) note, this is a relatively new area of research. New programs and research focusing on change management and strategic management under the umbrella of Reframing the Future (the national PD program to support implementation of the national training framework) are focusing on the capabilities required by VET leaders and managers. Recent research commissioned by the NCVER focuses on both leadership and management capability (Mulcahy 2003a, Guthrie and Callan 2002, Falk and Smith 2003).

In addition, the Victorian Office of Training and Tertiary Education has developed a framework for leadership capability for use by Victorian TAFE Institutes (Foley and Conole 2003). Key themes in this body of work include:

- Managers and leaders in VET are increasingly under pressure as a result of systemic changes, and are required to balance competing tensions – between staff and organisational needs, social policy imperatives and a competitive environment, cost-efficiency and innovation and excellence, quality assurance and flexibility and responsiveness (Mitchell et al. 2003, Mitchell and Young 2002b).
- These forces of change increasingly require leaders and managers to have change management and strategic management skills, in addition to traditional management skills (Mitchell and Young 2002b):
High-performing VET organisations of the future will require substantial strategic management and change management skills to respond to the range of organisational challenges facing senior VET managers, including an ability to function effectively in a competitive training market; an ability to establish and maintain training arrangements with industry; competence in marketing to overseas students; retaining of tenured staff to meet new student demands; an ability to use sessional staff; and the capacity to change directions to meet market requirements (Mitchell and Young 2001: 19).

Leadership and management are not the same thing – leadership is future focused, requires a clear and creative vision, and can happen anywhere in an organisation, while management is clearly located within the organisational hierarchy, and is focused on the present and delivering against current organisational imperatives (Foley and Conole 2003).

Leadership can be understood as a function of context, of the circumstance or situation that people find themselves in, rather than as an inherent characteristic of individuals (Falk and Smith 2003).

There does not appear to be a systematic approach to developing leadership capacity, as part of an overall strategic approach to workforce development and capability in TAFE Institutes (Foley and Conole 2003).

The capabilities required of VET leaders and managers include generic leadership attributes and competencies as well as attributes specific to education management – for example, understanding and being able to negotiate the VET system and VET policy, working in partnership with industry and communities, and the capacity to understand and cater to specific client needs (Foley and Conole 2003). As Falk and Smith note:

Success in the VET sector in this decade at the start of the new millenium will depend on how well VET leaders understand and operate across different areas, areas such as their organisational roles and functions, the leadership processes in which they are engaged and their own, their organisations’ , their local communities’ and their regions’ shared values and visions (Falk and Smith 2003: 14).

Other non-teaching staff

As noted earlier in this review, and in CEO interviews, to date there has been relatively little focus on the current skills and capabilities of non-teaching staff in research on VET professionals and practitioners. However, it is evident that their role is also expanding, for example to include direct student support, as flexible delivery practices become more widespread in RTOs (McNickle and Cameron 2003).

In a recent study on non-teaching staff in Victorian TAFE Institutes, Reed and Reed (2003) found that:

- Non-teaching staff had less access to professional development opportunities than did teachers and the quality of professional development they were able to access was variable.

- There was no clear career path for these staff, unless they completed the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment, and made the transition into direct delivery.
Staff in supporting roles such as librarians, student support and marketing staff experienced significant professional isolation, and required networks across RTOs to combat this lack of peer support.

Given the important role these staff are beginning to play in working with clients, more attention needs to be paid to their professional development needs, and to incorporating them into workforce planning and development strategies.

4.2.7 Key capabilities and skills for VET practitioners and professionals

This section discusses in more detail what the literature has to say about key capabilities and skills VET practitioners require, now and in future.

It should be noted that there is a large body of research which considers and lists these skills and capabilities, for teaching staff in particular (Wilson 2003b, CURVE and University of Ballarat 2003, Rumsey 2002, Corben and Thomson 2001, Harris et al. 2001). However, because the context of VET and RTO practice is changing so rapidly, more attention continues to be paid to the skills and capabilities that are required now and in the immediate future, and it is not always easy for researchers and practitioners to predict longer-term skill needs.

VET practitioners

The following clusters are drawn from across the literature and synthesise the capabilities and skills discussed in detail in material reviewed:

- **Pedagogical expertise.** This includes the capacity to adapt learning and teaching strategies to suit individual students, pedagogical understanding and access to a range of learning theories and techniques. Increasingly it will also involve understanding and applying new pedagogical approaches, such as those identified in the TAFE NSW pedagogy project — including coaching, mentoring, and facilitating learner-centred, self-directed learning, and learning at work (CURVE and University of Ballarat 2003; Dryen 2003a). European literature in particular identifies these new skills as critical as the roles of HRD and VET appear to be converging (Lassnigg 2001: 48).

- **Learner focus.** Some studies identify learner focus as a specific capability. This includes the ability to promote and support self-directed learning, as well as to cater for individual learning differences, and enable lifelong learning (Corben and Thomson 2001). However, a learner-focused approach is not the same as learner-centred learning in which the teacher is one of a range of resources available to the student (Dryen 2003a).

- **Industry currency.** Technical expertise in the teacher’s subject area is as critical as pedagogical expertise (Schofield 2002: 32). This is particularly important as it is one of the “selling-points” of VET, and is highly valued by employers and students alike. However, demand for generic skills among employers means that teachers need to be able to balance delivery of technical and industry specific skills with generic employability skills.
Use of technology. This covers knowledge and expertise in using new and emerging ICTs, in particular to stay in touch with and advise students, as well as for flexible delivery. These skills are also important to enable practitioners to stay in touch with each other, including via communities of practice and other networks, and can help to combat the isolation many teachers and trainers experience (Rumsey 2002).

Client focus. This involves brokering and relationship-building skills, to enable teachers and trainers to provide advice to clients (including students and enterprises), establish and maintain relationships, network with industry, develop partnerships, customise training and delivery to meet client needs, and evaluate and monitor outcomes (ANTA 2004).

VET system expertise. This includes working with Training Packages and the AQTF, applying competency based assessment, RPL, and emerging requirements such as employability skills and client focus (Rumsey 2002, ANTA 2004).

Personal qualities and attributes. Personal attributes are identified as being absolutely critical for all VET practitioners. However, there is some variation in the way these are defined by different authors. For example, Corben and Thomson identify a passion for learning and teaching as a key aptitude, together with communication skills, and a commitment to self-development (2001: 2). Rumsey suggests that these attributes include capacity to deal with change, self-directed learning, managing time and managing knowledge (2002: 45-46).

Managers and leaders

While management is about dealing with complexity and the present, leadership is about the establishment of a compelling vision, direction and a plan for the future (Guthrie and Callan 2002: 3).

There is a clear distinction between management and leadership in the literature, although it is recognised that an individual may have or require both sets of capacities to fulfil their role. Some key definitions of capability include:

- Leadership capabilities identified by Callan are transformative, and include: building and communicating a vision, strategic focus on future trends and business needs, the ability to deliver on the promise and achieve outcomes, change leadership, efficient use of resources, personal development and mastery, business and entrepreneurial skills, and the ability to develop and empower people (in Guthrie and Callan 2002).

- Mulcahy identifies the following capabilities for both managers and leaders in VET – business management, business development, strategic leadership, change leadership, people-centred management/human resource development, education management, and boundary spanning (the ability to form productive alliances and networks). She also notes that senior managers are required to focus more on business management and development, strategic and change leadership, and boundary management (external focus), while frontline managers need to focus on financial management, administration and operational management, consulting and educational leadership (Mulcahy 2003a: 8).
Mitchell and Young (2002b) view managers and leaders as requiring three broad sets of management expertise – traditional, strategic and change management capabilities. Where traditional management relates to managing the organisation and its resources, strategic management is about responding proactively to the environment, for example by analysing market trends and competitors, while change management involves providing a vision for the organisation, and motivating staff to achieve it.

Foley and Conole identify the following additional capabilities which are specific to educational leadership: the ability to challenge teaching and administrative staff and inspire and support colleagues to meet a diverse range of client needs; to establish and maintain strong links with the community, region and industry; and to operate effectively within the VET and education systems to cope with and adapt to change and promote the interests of the Institute (2003).

As the boundaries between teaching, non-teaching and management roles are increasingly blurred, many teachers are also required to develop management capabilities. As Mulcahy notes:

'Flatter' management structures and staff reductions have meant that leadership and management is increasingly the responsibility of a wider range of staff: 'We rely on our principal lecturers and advanced skills lecturers to provide leadership to the lecturers now' (2003a: 8).

Other staff

As noted above there is little in the literature regarding the capabilities required of non-teaching staff, though this was clearly identified as a gap in initial consultations with jurisdictions for this project.

Like other VET professionals, they will be required to possess:

- personal qualities such as the ability to adapt to change, communication skills, and a commitment to the values of the organisation
- technical skill in their area of expertise
- capacity to work with clients including in the area of direct student support
- aptitude and interest in developing new skills, for example in teaching and training, if required.

UK research on standards for supporting staff in Further Education discusses the capacities required by these staff, including technical support, librarians, student support staff, counselling/careers advice/specialist support staff, community liaison and curriculum development staff. Given the lack of focus on these staff in Australian VET it is worth citing the UK standards in full. They include:

- providing advice, guidance and assistance to learners and staff
- instructing learners and staff through demonstrations and workshops
- monitoring the use and application of systems, equipment and resources
- monitoring the availability of stock and provisions
- undertaking basic maintenance of equipment
- developing systems, resources and material
- communicating with and assisting learners, staff and colleagues
- planning and preparing own timetable and workload
- providing a contribution to the teaching and learning process (teaching, coaching and support)
- managing own administration, budgets and finance.
- working to quality standards and corporate objectives
- following health and safety procedures (FENTO 2001: 14).

**Skill and capability gaps**

In 2001, studies by Harris et al. and Mitchell and Young identified significant skill and capability gaps among VET practitioners and professionals which impacted on the ability of RTOs to deliver high-quality training under the national training framework.

Harris et al. found that VET stakeholders considered that only around half of current VET practitioners had the necessary skills, attributes, knowledge and capabilities to meet the core challenges posed by the changing VET system. Less than half of existing practitioners were felt to have the necessary capabilities going forward to improve the quality of VET provision (2001: 18).

In their review of Framing the Future, Mitchell and Young identified key trends impacting on the ability of RTOs to deliver under the national training framework. These included resistance to a demand driven system and operating in a service driven culture, pockets of entrepreneurial activity mixed with pockets of resistance within provider organisations, and a lack of focus on management and leadership (2001: 46).

In addition, Harris et al. identified specific gaps for older, casual and part-time workers, while Mitchell and Young suggested that staff development activity needed to focus on specific groups, including casual and sessional staff and staff of smaller, private RTOs, as well as particular aspects of the national training framework and Training Packages (2001: 48).

When these reports were written, reforms such as user choice and Training Packages were a relatively new arrival on the VET scene. During the intervening two years, VET professionals and practitioners have developed new skills and confidence in implementing new training and delivery practices, have become much more accepting of a client-focused, demand-driven system, and are embracing new developments such as flexible delivery with enthusiasm.

However, the pace of change continues to be rapid, and the literature suggests that skill and capability gaps remain. For example:

- Many practitioners say that they are confident about their ability to respond to learner needs; balance delivery of technical and generic skills, linking with industry to stay up to date with industry trends; use RPL; network; and build relationships with peers, clients and industry. However, they also say they are continuing to have difficulty unpacking Training Packages,
maintaining industry currency, supporting independent learning, and customising learning approaches. Even very experienced teachers still want more resources to help them to place learners at the centre, support generic skills development, work with Training Packages, facilitate work-based learning, and meet the needs of a diverse client base (CURVE and the University of Ballarat 2003).

In addition, relationship-building and networking skills, in particular with industry and enterprise clients are a challenge for some practitioners:

Partnerships and relationships with industry are seen as a challenge to many practitioners whose backgrounds were in teaching rather than in industry, as is the paradigm shift to flexibility in regard to time, location and style of delivery. Indeed, abandoning the teacher-dominant/curriculum mindset is still very challenging, and requires a cultural change (CURVE and the University of Ballarat 2003: 39).

'Front runners’ or early adopters have been quick to adopt flexible delivery practices and act as champions for new ways of doing things within their organisations (I&J Management Services 2003, McNickle and Cameron 2003). However, some research suggests that there is continuing lag between these early adopters and other staff. Certainly some staff continue to resist flexible delivery practices (partly due to a preference for face-to-face teaching) or are less than confident about their ability to negotiate online delivery (because of lack of ICT skills and infrastructure). Skill gaps identified in research include IT, information literacy, instructional design skills, and using technologies to communicate with learners, as well as online facilitation and assessment (McNickle and Cameron 2003: 26).

Research with support staff in Victorian TAFE Institutes found that skill gaps included training and assessment skills, general IT skills, management, and multi-media skills (Reed and Reed 2003).

There continues to be a marked skill gap among part-time and casual/sessional staff, in part due to lower levels of access to professional development, and also because of the way these staff are recruited – for their industry rather than teaching expertise (Wilson 2003b).

Finally, recent reports on management and leadership identify development of management and leadership skills in the next generation of VET professionals and practitioners as a critical challenge (cf Mulcahy 2003, Mitchell and Young 2002b).

Many of these skill gaps are related to current needs and priorities for VET providers, and are therefore the focus of a great deal of the current professional development activity taking place in the sector. However, while key skill gaps in the current workforce are well canvassed in the literature, it is harder to get a sense of the extent of the gap – the proportion of staff with considerable, minor or no skill gaps, mapped against their roles, employment mode and so on. It is even more difficult to predict possible skill shortages in future. This kind of data will be important to inform planning and funding for professional development and other HRD strategies.

Part Two of this report discusses workforce planning, development and management strategies and initiatives currently in place to manage and respond to the challenges identified in Part One of the review.
4.3 Part two: Workforce planning and development

4.3.1 Policy contexts

The need for a strategic approach to VET workforce planning and development has recently been identified as a priority issue by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments.

The new National Strategy for VET 2004-2010, Shaping our Future includes the following objective:

The vocational education and training workforce has the capacity and the skills to provide high quality, client-focussed, flexible learning and assessment, in partnership with businesses and other organisations (ANTA 2003f: 16).

A number of State and Territory VET and post-compulsory strategy documents identify workforce capability as a key issue for the VET system and RTOs. For example, in Skills for the Future, the South Australian government suggests that TAFE needs to be:

supported by a funded workforce development strategy which ensures that staff delivering the program have the necessary initial and advanced skills needed to meet high professional standards, adopt innovative teaching and management practices and facilitate workforce development in workplace, community, institutional and virtual contexts (Government of South Australia 2003: 48).

Similarly in Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy, the Victorian government provides that:

A set of initiatives will reflect the importance of workforce management as an essential part of Institute organisational development, including incentives for the achievement of international benchmarks of human resource management (Kosky 2002: 8).

The NSW State Government Commitments for the 2003 election outline a range of initiatives relating to PD for TAFE teaching and administrative staff, including development of a PD framework for TAFE teachers, now in draft form (TAFE NSW 2003b).

Some States and Territories are focusing specifically on strategies for VET, while others are developing frameworks for post-16 education and training that include VET, ACE, and schools. This has implications for the project, and for the capabilities of the people who work within and across these sectors. Given the extensive literature on the VET sector alone – albeit more focused on TAFE than private RTOs – this review has not looked at research on staff working in ACE and VET in schools sectors or the future skills and capabilities these people require. It may be necessary to undertake additional research on these staff to inform implementation of a national approach, given the policy focus of some States and Territories.

Professional development strategies or frameworks are in place in a number of States and Territories. In addition, specific initiatives, such as the TAFE NSW pedagogy project, are underway at the national and State and Territory levels. The need for a national professional development and workforce development strategy to support the new national strategy, Shaping our Future (ANTA 2003f), is a key driver for this project.
However, it would be fair to say that to date, attention to workforce planning is relatively new for most governments and for RTOs, and this is clearly reflected in the literature sourced for this review. While professional development has been on the VET policy agenda for some time, and management and leadership development and succession planning have received more recent attention, there has been considerably less focus on other elements of workforce planning and development such as retention and evaluation. A comprehensive and strategic approach to these issues has largely been lacking in VET (Schofield 2002, Government of South Australia 2003):

The future of South Australia’s skills system is ultimately dependent on the competence of the people who work within it. It is the core asset of staff competence that will remain the single most valuable source of future value in terms of process innovation and improvement in the quality of teaching, learning and assessment. There is strong evidence of under-investment and inadequate planning in this area that poses a high risk to sustainability (Government of South Australia 2003: 37).

This is coupled with a lack of focus on HRD in RTOs:

Overall, the state of HR management information across TAFE is inadequate to meet current and future planning requirements, and reasoned debate about what is to be done is being constrained by the lack of appropriate data and agreed data collection procedures (Schofield 2002: 37).

Statements about workforce development and planning tend to suggest what needs to be done, but are not supported by a comprehensive underpinning strategy that brings together initiatives for professional development, recruitment and retention, workforce planning, data collection and evaluation. In addition:

- In most States and Territories approaches to workforce planning, together with professional development strategies, are focused on TAFE, not all RTOs (see for example TAFE NSW 2003b, VMAC 2003).

- Most States and Territories, and ANTA, have continued to concentrate on developing individual capability through professional development (OTTE 2002, Forwood et al. 2001).

- PD is often used as a lever to bring about change in the VET system while other workforce management practices are less often utilised (McNickle and Cameron 2003).

The literature available to the review team suggests that approaches to workforce planning and development have been most clearly identified as a priority for action in Victoria, and research and workforce development initiatives are most developed in that State, as discussed below.

While workforce planning and development is generally understood to include professional development, PD is discussed separately here, due to its importance as an area of focus and lever for system change in the VET sector.
4.3.2 Focus on professional development

There is clear evidence of system-wide interest in professional development across the VET sector, dating back many years. If anything, engagement with professional development issues has increased over the past few years, as State and Territory governments put in place professional development frameworks and strategies, supported by a range of initiatives.

While there is no broad professional development strategy in place at the national level, *Reframing the Future* and the *Australian Flexible Learning Framework* professional development program continue to make significant inroads in research and practice that support VET professionals to deliver against national priorities.

**Current initiatives**

Current approaches to professional development are largely designed to address the priority skill needs identified in Part One of this report, and employ a wide range of formal and informal strategies. They include:

- national professional development programs – *Reframing the Future, Australian Flexible Learning Framework* initiatives including LearnScope and Flexible Learning Leaders, and equity professional development projects

- State and Territory initiatives including training and development opportunities provided to State and Territory public servants, by State and Territory Education and Training Departments

- development opportunities provided by industry advisory bodies and professional associations

- programs which school and university teaching staff are able to access through their employers, including State Education and Training Departments

- various initiatives undertaken by RTOs and ACPET.

A detailed review of current initiatives is beyond the scope of this review. However, it is worth noting that:

- At the national level, professional development activity has been largely focused on implementing aspects of the national training system, in particular Training Packages and competency based training, flexible learning and delivery, and the AQTF. Indeed, research suggests that the bulk of PD at the national and State and Territory levels focuses on current system priorities such as the AQTF, language literacy and numeracy, action teaching and assessment, and PD about the VET system, and is not very future focused (Wilson 2003b, Forwood et al. 2001).

- In addition, at the RTO level, a lot of professional development activity relates to compliance, for example with the AQTF and other legislative requirements such as occupational health and safety (Harris et al. 2001).

- However, it is also worth noting that professional development initiatives have broadened from a focus on VET practitioners to supporting VET professionals more widely. This is evident in the new focus on managers and leaders, for example in *Reframing the Future*’s strategic and change management initiatives (Mitchell 2003b, Mitchell and Young 2002b).
Communities of practice, networks and mentoring are becoming more widely used. For example, the Flexible Learning Leaders initiative actively supports and encourages champions or front runners as mentors for other staff, while Reframing the Future's Communities of Practice initiative fosters ongoing use of specific purpose networks to advance implementation of the national training framework (I&J Management Services 2003, Mitchell 2003a).

New and emerging needs and interests are evident in projects such as the TAFE NSW pedagogy project, which aims to provide VET practitioners with the latest information about pedagogical practice, together with practical techniques for application (Dryen 2003a).

While the literature often focuses on professional development for ongoing staff, it is worth considering these initiatives in the wider context of activity designed to support the professionalism of teachers and other VET professionals, including standards and qualifications, discussed in Part One of this report.

In this view, professional development is part of a spectrum of activity which contributes to skill development, from formal qualifications through to action and practice based learning approaches. In summary, these approaches include:

- Using standards as a driver for professionalism and a benchmark for what is expected from novice, professional and expert practitioners, including qualification requirements. The UK Further Education standards are an example of this model.

- Specifically employing qualifications – both at initial and higher levels – to provide the minimum requirement for practitioners. This has been the approach in Australia, using the Certificate IV. However, as is often noted, this is a minimum standards model, and does not provide for standards of excellence.

- Using ongoing professional development to drive system change and implement new initiatives. As noted above, Australia's national and State professional development programs are an example of this approach.

- Providing for continuing professional development that leads to certification. This has been the practice in America where career and technical education teachers can either gain a qualification or become certified. The use of RPL in Australia is a similar example.

- Developing excellence through initiatives such as teaching and/or leadership institutes and centres. Examples include the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership, the Institute for Learning in Higher Education in the UK and the proposed TAFE Centre in Victoria:

  The Centre's primary role should be to raise the professional standing of the TAFE workforce by describing, supporting and promoting excellence in educational practice and by providing development initiatives and services that enhance the quality of teaching and learning practice within TAFE (Victorian Ministerial Advisory Committee on the TAFE Development Centre 2003: 3).

- Formalising initiatives such communities of practice and mentoring programs to support and drive change within and across RTOs – for example Communities of Practice and Flexible Learning Leaders.
Adopting action based learning as a focus for professional development and to foster innovation – for example LearnScope projects.

Providing opportunities for practitioners to reflect on new and emerging learning and teaching strategies – such as the Blue Skies project.

**Participation**

As a number of studies note, participation in PD tends to be concentrated among full-time, permanent, teaching staff of RTOs, as well as frontline and senior managers and executive staff. In addition, staff of public RTOs are more likely to be able to access PD opportunities than those in smaller, private training providers.

While participation levels can be hard to estimate (often because data is unavailable, or tracks total participant numbers without indicating levels of repeat business) there are some good indicators about engagement with PD at the national level and in some States and Territories:

- Reframing the Future statistics provided to the research team indicate that absolute numbers have increased each year from 1997-2002, with 55% of participating organisations new to the program in 2002. TAFE RTOs continue to dominate – 61% in 2002, and part-time VET workers make up one-fifth of participating VET professionals. In addition, the proportion of unfunded projects has increased, from 39% in 2000 to 44.5% of all applications, suggesting an increase in unmet demand (Young 2002: 10).

- The Australian Flexible Learning Framework is about to be evaluated for the second time. The 2000-2001 evaluation report found that there were still considerable gaps in engagement among industry, non-public RTOs and ACE, and noted that:

  While the early adopters have been well reached, there is still a large body of those who do not see flexible learning as their major concern and whom the Framework has not yet reached. Among these are many contract and casual staff (for whom the provision of professional development is a perennial problem) and many of those in non-teaching positions, especially middle managers (ANTA 2002b: 44).

- The 2002 evaluation of LearnScope also identified high participation levels among TAFE providers, with much lower participation rates among enterprise RTOs and ACE. Larger RTOs were also more likely to be involved in LearnScope projects and initiatives (Henry et al. 2002: 10, 12).

- Research for the Queensland professional development strategy identified that programs such as Reframing the Future, LearnScope, AQTF implementation, quality assessment and action teaching were the most heavily subscribed (Wilson 2003b). In addition, the bulk of TAFE Queensland PD was focused on delivering to industry (47% of hours), and educational delivery practices (31% of hours).

As the Queensland research acknowledges, to some extent the national PD programs have driven the PD agenda. They have clearly been a boon to RTOs and providers, in part because of the funding these programs attract and the opportunities they provide for time release, reflection on practice, networking and the like.
While an exact profile or segmentation of participants in PD is not available, research also indicates that:

- There appear to be three broad cohorts when it comes to participation in professional development: front runners, those who participate but don’t actively pursue opportunities, and those who rarely participate due to barriers such as competing demands on time (Wilson 2003b: 63).

- Some practitioners and professionals may actively resist participating in professional development because they are not confident about existing skills or do not support the directions the VET system is heading in (McNickie and Cameron 2003: 23, Mitchell and Young 2001).

- Isolation and loneliness are important factors impacting on involvement. While they may act as a driver for participation, they can also act as a barrier to access:

> While it is acknowledged that being able to participate in networks is the ideal, the reality for many practitioners is that such participation is not always possible because of time, geography, management support and funding. For those practitioners who are lacking the sort of social and professional interaction that they might otherwise rely on, exemplars and models of good practice need to be readily available for them to benchmark their practice against (Curve and the University of Ballarat 2003: 29).

- VET practitioners and professionals are more likely than in the past to be paying for their own professional development, in particular when studying towards a formal qualification (Kronemann 2002, 2001, Harris et al. 2001). Those practitioners who are willing to pay are likely to undertake more PD. This in itself skews participation to those who can afford to continue to self-fund their own training and development.

Other factors which impact on participation in professional development identified in research include (Wilson 2003b, Harris et al. 2001):

- support from managers and the organisational culture, including whether there is an integrated plan in place for PD

- shared cost arrangements – for example costs of attending training, transport, resources are covered or contributed to by the employer RTO

- time release and cover for relief teaching

- just in time, just for me approaches that are relevant to the immediate needs and practice of practitioners and professionals

- support for flexible learning options which enable practitioners to learn at their own pace, supported by face-to-face contact

- availability of experts and mentors from within and outside the organisation

- networks and support, for example via communities of practice

- opportunities to reflect on current practice and try new ways of doing things.
Professional development needs and priorities

Priority areas for professional development are a key concern of the literature reviewed and a number of studies reviewed have focused specifically on PD needs (Corben and Thomson 2001, Harris et al. 2001, Rumsey 2002, Wilson 2003b, TAFE NSW 2003b, CURVE and the University of Ballarat 2003). These reflect the current skill requirements and gaps discussed in section 2.7 and include professional development to support VET professionals and practitioners to:

- implement the national training framework – eg. competency based training and assessment, working with Training Packages
- use flexible delivery practices, including online delivery
- comply with State and Territory and national requirements, including the Australian Quality Training Framework (the AQTF)
- understand and work with the broadening client base in VET, for example to understand different learning styles
- understand and navigate the VET system
- update industry skills and refresh their specialist expertise
- continue to develop their teaching practice, including an understanding of teaching and learning styles, how to develop students’ generic skills and facilitate work-based learning
- develop leadership and management capability including strategic, change management and innovation capability – particularly for senior and frontline managers
- develop consultancy, marketing and client-focus skills and relationship-building skills to collaborate with industry and develop commercial and educational partnerships.

A staged approach to professional development is also identified as important to recognise and build on teacher expertise and provide clear career pathways. Corben and Thomson (2001) argue that professional development (including initial teacher training) for teachers should involve three consecutive phases, to develop basic delivery skills, sound teaching practice, and reflection on advanced practice. Similarly, the Queensland professional development strategy identifies three key stages of development for VET practitioners – understanding and being able to apply the basics of good practice, good practice for professionals, and advanced and best practice skills (Wilson 2003b).

Importantly, professional development is also identified as an opportunity for teachers and other staff of RTOs to reflect on their practice, develop and maintain networks and combat isolation – a particular issue for staff of small and remote RTOs (Corben and Thomson 2001, Rumsey 2002).

In addition, it is likely that professional development will continue to need to involve not only formal initiatives but also a broader range of strategies, which include informal learning, mentoring and communities of practice. Research on the learning preferences of VET practitioners and professionals (CURVE and the University of Ballarat 2003, Guthrie and Callan 2002) identifies a strong preference for:
A combination of e-learning, print resources, face-to-face support and mentoring, formal PD together with networks and communities of practice and action based learning among teachers.

A combination of presentation methods (forums, lectures and programs), hands-on approaches (mentoring, learning contracts), team building and action learning teams among managers.

**International approaches**

Briefly, it is worth noting that the kinds of issues and approaches considered in this section in relation to PD initiatives in Australia are echoed in other countries examined. For example:

- In the UK, in addition to a focus on standards for teachers and other FE staff, there is now a requirement that FE practitioners have a teaching qualification. Industry currency is a particular issue for teachers, and most PD initiatives relate to organisational or national objectives (Brookes and Hughes 2001). Approaches to PD have tended to be ad hoc, and funding levels at the college level have been low (Lucas 2000).

- European approaches to staff development in VET are to be found along a spectrum from initial qualifications (e.g. in Germany where teaching and industry-specific qualifications are required prior to employment) through to FE in England where no teaching qualification was required at all until 2001. A number of European countries are considering formal qualifications for VET teachers and trainers, and it has been suggested that a European Institute be established specifically to cater for the education of VET teachers and trainers (Atwell and Brown 2001).

- In career and technical education in the US, the priority has been attracting teachers into the profession via initial teacher training and certification, and on mentoring and supporting entry-level teachers through their first twelve months of teaching. There has been less interest focus on continuing professional development and the transition from novice to expert teacher (Ruhland and Bremer 2003, Bruening et al. 2001). In contrast, the community college sector has concentrated on leadership training to ensure a cohort of staff are equipped to replace a rapidly retiring generation of principals and other senior staff (Shults 2001).

4.3.3 Workforce management in RTOs

Workforce management practice is the province of RTOs and State and Territory governments, and is therefore largely outside the scope of a national approach to workforce planning and development. However, research on HRD in training organisations has implications for the project, in particular because we need to understand implications of workforce management in RTOs for career progression and skill requirements, and because there are opportunities for training organisations to identify and share best practice approaches.

However, with the exception of studies conducted in Victoria (Forwood et al. 2001), and recent research commissioned by the NCVER for the *Australian Flexible Learning Framework* (McNicke and Cameron 2003), there is little available literature about workforce management within Australian RTOs. This translates into a lack of information about the systems RTOs are using, their HR function and what it does, how job and workload changes are being addressed in workplace agreements, how the impact of PD and HR investment is measured and evaluated, what is being done about knowledge management, and so on.
While the project team is conducting a limited number of key informant interviews with PD and HR managers in private and public RTOs as part of the current project, there is room for more systematic research on this issue, in order to inform a strategic approach to support RTOs to improve their HRD practice.

McNickle and Cameron's (2003) research in 15 TAFE Institutes looked specifically at the impact of flexible delivery on HRD practice in the Institutes studied. They found that:

- Professional development was the area in which human resource practice had changed the most as a result of the introduction of flexible delivery. Other areas were job design and workload management, but these were ranked much less highly than PD.

- Job design and job descriptions were not keeping pace with changing work practices, and this was a particular problem when recruiting new staff. This meant that RTOs were getting around job descriptions, for example by asking questions at interview relating to the adaptability, problem-solving capacity and time management and communication skills of applicants, even where these were not listed in the duty statement.

- Some attention was being given to workforce planning, for example looking at the skill sets, staffing loads and allocation of staff.

- Most organisations had yet to address the issue of succession planning, even though they acknowledged that it was a critical issue.

- Performance management strategies are being widely used and are linked to professional development strategies and individual learning agreements.

- As with job design and descriptions, pay rates had not changed to recognise flexible delivery, and existing industrial agreements were too inflexible to accommodate different delivery approaches. In addition:

  There was no distinction being made with regard to pay and conditions between those delivering traditionally in a classroom and those involved in delivering in a range of flexible ways (McNickle and Cameron 2003: 21).

- Funding arrangements are a major barrier to flexible delivery practices, because they are based on face-to-face student hours. For some teachers, this means that their practice bears no relationship to the delivery style assumed in the funding formula.

In addition, Forwood et al. (2001) note that:

- Training and staff development was the most widely used and valued HR practice across TAFE, private RTOs, universities and ACE.

- Most of the RTOs surveyed did not formally measure staff turnover, however private RTOs had the highest rate of turnover among teaching staff.

- While succession planning was clearly identified as important, most RTOs were not doing anything about it.

- There are elements of good practice and innovation, but most RTOs were not employing a strategic approach to HRD.
A range of approaches to HRD is employed in RTOs and there is no one size fits all model that meets the needs of all training providers.

The Forwood et al. and McNickle and Cameron reports suggest that HR practice continues to tend to be reactive, and focused on current challenges, rather than proactive and future focused. In addition, in many RTOs, the PD and HR functions are managed separately, rather than integrated, which makes it more difficult to implement a strategic approach.

Unpublished material provided to the review team indicates that initiatives are underway in Victoria to support HR practitioners in TAFE Institutes to promote good practice in HR management and development. Initial priorities identified by RTOs include HR strategy, workforce and succession planning, recruitment and selection skills and strategies, leadership development, performance development, anti-discrimination, OH&S and industrial relations.

In addition, material provided by TAFE NSW suggests that NSW TAFE Institutes are moving towards more integrated HR management and practice which aligns the HR function to strategic organisational goals and includes investment in skill development for administrative and support staff.

4.3.4 Key features of best practice in workforce planning and development

Features of a best practice approach to workforce planning and development – at the systemwide and organisational level – are discussed by a number of authors in the VET and HRD literature reviewed. For example:

- McNickle and Cameron identify eight key human resource issues which need to be addressed in a comprehensive approach to HRD: job design (tasks and responsibilities and the skills and capabilities required to fulfil them), human resource/workforce planning (data analysis to understand and respond to employment trends), recruitment and selection, performance management (rewards and recognition), training and development (professional development), pay and conditions, employee relations and occupational health and safety (2003: 13).

- In *Defining and scoping human resource development in the Victorian TAFE system*, Forward et al. highlight the following key elements of strategic human resource development – performance management, recruitment, leadership skills, professional development, teaching skills and retention and succession planning (2001: 9).

- The 2003 Accenture study of 200 leading companies employs the following measures of successful workforce management practice: that workforce management is aligned with corporate strategy, uses emerging practices and tools including HR service delivery that meets the needs of staff, an integrated and strategic approach to staff training and development, performance support and information/knowledge management strategies; and ensures that evaluation and measurement strategies that link investment in HR and training initiatives to outcomes, including staff and customer satisfaction are in place (Cheese et al. 2003).
Underpinning a national approach to workforce planning for the school teaching profession are the following principles, adopted by the Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education:

successful recruitment and retention of high-quality teachers with the required skills and expertise; understanding and analysing existing teacher motivations and intentions; ensuring rapid and strategic intervention and responses to changing needs; identifying and retaining the best; reducing costs associated with teacher attrition, replacement and retraining, and monitoring and evaluation (2003: 95).

In summary, the literature suggests that a best practice approach to workforce development and planning might involve the capability to:

- match workforce capability to employment trends and skill needs at the national and organisational level
- shape recruitment, retention and retraining strategies and initiatives to meet strategic and organisational objectives
- understand the motivation of current and prospective staff for entering, staying and leaving the VET workforce
- match initial training and professional development strategies and implementation to broad strategic objectives (at the national, State and RTO level)
- match job design and employment agreements to the current and future work performed by VET practitioners and professionals, while balancing the interests of employees and employer organisations
- provide a balance of tangible and intangible rewards to attract and retain staff, drawing on the identified motivations and aspirations of the current and prospective workforce
- employ recruitment and development strategies to address succession planning and retention issues, including to ensure a new generation of leaders and managers is available to VET RTOs
- incorporate strategies for managing and disseminating knowledge and information, including soft knowledge, within RTOs and across training, client and partner organisations
- build in evaluation measures that clearly demonstrate the return on investment from workforce development and management activity, including impact on client and staff satisfaction.

It is suggested that many of these issues are best dealt with at an organisational level and are not amenable to national intervention. However, a national approach can support RTOs and State and Territory governments in a number of ways, for example via consistent data collection, development of broad principles and frameworks to support implementation, and identification of best practice approaches.
4.3.5 Aspects of workforce planning and development in Australian VET

As this review demonstrates, to date the focus of workforce planning and development activity has largely been on professional development and staff training. Other aspects such as recruitment, retention, and rewards, understanding what motivates teachers and non-teachers to enter and stay in VET, are less well developed. However, material was provided to the review team about efforts Victoria has taken to address these issues. In addition, most activity is focused on the TAFE system, while private RTOs are less well resourced, and their current practice less well understood.

This section briefly summarises findings from the review about current activity and gaps against the criteria outlined above.

**Matching workforce capability to employment trends and skill needs at the national and organisational level**

As this review demonstrates, there is a substantial amount of information available to governments and RTOs about the current skill and capability of the existing workforce, demographic trends, and likely competition for skilled staff going into the future. In addition, industry skill requirements, which impact on the skill mix required of RTOs, are also well documented in the literature.

It should therefore be possible for RTO employers to map where staffing levels and mixes are now, and what will be required in the short to medium term to meet likely demand. However, evidence suggests that these approaches are mixed across VET RTOs. For example, Victorian research indicates that while some RTOs have begun to address these issues, others have not. Support is likely to be required to assist RTOs to undertake this kind of analysis and planning. Consistent national data collection will also be required.

Certainly, as discussed in Part One of this report, consistent national data will be important to develop workforce projections at the national and State/Territory level. Given gaps in existing data it has not been possible to develop such projections within the current project.

**Shaping recruitment, retention and retraining strategies and initiatives to meet strategic and organisational objectives**

Again, the literature indicates that approaches to recruitment, retention and retraining of staff are not always driven by strategic imperatives, and often take place on an ad hoc basis at the RTO level (OTTE 2002, Schofield 2002). In addition, recruitment tends to be driven by current, not future needs – for example, teachers and trainers are recruited in the subject areas which are in demand now, not in the future.

Some Institutes do appear to be developing workforce plans, while others continue to use sessional staff to ensure they have the flexibility required to change to meet industry demand (Palmieri 2003: 25). While this is important to ensure flexibility, a longer-term view is also needed, for example to recruit a proportion of teaching staff who have the interest and aptitude to take up leadership positions as these open up.
At the State level, the Victorian Government has adopted a recommendation that a TAFE alumni association be established as a way of identifying and recruiting potential employees. In addition, options for a TAFE industry exchange scheme are currently being considered by OTTE. The scheme would function both as a professional development opportunity, and as a recruitment initiative (Department of Education and Training Victoria 2002).

**Understanding the motivations of current and prospective staff for entering, staying and leaving the VET workforce**

While a great deal of research has been conducted on the attitudes and experiences of staff of RTOs, there are no studies located for this review which focus on the reasons why VET professionals and practitioners enter, leave or stay in the VET workforce. This is in contrast to studies conducted with nurses and school teachers (as well as other professions not examined for this review such as university teachers and general practitioners) both in Australia and overseas (Buchanan and Considine 2002, Smithers and Robinson 2003).

Of course it is possible to extrapolate from existing VET studies and research on job satisfaction in Australia to better understand the motivations of VET practitioners and professionals – factors such as workload, pay rates, the satisfaction involved in teaching, are clearly important. However, research with current and former practitioners and professionals would need to be undertaken to inform a retention strategy.

In addition, from the literature provided to the review team, it appears that most States and Territories do not track retention and attrition in the publicly funded sector. Unpublished Victorian research does identify estimated exit rates for 'ongoing' or permanent teaching staff, and suggests that a major driver of resignations in the TAFE sector is likely to be voluntary early retirement related to superannuation, for those teachers who have been in public service schemes for 30 years or more.

**Matching initial training and professional development strategies and implementation to broad strategic objectives**

Professional development is discussed in detail in section 3.2. It is clear that PD is employed as the key lever for strategic change at the national, State and Territory and RTO level. Professional development initiatives are becoming more closely tied to strategic objectives at the national and State/Territory level, although this is not always the case within RTOs.

For example, the new Queensland professional development strategy clearly identifies priority needs, and designs initiatives to respond to system-wide priorities. Importantly, the strategy addresses VET practitioners and professionals working across public and private sectors, and includes specific initiatives designed to address isolation and distance for those staff working in regional areas. The strategy also provides for professional development to support teaching staff over the course of their careers as they develop from novice to expert teachers (Wilson 2003b). The TAFE NSW PD framework is focused on TAFE teachers, and aims to develop attributes of excellence, including learner focus, technical knowledge and currency, expertise in teaching and learning and personal attributes and values such as a passion for teaching (TAFE NSW 2003b).
Both *Reframing the Future* and the *Australian Flexible Learning Framework PD* program take a similar approach. *Reframing the Future* has continued to widen the range of programs under its umbrella, to include strategic and change management initiatives that develop the skills and capabilities of leaders and managers (Mitchell 2003b, Mitchell and Young 2002b). Similarly, the AFLF PD initiatives recognise the importance of professional development as an underpinning support for the introduction of new delivery practices, and offer a combination of encouragement for leaders and champions and professional development for experienced and beginning practitioners (I&J Management Services 2003, ANTA 2002b).

**Matching job design and employment agreements to the current and future work performed by VET practitioners and professionals, while balancing the interests of employees and employer organisations**

In a recent paper on the future of industrial relations in Australia, Russell Lansbury argues for a new social contract at work, which balances the requirements of employers — for flexible, nimble staffing arrangements — and employees — for satisfying work, and better work–life balance (Lansbury 2003). Striking such a balance for all staff of RTOs is one of the key challenges for unions and RTO employers, and will be important both to attract new staff, and retain expertise within the sector.

Research suggests that these issues are particularly acute in RTOs at present. Job design and employment arrangements were identified as requiring urgent attention in the McNickle and Cameron (2003) study of HR practice in TAFE RTOs.

A study commissioned by the Victorian TAFE Association has examined the issue of job design and employment arrangements in more detail. Fitzfin Consulting and Griffin (2002) found that:

- The current job classification is not aligned with the current business of RTOs, with the result that the goodwill, commitment and loyalty of staff are supporting RTOs, sometimes in practices that are not legal.

- Institutes are getting around job descriptions based on industrial awards, including by making one-off payments to staff, use of time in lieu arrangements, and allowing sessional staff to form their own companies.

- Some RTOs are negotiating for more flexible arrangements in their agreements, but this tends to be ad hoc rather than systemic.

- Some staff are adhering to the conditions of their award agreement, which impacts on the capability of the Institute as a whole, and on staff morale.

- Pay levels are not competitive with industry, and flat organisational structures mean that there are not opportunities for career progression.

- Given the changing business of VET, a job classification system which encourages and facilitates flexibility is required.
These trends were also identified in other jurisdictions and are supported by the findings of the McNickle and Cameron study. Fitzfin Consulting and Griffin also examined practices in private RTOs and identified quite different approaches, with a low level of unionisation, no provision for set teaching hours in agreements and a minimum requirement for the Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment (2002: 21).

They suggest that an integrated approach to job classification is required, which offers:

*a range of advantages including a vision for staff of the TAFE of the future; a flexible, multi-skilled professional workforce; the ability to respond to market forces; the opportunity to lead change; and very importantly, an attractive career path for staff in the industry. (2002: 25).*

Fitzfin Consulting and Griffin recommend a four-part structure which includes VET teacher, professional educator, industrial skills instructor, and VET trainer. The proposed classification scheme would work as follows:

- While the VET teacher position is the core role within TAFE, it would be open to these staff to convert to professional educator status. The professional educator classification would also include positions such as head teacher, and other frontline management positions.
- Financial incentives would be offered at each grade within the classification.
- The industrial skills instructor classification would emphasise vocational skills, and work-based delivery. Assessors would fall into this category.
- Finally, the VET trainer classification would include consultants and Institute staff who deliver Training Package training, and develop customised training solutions.
- Sessional staff would be paid an hourly rate under the classification they fall into.

**Providing a balance of tangible and intangible rewards to attract and retain staff, drawing on the identified motivations and aspirations of the current and prospective workforce**

As noted above, while there has been little specific research on VET practitioners’ and professionals’ motivations for entering, staying in and leaving the profession, there are some pointers about the tangible and intangible rewards that are likely to attract and retain skilled professionals in the VET sector. In summary, these include:

- **Opportunities for continuing skill and professional development.** This is a threshold issue for the so-called free agent or portfolio worker. VET employers that provide and promote these opportunities will be better able to compete with other industries and sectors to attract staff.
- **Work–life balance.** For example as women are likely to continue to make up the bulk of part-time and sessional staff in VET, family friendly workplace policies and practices need to become part of the mainstream in VET employers.
- **Access to career pathways, and incentives to progress.** As discussed above, flat management structures and lack of financial and other incentives do not encourage or support career progression. The kind of career progression offered in the Fitzfin Consulting and Griffin model will be important in order to retain skilled teaching and non-teaching staff.
- **Wages which, if not competitive with industry, do not fall too far behind.** While VET is unlikely to be in a position to offer competitive salary packages for people working in highly paid industries, research indicates that if other factors such as development opportunities and work-life balance are present, a substantial proportion of people are willing to accept relatively lower rates of pay.

- **Opportunities to continue to undertake satisfying work.** For example, for teachers this is about continuing to gain satisfaction from their teaching practice, and is directly related to reasonable workloads which balance administrative and teaching duties.

- **Employer brand.** One of the critical issues for VET going forward is the 'second-class' status of VET compared to university education. Branding and promotional strategies which aim to reposition VET are being considered by ANTA and several State and Territory governments. Current and prospective staff will be an important target audience for these initiatives.

### Employing recruitment and development strategies to address succession planning and retention issues, including to ensure a new generation of leaders and managers is available to VET RTOs

Leadership and management has clearly been identified as a priority for VET RTOs, and a range of professional development strategies is in place to address leadership capability, including *Reframing the Future* initiatives and Victorian leadership capability research, discussed earlier in this report. Other initiatives include NSW's leadership development network, and TAFE Tasmania's leadership development strategy and pilot leadership development program. Some Institutes appear to be looking at succession planning, and considering how best to address this issue, for example by recruiting retiring staff back in consulting or casual roles.

In the US, succession planning has been a critical issue for American Community Colleges (Shults 2001). Approaches to this problem have included adopting different recruitment criteria to widen the pool of prospective leaders and managers, together with targeted professional development initiatives such as a Future Leaders Institute for staff and managers aspiring to leadership roles. In addition, former community college principals are acting as mentors to new and prospective leaders coming through the system.

### Incorporating strategies for managing and disseminating knowledge and information, including soft knowledge, within RTOs and across training, client and partner organisations

Knowledge management is an emerging area of interest in Australian VET. For example, *Reframing the Future* has identified a range of knowledge management approaches for VET RTOs, which include using professional development and communities of practice to build and share knowledge among practitioners (Mitchell and Young 2002c). However, this review was not able to identify any research which specifically examined current knowledge management practices in RTOs.

Research conducted for the Australian Business Foundation (Hall 2003) identifies the following elements of good practice in knowledge management which may be of use in conducting such an assessment:
Support for knowledge management practices in job design and performance management and assessment.

Use of cross-divisional teams.

Use of networks, learning communities and communities of practice.

Recognition that knowledge management is not a stand-alone strategy, but an underpinning support to the work of individuals and teams.

Use of formal and informal practices to translate individual knowledge into organisational knowledge, including standard operating procedures, de-briefing and reflection, and mentoring arrangements.

Adoption of incentives and rewards for innovation – proposals or ideas for new ways of doing things.

Working beyond organisational boundaries to share knowledge and tap into R&D, for example via professional associations and networks.

**Building in evaluation measures that clearly demonstrate the return on investment from workforce development and management activity, including impact on client and staff satisfaction**

Accenture research on HRD leading firms identifies evaluation and measurement as a critical indicator of good HR practice (Cheese et al. 2003). While evaluation is commonly used in VET, for example to assess the impact of professional development initiatives, the focus tends to be on participation levels and numbers, and the self-assessed impact of these activities (for example via feedback from participants). Impacts on the wider organisation are sometimes neglected, and evaluation rarely assesses the impact of PD activity on clients, for example on client satisfaction. This is a considerable gap. The Accenture study recommends that evaluation measure the impact of investment in PD and HR initiatives on productivity, client satisfaction, as well as on non-participating staff, and staff satisfaction levels (Cheese et al. 2003: 19).

An exception is the use of the balanced scorecard approach in Victorian TAFE Institutes. Unpublished data provided to the review team indicates that OTTE is currently tracking financial investment, profitability, client satisfaction, community participation, and expenditure on personnel and staff development to develop a scorecard for each TAFE Institute. As comparable information was not available from other States and Territories for this review, it is not possible to assess whether they are using similar approaches.

**Current initiatives**

A systematic review of best practice approaches to workforce planning and development is beyond the scope of this review, and would require original research, including detailed investigation of national and State and Territory government initiatives, and case studies at the RTO level. It is likely that interviews with HR and PD managers will identify some examples for further investigation. The best practice criteria for workforce planning and development discussed earlier in this report could form the basis for such a review.
4.4 Appendix A: Examples of current initiatives

The review identified a number of current initiatives which illustrate the breadth of current responses to the workforce development and planning challenges discussed in this report. Four of these are described below. As the current project is designed to identify system-wide approaches, examples are drawn from State and Territory and national initiatives, not RTO practices. Most relate to professional development, and not to other workforce planning and development practices, given the overwhelming focus on professional development activity in the literature reviewed.

There are many other examples, including initiatives under Reframing the Future and the Australian Flexible Learning Framework. Those discussed here are likely to be less well known to the sector as they have not yet been extensively documented. For information about initiatives under the national professional development programs, visit <www.reframingthefuture.net> and <www.flexiblelearning.net.au>.

**Strategic professional development project – Queensland Department of Education and Training**

Deborah Wilson Consulting Services (2003) undertook a major review and strategic analysis of the professional development needs of vocational education and training professionals and stakeholders in Queensland, and developed a strategic framework for PD in that State.

The project included a literature review, review of current professional development programs and extensive consultation. The strategy identifies key PD priorities and areas of unmet need, and builds an approach that provides for:

- mutual obligation between employer and employee to invest in professional development
- clearly outlined career pathways for teaching and non-teaching staff
- special initiatives to tackle specific issues as they arise
- collaboration and cooperation to plan for and deliver professional development
- greater access to professional development in regional Queensland
- measurement and evaluation.

The strategy identifies the need for ongoing professional development which introduces the basics of good practice, builds on good practice for professionals, and develops advanced and best practice skills.

Key priority capabilities include working with a diverse client base, training system knowledge, teaching and learning management skills, industry currency, and organisational capacity building.

Different target audiences for professional development are clearly identified and include managers, teachers and non-teaching staff of public and private RTOs, stakeholders, and Departmental employees. The strategy also includes:

- access strategies to increase participation, for example via just in time delivery, short, sharp courses, and use of regional networks.
specific strategies targeting teaching in schools, teaching Indigenous students and students with a disability, for overseas students, and to incorporate VET professional development into university teaching courses

evaluation and planning initiatives to track participation and satisfaction, including establishing a reference group for professional development in the State.

A new VET pedagogy – TAFE NSW

The TAFE NSW pedagogy project is designed to provide TAFE Institute teachers with access to a broad base of pedagogical theory and practice which they can draw on to inform teaching, delivery and assessment strategies. It is explicitly positioned as focusing on developing a best practice approach to teaching and learning in VET.

The project includes a literature review (Dryen 2003a) and 24 case studies on current teaching practice. Where the literature review discusses new approaches to teaching and learning, and the usefulness of cross-disciplinary research about how people learn as a basis for pedagogical theory, the case studies investigate innovative pedagogical practice.

Features of innovative pedagogical practice identified in case study research (Grady et al. 2003) included:

- partnerships with industry and the community to support course design and delivery
- course design that responds to students' needs and strengthens the quality of the learning experience
- availability of a range of learning modes to students to enable greater learner choice and support individual learning styles and preferences
- strong collaborative relationships between teachers and students
- project and action based learning
- use of 'up-front' assessment and recognised prior learning to evaluate where learners are at, and prepare individual learning plans.

The next stage of the project will draw together these findings and develop a pedagogical framework and set of resources for practitioners, designed to evolve on an ongoing basis as theory and practice continue to develop.

A balanced scorecard for Victorian TAFE Institutes – Office of Training and Tertiary Education

OTTE has recently introduced a balanced scorecard approach to assessing performance in Victoria's TAFE Institutes. Institutes are required to report against the following performance measures:

- Constituents – students, employers and the community. This is measured using module load completion rates – the number and percentage of completions, student contact hours, student satisfaction ratings, employment outcomes and employer ratings of TAFE as a training
provider. Participation rates among specific community groups – women, 15-19 year olds and mature age students, first generation migrants, people with a disability, Indigenous and rural and regional students are also included as a measure of community participation.

- **Resource management.** These are the financial indicators and include the ratio of independently generated revenue, expenditure – including the cost of delivery and support for each student contact hour, staff expenditure and other costs, the net operating margin, working capital and asset utilisation.

- **Internal processes.** This is measured using the percentage of invalid enrolments (as an indicator of efficiency) and supply of training by sector. In future it is intended to map demand against supply.

- **People and the work environment.** Measures used here include the average spent on professional development for each staff member, and the percentage of overall salaries and wages spent on staff development. The number of student contact hours per EFT staff member, and the proportion of ongoing, fixed-term, sessional and non-teaching staff are also used. For the first time, in 2001, measures of teacher satisfaction were also employed.

The performance indicators described above are then used to develop an overall rating for each TAFE Institute which allows TAFE RTOs to assess their performance and address any issues identified.

**Professional development models for the future – Australian Flexible Learning Framework**

*The most significant learning comes from a combination of exposure to new ideas, critical thinking and interactions with experts and people who hold divergent perspectives, and seizing the opportunity to be taken out of one’s comfort zone (BDO Kendalls 2003: 2).*

This AFLF project also illustrates current interest in new approaches to VET practice and professional development. The first stage of this project focused on capabilities for the knowledge era. This stage included a literature review and interviews with knowledge workers in a range of sectors to identify key features of knowledge work, aptitudes and attitudes of knowledge workers, and the learning and development strategies they employ.

This research identified the following attitudes and approaches to learning among knowledge workers. They:

- use disruption as an opportunity to learn, for example going outside their comfort zone, trying something new or taking a new role
- immerse themselves in a new role, job or task by focusing, talking, reading and thinking around an issue
- actively seek out opportunities for new development and learn by doing
- expose themselves to new ideas from external sources, for example by going outside their discipline
- network with those at their peak in a field, peers and colleagues, and mentors
- take time to reflect on and consolidate new learning
- take responsibility for their own development and learning (BDO Kendalls 2003).

In addition, the draft final report identifies enablers which support professional development of knowledge workers in VET, including:

- using information technology to support capturing and sharing knowledge and generation of new ways of knowing
- seeing professional development within the organisation and its culture – locating change within the individual or team within the wider organisational context, identifying barriers and enablers that support the intervention or change
- connecting staff to the organisation's identity – directions and aspirations – and knowledge needs and requirements, in order to facilitate generation of new knowledge
- connecting professional development to the needs and interests of the individual knowledge worker, and their career trajectory, to ensure its relevance and encourage self-motivation
- using extreme or radical teams, teams which work on projects which aim to tackle and resolve issues which are significant to the organisation – mission-critical. The learning and development of knowledge workers and organisational change are one and the same in these teams – as the team changes it learns, and as it learns, it changes the organisation
- understanding knowledge workers as creative designers, and developing professional development that supports them in the design process, and allows them to drive their own PD
- integrating the learning that comes with working and the learning that comes with professional development so that these activities are iterative and engaged, so that professional development is part of and supports the core business of knowledge workers
- creating a work environment that promotes intuitive thinking, creativity, testing of assumptions and risk taking, including via organisational structures, leadership and communication that is supportive, generous and open (AFLF 2004)
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