In response to an increased interest in the development of generic skills within vocational education and training (VET), the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) have commissioned work on developing a framework for the recognition of Employability Skills. One of the first steps in this process was the research and thinking underpinning the report from the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and the Business Council of Australia (BCA), Employability Skills for the Future (2002). This report has received a mixed reception with the controversy centred on a number of key elements, namely, the term “employability skills”, the skills identified, the proposed recognition of attributes as well as skills and the perceived lack of consultation within the VET community.

Further to the publication of this report, ANTA has commissioned a number of projects to explore the recommendations of the ACCI & BCA report and to develop models which might enable the recognition, teaching and learning, and assessment of the employability skills in preparation for a community consultation on employability skills. The author has been involved in two of these projects which will be outlined in this paper. In addition, some reflections on the probability of employability skills becoming integral to teaching, learning and assessment within vocational education and training given our experience with the Key Competencies since 1992 will be discussed.

The team that undertook the research which resulted in the report, Employability Skills for the Future (ACCI & BCA 2002), identified a number a personal attributes, generic skills and elements of these skills which were the building blocks of the Employability Skills Framework. In doing so, they acknowledged that:

- these skills build on the Key Competencies
- employer recognition and integration of the Key Competencies within work, learning and recognition were strong
- employers identified the importance of those personal attributes that contribute to employability
- the same critical mix of skills had been identified by small and medium enterprises and large enterprises
- the skills identified as critical were broadly consistent across industry sectors
- it was at the element level that the contextual and industry nature would become apparent
- the priority placed on the employability varied from enterprise to enterprise
- employability skills are as relevant as job specific or technical skills
• employability skills are relevant to both entry level and established employees
• there is strong recognition of the role of lifelong learning in skill development and response to change
• the skills identified in the framework underpin the capacity for leadership
• customer service is not an isolated skill but, rather, is the outcome of the integration of a range of different skills
• the employability skills are as important for effective participation in the community as they are in employment.

The Employability Skills Framework incorporates the following personal attributes which contribute to overall employability:

• loyalty
• commitment
• honesty and integrity
• enthusiasm
• reliability
• personal presentation
• commonsense
• positive self-esteem
• sense of humour
• balanced attitude to work and home life
• ability to deal with pressure
• motivation
• adaptability

The key skills identified in conjunction with the personal attributes to make up the Employability Skills Framework are:

• **communication** skills that contribute to productive and harmonious relations between employees and customers;
• **team work** skills that contribute to productive working relationships and outcomes;
• **problem-solving** skills that contribute to productive outcomes;
• **initiative and enterprise** skills that contribute to productive outcomes;
• **planning and organising** skills that contribute to productive outcomes;
• **self-management** skills that contribute to employee satisfaction and growth;
• **learning** skills that contribute to ongoing improvement and expansion in employee and company operations and outcomes; and
• technology skills that contribute to effective execution of tasks.

The release of the report resulted in a mixed reception, with adverse reactions coming particularly from some State and Territory training Authorities and vocational education and training practitioners. The concerns about the Employability Skills framework have largely centred around:

• the term “employability skills”
• the skills selected for the framework
• the inclusion of attributes
• lack of consultation within the VET community.

A rose by any other name would smell as sweet?

By deciding to call the set of generic abilities they are championing “employability skills”, the ACCI and BCA seem to be repeating one of the mistakes which was made with the Key Competencies.

Key competencies are not competencies as understood within a competency based framework. They should perhaps have been called capabilities which might have reduced the ensuing confusion about levels as well as the on-going debates as to whether they should be embedded within other Units of Competence or taught and learned as a stand alone entity. By using the term capability, the sense by which these are the learning tools or glue, which enable the learning of other competencies and the embedding together of competencies into knowledge and performance, is clearly conveyed. In a similar sense, the employability skills are not skills in common parlance which often distinguishes between doing and knowing as in the use of the phrase “knowledge and skills” in the definition of competence (ANTA 1996?). The ACCI & BCA definition of a skill, namely:

Term used to describe the learned capacity of the individual. Skills has been used instead of competencies reflecting the language of the enterprises interviewed and to avoid any confusion with the different ways competencies is used (ACCI & BCA 2002, p. 5)

does nothing to avoid confusion by using skill as an overarching term for learned capacity when it is commonly used to denote a performance. The continuing debate on the nature and role of underpinning knowledge within Units of Competence has its roots in the use of the term “skill” to describe a capacity for action, which consequently leaves in question the underpinning knowledge which may or may not be embedded within this action.
Of even more concern is the use of the term ‘employability’. Although the authors of *Employability Skills for the Future* noted that these ‘skills’ apply equally to those in work as to those seeking work, it is the latter group with which the word is commonly associated. Employability carries with it the connotations of entry level, pre-vocational, low AQF levels when these generic capabilities are, clearly, an essential part of our lifelong learning and development as social beings.

It has been suggested that these should, perhaps, have been termed “employment ……”. This is preferable in terms of conveying a lifelong development – but only for some. It excludes the voluntary workers, the self-employed, those who choose not to be employed, the unemployed and retirees. The capabilities they describe are as useful in our out of employment lives as they are at work. They are essential capabilities for work but they are also essential for our lives as a whole.

**Re-badging or innovation?**

The second issue of concern with the listing of the employability skills in *Employability Skills for the Future* is the actual “skills” involved. The longer one looks at them, the more obvious it becomes that these are basically the Key Competencies re-badged. It is true that ‘using mathematical ideas and techniques has slipped off the agenda and that cultural understandings appears to be a non-starter. One wonders why. Is it the discomfit that many people have around their experience of school mathematics, that leads to a failure to recognise that estimating, prioritising, counting, making spatial comparisons and many other mathematical skills which we use everyday in our work are in fact mathematical skills? Do cultural understandings need to stay in the too-hard basket in a world which stresses working with others, collaboration and partnerships? How can we work together without understanding the ‘way we do things around here’ and the factors which marginalise others in such an environment?

*Initiative and enterprise* and *self management* appear to be new to the list. *Learning* is an enhancement of the first of the Key Competencies defined by *Putting Education to Work* (Mayer 1992), whilst the other six can be viewed as a re-statement of the original Key Competencies. But are *initiative and enterprise* and *self management* really new?

When we look at the ANTA definitions of competency (ANTA 1998; 1997), we find that the competency includes:

- task skills;
- work organisation skills;
- contingency management skills; and
- work environment management skills.
Surely it is in our management of contingencies that we demonstrate our initiative and enterprise and is not self management an inclusive term for us being able to organise our work and operate effectively with the work environment?

As someone who has long argued that until our assessment of competency takes all these dimensions into account, we are taking a single dimensional view of competency and, as such, assessing the shadow and not the reality, I have concerns about this sleight of hand which moves essential dimensions of competency and renames them as employability skills. Of course they are essential for work – just as they are essential for existing in society. The worry is, by naming them as employability skills, do we run the risk of continuing to view competency as simply the ability to perform task skills under ideal conditions. Where then is the need for underpinning knowledge? My dogs can perform all sorts of obedience exercises – but even they choose or make judgements about when and where they will apply them!

It is to be hoped that the promised consultations with the wider VET community will provide the opportunity to re-negotiate the actual skills which make the final list.

**The inclusion of personal attributes**

The potential difficulties in systematically assessing one’s initiative and enterprise, within an environment where consistency is seen as a major concern and is often confused with sameness, pales into insignificance when we try to imagine how the ‘personal attributes which contribute to overall employability’ (ACCI & BCA 2002, p. 8) might be recognised without bias or cultural insensitivity.

When competency-based training (CBT) was first introduced in Australia, it was sometimes described as being comprised of knowledge, skills and attributes. The A word was rapidly discarded along with other A words such as attitudes and awareness (of context and its effect, role and functions) as being too hard to assess and far too hard on which to get agreement of. At the time, this disappointed me as I do not think we should avoid hard things if they add to our understanding and performance. I still believe that it is the three As which transform a capability into a competence. But given that more than ten years have passed since the introduction of CBT and that assessment is still skewed to a focus on task skills alone within many of our institutions and workplaces, there is a need for some serious research and work on how the recognition of attributes will need to be implemented and played out.

After all, the inclusion of attributes within American skill frameworks has resulted in a very slow adoption rate of the skills framework within industry (Kerka 1998) and most of the countries with similar vocational education and training approaches to our own, have to date avoided anything more than a superficial acknowledgement of the role attributes play in the exercise of competence. Should we respect their wisdom and experience or must we insist on our right to make the same mistakes for ourselves?
Consultation Process

My understanding is that ANTA intends to develop a number of support processes around the employability skills identified by the ACCI & BCA report and to then present this material to the State and Territory training Authorities for wider consultation. This would appear to be a sensible course of action and it is hoped that the resultant consultation will be as inclusive and consultative as possible.

There persists, however, a fear in some quarters that this may not be so. Underlying this fear (or cynicism) are unresolved issues around the respective roles of ANTA, industry and the vocational education and training community of practitioners. Although in the recent consultations by ANTA in the development of its strategic directions, there were some signs of a growing recognition that industry, government and VET providers needed to develop a tripartite relationship to avoid the issues arising from an industry-led VET system, there were also signs that any watering down of the primacy of industry in such arrangements would be resisted.

Theoretically, industry defines what, providers determine how this might be achieved and the role of the government is to provide the statutory, policy and fiscal environment in which this might happen. In reality, it is a contested environment and one in which the (perhaps unintentional) alienation of providers has resulted in much discomfort, disengagement and disillusion.

Further progress

In order to prepare for the consultation process, ANTA has commissioned a number of research and other projects in order to collate the necessary strategies and resources for the integration of the employability skills within the National Training Framework. At the same time, a number of other bodies, such as state training authorities, the Department of Education, Science and Technology (DEST) and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research have sponsored investigative work into the employability skills. I have been involved in two of these projects and it is these I wish to discuss in this paper.

The first of these was a project in conjunction with ratio – a Sydney based consulting group headed by Tess Julian. The objective of this short, intensive project was to:

1. Develop options for incorporating the employability skills in Training Packages in a way that facilitates the recognition and certification of these skills.
2. Test options with a small sample of Training Package developers and departmental staff in States and Territories responsible for Training Package implementation.
3. Prepare a report for consideration by the NTQC.
Before the models could be developed we needed to work towards a common understanding of the nature of employability skills. The following section of this paper is taken directly from the final report developed by the project entitled *Employability Skills in Training Packages* (ratio & Down 2002, pp. 16 – 17)

**The nature of employability skills**

Employability skills are those basic skills and capabilities required for getting, keeping and doing any job we do. They complement the technical skills required for a specific job. Out training and education system has traditionally conceptualized skills in a way which responds to a paradigm of work which is fast disappearing. We are now moving into the age of the high performance workplace in which all employees are expected to have the necessary skills to enhance the performance of the enterprise as a whole. For example, until recently the need for creative thinking among the general workforce would have been unimaginable, and yet now it is almost the highest on the list of sought after attributes.

Employability skills are usually not discrete functions of work, although at times can be. They operate within and between work functions, they underpin work and provide an integration of work. They are often not related to academic performance or technical performance and have more to do with emotional intelligence than traditional notions of intelligence. Employability skills are context specific and cannot be accurately assessed out of a specific application. For example, working in a team cannot be assessed outside of a team at in meaningful work, problem solving at work can’t be assessed outside of a work problem.

They are not a package of skills, they operate in many different ways, for example:

1. **Employability skills can be an integral part of a specific technical competency**

   It is one thing to know how to set up lights for a function, but competency means having the capacity to improvise when equipment fails, to keep calm when the deadline is brought forward, to reassure a new team member- these aspects are employability skills.

2. **Employability operates across tasks as well as just within them**

   The skills serve to link a number of work tasks. Skills such as working together, time management, multi tasking and the capacity to transfer across contexts are core skills about work rather than about one task. So expressing them within one competency standard
ignores the fact that they are relevant to most. Expressing them in every competency standard devalues them. Expressing them as a separate competency standard removes the context.

3. **Employability skills are needed by individuals to manage their work life**

While there is debate about whether many of the attributes can be taught, they perhaps suggest that young people in particular need guidance in identifying the behaviours appropriate for a work environment. Currently, many believe that these are not defined sufficiently explicitly in our training programs.

In addition, everyone needs the skills to be able to manage themselves at work and between jobs, to identify what they need to learn, and to access the learning that they need.

4. **Employability also includes new skills needed by organisations and individuals to survive the new global commercial landscape**

Increasingly employees need to enhance their cognitive and interpersonal skills. It is now as important to learn how to think as to what to think, to learn the skills for lifelong learning and adaptability, to learn to deal constructively with diverse colleagues, markets and products. It is also important to be able to contribute to an innovative work environment and to knowledge management.

The challenge for educators then, is how to capture, describe and deliver these skills in a way that makes sense. Our past efforts, the Key Competencies, went a long way in identifying them; they acknowledged that they are critical to all work, However, feedback suggests that they do not address the complexity of the way the employability skills operate and enhance work performance.

Moreover, there is evidence to suggest that Training Packages are still not well understood by many trainers and assessors. This means that much of what is possible in innovative delivery against Training Packages is not being realised and this further impedes the development of employability skills.

**Context of VET**

In discussing the recognition of the employability skills within Training Package development and implementation, it is essential that the current context of VET practitioners is taken into account. The *Strategic Evaluation of the Qualitative Impact of the Introduction of Training Packages on Vocational Education and Training Clients*, which was completed earlier this year, presented a snapshot of a context in which variability, uncertainty and confusion with respect to Training Packages was evident.
Whilst an increasing number of practitioners are gaining confidence in their new roles and embracing the flexibility and multiple delivery and assessment pathways, which Training Packages enable, to meet the diversity of student needs, others are still clinging to the practice and expectations of the past. In particular, the report highlighted:

- the variability in understanding the nature, function and roles of Training packages across VET practitioners and the subsequent diversity of effectiveness in implementing Training Packages
- infrastructural barriers to the introduction of Training Packages where systemic or institutional policy and procedures were not compatible with the flexible use of Training Packages
- the need for effective professional development to enable teachers and trainers to develop and use their educational competence to develop effective learning paths for different groups of students within the Training Package framework
- the need for a supportive environment which encourages innovation, manages risks and is, thus, tolerant of error and learning through innovation and experience
- the lack of sufficient educational leadership at all levels of the VET community who can model and assist practitioners in finding ways to effectively implement Training Packages and to envisage a better vocational and training future and seek to achieve it.

It is, therefore, important that the introduction of the concept of employability is not seen as yet another change made before previous changes have been given time to gain acceptance within the VET community. Equally important is to ensure that it is accompanied by appropriate and accessible professional development activities which will not only enable the implementation of a formal process for recognising employability skill development and for integrating the concept of employability skills within Training Package learning and assessment.

### Levels of Employability Skills

Employability skills are developmental capabilities. This development is not bounded and is experientially based. This means that the development of employability skills is influenced by:

- experience in developing and using skills within a meaningful work task
- approaches to learning
- effective reflection on the outcome and process of work tasks
- interaction with and understanding of the context of the meaningful work task
- need to plan and organise work task
- performing the work task in non-routine or contingent situations.
This means that the standard at which employability skills will be demonstrated and recognised must be consistent with the standard of the other skills and learning in which the employability skills are embedded.

In practice, this means that the employability skills will be recognised at the Australian Quality Framework level of the qualification being undertaken.

To understand what this means, the employability skills must be interpreted within the AQF Level Descriptors and characteristics. How this might be done is discussed below for AQF Levels 1, 3 and 5.

**Level I**

The descriptors at this level are concerned with the recall of knowledge within a narrow range, basic practical skills, performing a sequence of routine tasks under clear direction and receiving and passing on messages or information.

The employability skills must be recognised within the framework these descriptors provide and must be demonstrated in conjunction with meaningful work tasks which fit within the descriptors for AQF Level I. Thus:

- **communication** is concerned with the receiving and passing on of messages, clarification of work tasks with supervisor, responding and making suggestions within team meetings or interactions, requesting assistance and reporting contingencies
- **teamwork** involves the sharing of tasks within clear direction and the completion of work tasks to meet the team’s goals
- **problem solving** is limited to single issue problems around the performance of work tasks and decisions as to respond in the short term to contingent situations
- **planning and organising** is focused on the achievement of own work tasks in a timely manner and one which is supportive of the work teams objectives
- **use of technology** is focused on receiving and passing on of messages and carrying out routine tasks applicable to the learner’s work
- **initiative and enterprise** needs to be focused on improvement in performance within the parameters of direct supervision
- **learning** is concerned with the recall of key knowledge and the development of practical skills to enable the completion of work skills
• **self-management** is demonstrated by the ability to complete tasks and meet timelines and to seek help from one’s supervisor when this is not possible.

**Level III**

The descriptors at this level are concerned with the demonstration (or application) of relevant theoretical knowledge, the application of a range of well-developed skills, applying known solutions to a variety of predictable problems, using some discretion and judgement when carrying out normal work tasks and interpreting available information, taking responsibility for their own work and learning, and taking limited responsibility for the learning of others.

The employability skills must be recognised within the framework these descriptors provide and must be demonstrated in conjunction with meaningful work tasks which fit within the descriptors for AQF Level III. Thus:

• **communication** is concerned with working within a work group, explaining ideas and actions, suggesting alternative actions, and dealing with contingencies and non-routine situations

• **teamwork** involves the sharing of tasks and providing appropriate support to other team members, the completion of work tasks to meet the team’s goals and joint decision making and problem solving of issues concerned with everyday skills and work tasks

• **problem solving** is limited to problems around the performance of work tasks and to determining solutions which are focused on both the short-term and long term resolution of work task problems

• **planning and organising** is focused on both the achievement of own work tasks in a timely manner and on ensuring that the work team achieves its stated work goals

• **use of technology** is focused on tasks applicable to the learner’s work and in the application of employability skills such as communication, problem solving, planning and organising etc.

• **initiative and enterprise** needs to be focused on improvement in both own and other members of the work team’s performance within the parameters of routine and well-developed work skills

• **learning** is concerned with the comprehension and application of theoretical knowledge to well-developed skills and the development of a recognition and working understanding of the processes and systems which apply within the workplace

• **self-management** is characterised by the completion of work tasks and the meeting of timelines within the combined contexts of work tasks, environments, systems and expectations and involves the exercise of discretion, judgement and the acceptance of responsibility and accountability.

**Level V**
The descriptors at this level are concerned with demonstrating the understanding and application of theoretical knowledge concerned with work tasks and their contextual characteristics, analysing and planning approaches to technical and human interaction problems and situations, transferring and applying skills and knowledge across a range of situations, evaluating information and using it for planning or research purposes, taking responsibility for own actions in relation to both quantity and quality outputs and taking limited responsibility for the achievement of group outcomes.

The employability skills must be recognised within the framework these descriptors provide and must be demonstrated in conjunction with meaningful work tasks which fit within the descriptors for AQF Level V. Thus:

- **communication** is concerned with working within a work group, explaining ideas and actions, discussing and analysing alternative actions, dealing with contingencies and non-routine situations, writing reports and presenting an argument for improvement in work practice.

- **teamwork** involves the sharing of tasks and providing appropriate support to other team members, mentoring and training where appropriate, the completion of work tasks to meet the team’s goals, and joint decision making and problem solving concerned with work tasks, quality, work-environmental issues and the prevention/minimisation of recurring contingencies.

- **problem solving** is focused on issues and problems which affect the performance of the work group and, thus, might extend outside the immediate work area. Solutions are focused on both short-term and long-term resolution which involves collaboration with others outside the immediate work area. It involves the resolution of multiple and often conflicting issues and may involve deviation from systematic problem solving methodologies.

- **planning and organising** is focused on both the achievement of own work tasks in a timely manner and on ensuring that the work team achieves its stated work goals. This will involve forecasting and research and collaboration with a wider community than the immediate work group.

- **use of technology** applies to both tasks applicable to the learner’s work and in the application of other employability skills such as communication, problem solving, planning and organising etc. and will include preparing resources for effective communication and planning.

- **initiative and enterprise** needs to be focused on improvement in both own and other members of the work team’s performance within the context of the whole organisation or a considerable division of the enterprise.

- **learning** is concerned with the comprehension, transfer and application of theoretical knowledge to all work practice and the analysis and evaluation of the processes and systems which apply within the workplace and which affect one’s work performance.

- **self-management** is based on a well-developed capacity for evaluation and self-assessment against specified criteria and the ability to adapt and innovate from existing systems, processes and procedures.

*Implications for Training Package developers*
When developing or making amendments to Units of Competency, developers need to ensure that the descriptors make explicit the expected standard of those employability skills which are embedded within a particular Unit of Competency. A guide similar to the examples given above for each of the AQF levels would be a useful resource.

**Implications for those implementing Training Packages**

Similarly, teachers/trainers and assessors need to be aware of the expected standard of development of the employability skills particularly where the employability skills are embedded within a technical or generic Unit of Competency. The guide prepared for Training Package developers would, therefore, be a useful resource for RTO and industry teachers/trainers and assessors.

**Suggested models**

From this thinking, the project went on to develop three approaches and seven models which could be used to integrate the employability skills into Training packages. These models were not intended to be an either/or choice but a range of strategies which could be used separately or in combination and which would meet the differing needs of training Package developers and those implementing Training Packages to accurately reflect industry and student needs and the different contexts in which work is performed.

These models are summarised in the following tables:
## Approach A – Strategies for Training Package Development

A1 – Stand alone descriptors – managed by a mechanism outside the ITABS

Appropriate for the employability skills needed to complement work rather than specific technical skills. Good for skills which link activities within work, provide self-management at work, and for skills needed in the new knowledge economy.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>For whom</th>
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| 1. New style descriptor/guideline standards, for example:  
• Solve problems  
• Work with others | Competency standard format  
• Different rules to competency standards reflecting their different functions  
• Have to be applied in conjunction with technical standards | Explicitly spell out what is to be learnt and assessed  
• Provide a mechanism for recognition of employability  
• Provides a status, flags the skills as important  
• Might provide a platform for more innovative delivery | If they translate into stand alone modules, they may overwhelm the content of the training packages  
• They also may become separated from companion competency | Analysis and development of models  
• Development of support materials to show how they can be used in Training Packages and training delivery  
• Professional development | Developers  
• Interpreters  
• Implementers |
| 2. Composite standards, for example, Organise a meeting with the eight employability skills as elements | Use the eight employability skills as a framework for the development of one standard | Shows that employability skills are part of a context and are related to each other  
• Allows for clumping  
• Provides a simple form of recognition | Has already been advocated and rejected  
• Relies on quality assessment processes | Development of models  
• Development of support materials | Developers  
• Implementers |
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Suggests that the employability skill is tied to the level of the technical unit</td>
<td>• Assumes that trainers and assessors understand the role of employability skills</td>
<td>• Models and trials</td>
<td>• Developers</td>
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<td>• Assumes that trainers and assessors understand the role of employability skills</td>
<td>• May be self limiting and not solve the problem of spelling out what is required to be learnt and assessed</td>
<td>• Professional development</td>
<td>• Interpreters</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>• May be self limiting and not solve the problem of spelling out what is required to be learnt and assessed</td>
<td>• Models and trials</td>
<td>• Implementers</td>
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3 Integrating units

For example, a unit might be:
Work effectively in the xxxx environment.

|       |             | • A unit in each qualification which describes the employability skills required for that context | • The development of employability is over a period of time | • It is an additional unit | • Developers |
|-------|-------------| • Essential evidence would be gathered over the course of the training/assessment. | • Requirements are specific and perceived to be important | • May be dismissed | • Implementers |
|       |             | • Supported by other strategies | • It encourages holistic and integrated assessment and learning | • Can be inflexible if the requirements are too specific | • Implementers |

A2 – Changing current descriptors

Appropriate for those skills which enhance the performance within technical competencies; represent the dimensions of competency
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<tr>
<td>4. Employability skills defined within performance criteria, for example: Solutions are sought using creative thinking techniques</td>
<td>• Recognises the intertwining of the employability skills with the application of more specific or technical skills&lt;br&gt;• The dimensions of competency are within the performance criteria. For example, organise own work, deal with contingent and non routine situations</td>
<td>• Reflects the richness of competency by recognising all its dimensions not just the visible ones&lt;br&gt;• It does not attempt to separate or fragment the employability skills from technical skills&lt;br&gt;• Will work well within workplace learning and assessment contexts&lt;br&gt;• Can be easily written into units of competency within existing</td>
<td>• Needs competent assessors who understand the complexity of competency&lt;br&gt;• Difficult to deliver in an institution&lt;br&gt;• Premised on teacher/assessor understanding&lt;br&gt;• Requires commitment by VET community to ensure that the issue of employability is integrated into practice at all AQF levels</td>
<td>• All standards would need updating as part of review processes&lt;br&gt;• Guidelines for reviewers and developers needed to identify where change is needed and then to ask the right questions to redevelop&lt;br&gt;• Supporters needed to identify how to apply dimensions to workplace tasks</td>
<td>• Developers&lt;br&gt;• Interpreters&lt;br&gt;• Implementers&lt;br&gt;• Supporters&lt;br&gt;• Reviewers</td>
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<tr>
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| 5. Employability skills in evidence guide, including assessment      | This model requires a more explicit spelling out the requirements in the      | • By spelling out key aspects of the process, identification and assessment of the employability skills could be assured  
• Should enhance the quality of the assessment process  
• Can enhance the quality of simulated and other institutional assessments | • In providing such detail might restrict the applications of the employability skills  
• If the assessor/trainer is not familiar with the workplace practice, it might not work  
• Demands assessment which is based on the appraisal of multiple evidence collected across different tasks, over time and in multiple contexts | • Tools and models for developers on how to write the evidence guide  
• Tools for developing relationships with workplace to find applications  
• Information on assessment practices for trainers/assessors | Developers  
Implementers                                                                 |
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<td>6. Embed the technical in the employability, for example, using a guideline standard, such as: Develop innovative ideas at work, as a framework for Design a learning program</td>
<td>Assumes that most technical skills are in fact an application of one of the employability skills and rather than analysing from the technical, start with the employability</td>
<td>• The employability skill becomes central and the process explicit&lt;br&gt;• Employability is present in all standards</td>
<td>• Developers need a new methodology for analysing work and developing competency&lt;br&gt;• It could result in the skewing of competency standards&lt;br&gt;• It still does rely on the interpretation of the implementer</td>
<td>• Comprehensive information and guidance for developers&lt;br&gt;• Guidance and information for interpreters and implementers to ensure that the appropriate balance is achieved</td>
<td>All stages of the cycle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| 7. Map skills in current competency standards employability, and develop a mechanism to show the relationship. | • Assumes that in most standards the employability skills are in fact embedded though not interpreted and implemented<br>• The employability skills would overlay the units of competency | • Ensure that employability skills are recognised in specific contexts<br>• Provides a way of addressing employability without rewriting the competency standards | • Is a minimalist approach and might achieve a minimalist response<br>• Might be dismissed | • Advice on how to identify and report the employability<br>• A format for doing so in Training Package guidelines and support materials | Developers
• Implementers |
### Approach B – Provide implementation strategies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Advantages</th>
<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>For whom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Explanatory booklets:</strong></td>
<td>• Team work&lt;br&gt;• Creative thinking&lt;br&gt;• Critical thinking&lt;br&gt;• Problem solving&lt;br&gt;• Communication etc</td>
<td>• Individual pieces of information be developed for each of the employability skills&lt;br&gt;• These could be produced as hyperlinks from standards and stand alone booklets</td>
<td>• There is currently very little that is widely available&lt;br&gt;• It would decrease the fear factor associated with employability skills&lt;br&gt;• It would encourage a blended approach to skill development encouraging trainers and assessors to look at the individual context and need</td>
<td>Development and distribution of booklets</td>
<td>• Implementers&lt;br&gt;• Interpreters</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

They would cover easy to follow guidelines for teaching and assessing in a context, at different levels, plus explanations of what to train for and what to look for.
### Approach C – Professional Development

- Direct effort into educational leadership and professional development

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<tr>
<th>Model</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<th>Disadvantages</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>For whom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Professional</td>
<td>Might cover:</td>
<td>• Would provide an opportunity to develop the new perceptions needed</td>
<td>• Needs to be done in conjunction with Training Package specifications</td>
<td>• Would require Commonwealth and State commitment</td>
<td>All in the cycle</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>development</td>
<td>• Training Packages</td>
<td>• Employability is integrated within the pedagogy and thus reinforces their essential nature</td>
<td>• Would require a great deal of financial support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Using innovative staffing solutions</td>
<td>• Enables flexibility in the development and recognition</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Holistic and Integrated models</td>
<td>• Wins support</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Employability skills</td>
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<td></td>
<td>It could be used to develop the support materials and thus create ownership and commitment</td>
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</table>
Current ANTA Project

The report, *Employability Skills in Training Packages*, was endorsed by the National Training Quality Council at its meeting in December 2002. Since then a further project has been initiated by ANTA. This project involves consultants working with key people and bodies in a number of industry areas to apply the models to Units of Competency within specific qualifications to test out the practicality of the models described above.

This has been done and the emerging exemplars used in a series of workshops involving VET practitioners from around the country to ascertain the acceptability of this approach. These workshops were organised by Reframing the Future and the response has been fairly positive.

As a result, a report has been written by *ratio* and is currently available via the project website for feedback before being amended and presented to the National Training Quality Council at their next meeting. My role in this project has been one of quality assurance and being a “critical friend” to the project team in the formative stages of the project.

Conclusions

There is still a lot of work to be done before the employability skills become a key strategy of the National Training Framework in general and Training Packages in particular. The preliminary work has been focused on providing concrete models and examples before the concepts are used as the basis of widespread consultation and the buy-in of ownership by VET practitioners of all levels.

In the end, the key to whether employabilities will become an integral part of vocational education and training will be the willingness of the VET community to take ownership of them. Before this can happen, there must be an extensive consultation within the VET community and ANTA must demonstrate its willingness to respond to concerns and to enable current contestation of the nature of these capabilities to be played out. Unless this happens we will not have progressed and our outcome descriptors will remain one-dimensional and a statement of what has been rather than what must be.

References


