

The background of the upper half of the cover is a close-up, high-angle photograph of a person's face, looking downwards. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent orange filter. Various words related to the book's theme are scattered across the image in a light, semi-transparent font, including "staying focussed", "strategy", "leadership", "vocational education", "management", "training", and "staying".

staying focussed
strategy leadership
vocational education
management strategy
strategy training staying
vocational education
focussed
management leadership
training

Leadership and management in vocational education and training

Staying focussed on strategy – Volume 1

Dianne Mulcahy

Publisher's note

This report has been organised into two volumes. The detailed report of the project is contained in volume 1 while volume 2 which contains the appendices appears on the National Centre for Vocational Education Research's website <http://www.ncver.edu.au>

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Executive summary

The study and objectives

This project has its origins in a broad recognition among the vocational education and training (VET) community of the changing roles of leaders and managers within VET provider organisations, the changing expertise required to perform these roles, and the need to identify approaches to management and leadership development that might provide this expertise. The specific objectives of the project were to:

- ✧ identify the roles and functions of senior and frontline managers in VET organisations
- ✧ identify the expertise needed by these managers, and these organisations, to manage and lead
- ✧ examine approaches to developing management and leadership expertise and the strengths and limitations of these approaches
- ✧ identify approaches to management and leadership, and management and leadership development, that may best serve organisations in the VET sector.

The project involved:

- ✧ a mail survey of managers in registered training organisations. A self-completion questionnaire was mailed to executive and senior managers in 1551 provider locations in five states. In total, 365 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 23.5%
- ✧ 147 telephone interviews with senior and frontline VET managers from 79 registered training organisations. Approximately 30 interviews were undertaken in each of the five states
- ✧ 10 intensive case studies of practices of managing and leading in VET providers, in each of the five states (two in each state). The case studies involved observation of organisational practices and in-depth, semi-structured interviews (50 altogether).

Key findings

Key influences on leadership and management in VET

There has been an increased focus on the external environment as opposed to the internal environment in terms of VET products and services. There are at least seven powerful external forces that providers must contend with today:

- ✧ *the changing work environment*: ‘People are working harder and stress levels are rising’
- ✧ *the changing policy environment*: ‘One person [is] employed full time now working ... [on] Commonwealth Government compliance issues, tax issues, paperwork issues, forms, all of these kind of things’
- ✧ *increased administrative responsibilities*: ‘We’ve got checklists for just about everything that exists’

- ✧ *reduced government funding*: ‘You have this vision for where your organisation is likely to be with absolutely no certainty that there will be any funding support for that’
- ✧ *increased expectations regarding corporate connections/industry links*: ‘You have got to have the sort of attitude of wanting to work with industry’
- ✧ *increasing use of technology and e-commerce*: ‘Reusable learning objects is one of the newer kinds of directions in online learning’
- ✧ *increasing expectation in relation to links with other sectors, agencies and organisations; for example, universities, schools, adult community education providers*: ‘We have a lot more relationships with other training providers in alliances’.

Policy interventions and initiatives that require compliance have a considerable influence on management and leadership within VET providers. The mutability and uncertainty of the policy environment where new initiatives appear regularly creates pressures for providers. Uncertainty over government funding is the key pressure point in technical and further education (TAFE) institutes and group training companies. Compliance demands on small business management hit small providers particularly hard.

A clear trend to increased adoption of strategic management processes is discernible in VET providers. Strategy concepts can be seen as an attempt to move providers from traditional management models (strictly functional, operational or task-based approaches) to one which is more businesslike and corporate in approach. They can also be seen as an attempt to build key private sector practices into the operation of the public sector.

Market activity defines the operating environment of VET providers. However, a number of VET managers have reservations about the appropriateness of a market structure in vocational education and training. Managers in various states are considering, and initiating, co-operative arrangements not only as a means to ‘build up business’ but also as a mechanism for developing an alternative method of provision in VET. These managers support a sectoral or systemic approach, rather than competitive, individual, institutional provision. A network-based approach to organisation where linkages between providers take precedence over the providers themselves may be emerging in VET.

Leadership and management roles

The roles of senior and frontline managers in VET providers are expanding. Managers themselves note that ‘there is a much more complex range of functions than managers were involved in five years ago’. Senior managers are found to perform five broad leadership and management roles:

- ✧ business management and development
- ✧ strategic leadership
- ✧ change leadership
- ✧ people-centred management
- ✧ boundary management (external focus).

Unlike frontline managers whose roles are more dispersed, senior managers’ roles are relatively integrated. Senior managers also experience more autonomy in their roles than frontline managers. The impact of change has been felt more fully at frontline management level than executive or senior level. Frontline managers’ roles are both strategic and operational. Frontline management is ‘where the rubber hits the road, as far as doing business is concerned’. Frontline managers perform six broad leadership and management roles:

- ✧ financial management
- ✧ administration and operational management

- ✧ strategic management
- ✧ people-centred management
- ✧ consulting
- ✧ educational leadership.

Ultimately, their responsibilities are financial, human and physical resource management.

Management roles and responsibilities are being redistributed. ‘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’.

Expertise required to perform leadership and management roles

The capabilities required of senior and frontline managers to perform their leadership and management roles are comparable. The capabilities required of frontline managers were reported to be similar to those described for senior managers ‘but to a lesser degree’. Frontline managers in publicly funded VET providers are increasingly required to perform managerial rather than educational/professional roles. VET leaders and managers require expertise in eight specific domains:

- ✧ *business management*: resource management; project management; contract management; information systems management and maintenance (for example, implementing systems and standards); planning and budgeting; tendering; monitoring processes and procedures, targets and goals; utilising new technology and conducting e-business
- ✧ *business development*: identifying business opportunities; ‘looking for breakthrough stuff’; sales and marketing; promoting the organisation
- ✧ *strategic leadership*: discerning trends; future-casting; setting corporate directions; promoting a shared vision; undertaking strategic planning; engaging in strategic thinking and taking strategic action
- ✧ *change leadership*: creating a vision for change; creating readiness for change; building work cultures that support change
- ✧ *people-centred management/human resources development*: interpersonal relations; communicating information; consulting with staff; consulting with ‘clients’; including staff in decision-making
- ✧ *education management*: co-ordinating and scheduling teaching teams; co-ordinating courses; monitoring learner management plans
- ✧ *boundary spanning*: forming productive alliances; consulting, liaising and meeting with industry and community groups; public relations; articulating the value of vocational education.

Leadership and management development

Vocational education and training organisations are characterised by a paucity of management and leadership development activity. Work-based learning or work-related learning, of a formal and informal kind, is the preferred means of development. Four broad approaches to leadership and management development are endorsed by VET managers:

- ✧ *work-related learning of a formal kind*: mentoring, coaching, work shadowing, deputising, project-based learning, action learning, experiential learning and one-on-one consultancy
- ✧ *work-related learning of an informal kind*: casual meetings, support groups, ‘chat rooms for peers’, self-directed reading and ‘be[ing] somewhere in another organisation [to] gain a perspective on how other leaders operate’

- ✧ *seminars and workshops*: participants who are drawn from different sectors can ‘cross-pollinate’, share ideas and talk, network and problem-solve, using case studies, simulations and scenarios as support
- ✧ *traditional courses and short courses*: conducted by various organisations which provide ‘formal qualifications in a practical context’, for example, Master of Business Administration.

Leadership and management development needs to take teamworking and networking into account. Strong management, it seems, grows out of cross-sectoral activity where information from disparate groups can be gathered and used to support innovation and creativity in vocational education and training.

Sustaining valued leadership and management in VET

Given the heightened responsibilities attaching to managerial roles and the shortfall in leadership and management development in the VET sector, there is a clear need for greater leadership and management support. In planning for the future, attention could well be given to:

- ✧ increasing opportunities for development at senior management level
- ✧ creating pathways for prospective managers and leaders, most particularly at frontline management level.

Change leadership and change management are the preferred processes for effecting organisational change in VET providers. Sub-cultures are easily overlooked or not taken into account during the process of changing the culture of the organisation. Strong leadership in vocational education and training requires acknowledging a sense of the ‘high tension zone’—the complexity of the relationships involved in simultaneous membership of different cultures (for example, business, occupational, professional).

Overview

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a study into management and leadership within providers of vocational education and training (VET) in Australia.

An increasing interest in management and leadership within the vocational education and training sector emerged over the last few years. A number of research projects have been sponsored recently by various bodies, chiefly the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), as part of the Australian National Training Authority's (ANTA) National Research and Evaluation Program.¹ This report presents the findings from one of these projects. Commencing in 2001, the objective of the project was to 'capture' and interpret the main features of the new kind of leader and manager now emerging in the VET sector. More specifically, it aimed to identify the expertise that VET leaders and managers now need in order to perform their leadership and management roles and how this expertise might be best developed. A key assumption underpinning the research was that the roles of managers and leaders within VET organisations are expanding, consequently, new 'knowledge' is required in the performance of these roles.

The research was undertaken by a consortium comprising five universities, two institutes of technical and further education (TAFE) and a community college. Led by the University of Melbourne, the project team consisted of pairs of researchers in each of the following five states: New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia.

Rationale

Very little is known about management and leadership in registered training organisations within the vocational education and training sector. Recent research has shown that the roles of educational personnel, most particularly education managers, have changed significantly in response to a changing operating environment. The various reform initiatives introduced by governments over the past decade have been the impetus for much of this change (Mitchell & Young 2001; Lundberg 1996; Paterson 1999). As these initiatives continue and their implementation devolves to the organisational level, further significant changes in these roles can be expected. Governance of the public vocational education and training system is also changing under pressure from state and federal priorities. In the emerging environment of autonomous organisations, councils and management must ensure the financial viability of their institutions. This includes developing the relevant organisational capacity to operate effectively.

¹ There were four related research projects running concurrently with this project; namely, *Management and leadership capabilities required of senior managers, directors and departmental heads in VET*, Victor Callan, University of Queensland; *Leadership in vocational education and training: Leadership by design, not by default*, Ian Falk and Tony Smith, University of Tasmania; *Research into the development of a leadership program for chief executives and senior managers in Australian TAFE institutions*, Anthony Tyrrel, TAFE Directors Australia; and *A management model for managers and intending managers for Australian VET providers, and strategies to achieve the model*, Fiona Oliver and Gloria Carmichael, TAFE Directors Australia.

It is widely acknowledged that those responsible for steering these organisations in the future will need a number of new skills in addition to those general leadership and management skills common to any organisation. Managers and leaders at all levels in VET providers will continue to be confronted by the need to develop enhanced or better skills in order to fulfill their existing and new roles. As layers of middle management are removed from Australian organisations, the responsibility for guiding staff in the pursuit of organisational objectives is increasingly falling to those in first-line management positions. Frontline managers are now understood to fill critical positions within organisations (Karpin 1995; Saul 1995).

Accordingly, the focus of the project was to identify and interpret the main features of leadership and management at different levels within VET organisation—a ‘top down’ and a ‘bottom up’ view was sought. Taking the changing context of vocational education and training into account, we aimed to identify the expertise that senior managers and frontline managers now need in order to perform their management and leadership roles and how this expertise might be further developed and sustained.

The project and research questions

The principal purpose of the project as specified in the project proposal was to identify requirements for expertise in management and leadership within VET providers and how these requirements might best be met. Specifically, this project sought to:

- ✧ identify the roles and functions of senior and frontline managers in VET organisations, initially through a literature review
- ✧ identify the expertise needed by these managers and these organisations, to manage and lead
- ✧ examine approaches to developing management and leadership expertise and the strengths and limitations of these approaches
- ✧ identify approaches to management and leadership, and management and leadership development, that may best serve organisations in the VET sector.

In the light of the above, the project aimed to address the following four questions:

- ✧ What are the roles and functions of senior and frontline managers within VET organisations and how are they changing?
- ✧ What are the requirements of VET organisations for expertise in management and leadership, in relation to this change?
- ✧ What practices of management and leadership, and approaches to management and leadership development, can best serve these organisations?
- ✧ How do we sustain valued management and leadership expertise in the VET sector?

Approach

Framework for research

The research was set within a constructivist framework. The main purpose of constructivist management and leadership research is understanding management and leadership. Thus, the study did not set out to prescribe what VET managers ought to do to make their organisations more effective but rather *describe* what it is that these managers do and what they require in order to do it.

National context and public policy are now important contextual influences on the strategies of organisations, most particularly education and training organisations. Consequently, a key

assumption underpinning the research was that, if we seek to understand management and leadership in the VET sector, we need to take contextual elements into account.

In addressing the questions above, information was collected at three levels, namely:

- ✧ *system or institutional* level where the structural demands upon VET management posed by various external initiatives and changes (for example, reforms required under the National Training Framework) could be examined
- ✧ *organisational* level where organisational practices of management and leadership (for example, organisational learning, continuous improvement, team leadership), and the knowledge and skills which support these practices, could be identified
- ✧ *individual* level where the development needs of managers, and the most appropriate means of meeting these needs, could be mapped. The emphasis here was on management development as experienced by individual managers.

Methodology

The study was undertaken in three stages and used both quantitative and qualitative research methods. A mix of methods was employed in order to provide both breadth and depth of understanding. The first empirical component of the research consisted of a postal survey. Questionnaires were mailed to executive/senior managers in 1551 provider locations, in five states (New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia).

In total, 365 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 23.5%. Useable questionnaires were returned for 355 sites. A sample of 355 is a sufficient number for analyses.

The largest group of respondents (127 in all) were from public sector providers, principally TAFE institutes. The next largest group of respondents was from the private sector. Of this group, 83 were from private commercial providers with 51 from group training companies. The data were analysed using the SPSS 10.0 package of statistical procedures. Comparative analyses were undertaken of 'key respondent groups'—TAFE managers, managers in private commercial providers and managers in group training companies.

Secondly, telephone interviews (147 in all) with senior and frontline managers were conducted in the five major states. Approximately 30 interviews were undertaken in each of these states. A preliminary analysis of the qualitative data was conducted using manual thematic techniques whereby categories were developed from a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Subsequently, data for all 147 interviews were analysed using the ATLAS.ti 4.1 package of qualitative procedures.

The third empirical component of the research involved intensive case studies (ten) of practices of managing and leading in VET providers, in each of the five states (two in each state). A multi-case study approach was chosen to explore the potentially different perspectives of participants in public VET providers and private VET providers, including non-profit providers. The case studies involved observation of organisational practices and in-depth, semi-structured interviews (50). Interviews were conducted with various individuals at each case site, namely, an executive or senior manager, frontline manager, manager developer (for example, human resources manager, staff development manager), and staff members (two). The interviews were intended to provide a 'thick description' of practices of management and leadership and the knowledge and skills which support these practices.

Key terms and definitional issues

VET-related terms

‘Vocational education and training’ is usually taken to mean education and training which is designed to prepare people for work or to improve their performance or prospects in their work (Smith & Smith 1998, p.1).

‘VET organisations’ are organisations which provide education and training which is accredited. The VET sector is now characterised by an increasing variety of providers:

- ✧ adult and community education (ACE) providers—funded by government or community-sponsored organisations
- ✧ commercial training providers—delivering training to private individuals on a fee-for-service basis, for example, business colleges
- ✧ enterprise training providers—providing training essentially for enterprise employees
- ✧ group training companies—-independent, not-for-profit companies operating on either an industry or regional basis and providing employment for apprentices and trainees
- ✧ industry training providers—providing skill-based training to enterprises across an industry
- ✧ TAFE institutes or colleges and TAFE providers, for example, the TAFE division of a university
- ✧ independent and state secondary colleges.

In the Australian vocational education and training system, all providers of accredited training must be registered as a registered training organisation. Registered training organisations compete for public funding through processes of competitive tendering and user choice. Recent figures indicate that TAFE and other government providers comprise the largest group and attract three-quarters of all VET students (75.5%), while community providers account for 13.0%, and other registered providers, including private providers in receipt of public funds, 11.5% (NCVER 2001b, p.3).

A distinction is drawn in vocational education and training between a provider and a provider location. A ‘provider location is a specific training site (for example, institute, campus, or annex) administered by a training organisation for the purpose of providing clients with programs of training’ (NCVER 2001a, p.115). Accordingly, data can be collected from various different sites administered by the same training provider (registered training organisation).

Manager and leader: Continuity and change

‘Management’ and ‘leadership’ are similar terms in some respects and different in others. Traditionally, managers have been viewed as implementers of strategies and policies (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.101). As a teacher in TAFE states: ‘A manager is under the restraints of ... rules ... There is a structure and a strategy and systems that they have to work with’. In general, they provide order and consistency within an organisation. ‘Managers are disciplined planners, budgeters and controllers. They plot who should do what, how it should be done and what resources are necessary’ (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.27).

By contrast, leadership is about movement, direction and change. Leaders guide or induce ‘followers’ to take a certain course. Fundamentally, it is about seeing things differently: ‘It involves stretching beyond existing boundaries, beyond the mindset of “this is how we see and do things around here”’ (Owen & Lambert 1998, p.357).

In short, management involves continuity, while leadership involves change. Management works within an organisational culture but leadership is concerned with redesigning that culture to

maximise performance (Owen & Lambert 1998). Plans and visions characterise the well-managed organisation. The differences between these roles and practices have been summarised in table 1.

Table 1: Differences between managers and leaders

Managers	Leaders
Administer	Innovate
Have a short-range view	Have a long-term view
Ask how and when	Ask what and why
Focus on the bottom line	Focus on the horizon
Challenge the process	Reconstruct organisational capacity

Source: Owen & Lambert 1998, p.358

But there is also a blurring of the distinction between managers and leaders (Campbell 1999), and it is commonly assumed in the literature that both management and leadership skills are required by those who hold leadership positions. The Karpin taskforce concluded that ‘the distinction between managers and leaders is increasingly irrelevant in the context of downsizing and flattening organisational structures. In future all managers, irrespective of level, indeed many employees, will need some leadership skills’ (Karpin 1995, p.xxxviii). Along with high-level technical skills, the contemporary manager must display considerable leadership characteristics in order to be effective (Viljoen & Dann 2000). Similarly, the managerial role is not viable without leadership (Northouse 2001).

Consequently, and in line with some of the most comprehensive descriptions of management theory (Yukl 2002; Northouse 2001), the terms ‘manager’ and ‘leader’ and ‘management’ and ‘leadership’ are used interchangeably throughout this report. No hard and fast distinction between these terms is intended or maintained.

Senior manager and frontline manager

Managers at all levels in VET providers will continue to be confronted with the need to develop enhanced or better skills in order to fulfil their new roles, but the particular focus of this research was management at senior and frontline levels. A senior manager was defined as a manager to whom other managers report and a frontline manager as a manager to whom no other managers report. More formally, senior managers were defined as those who have a high-level, specific responsibility such as heading a school, section, or sector. By extension, executive managers were defined as those who have the highest level organisational responsibility, for example, chief executive officers, managing directors, directors.

It should be noted, however, that as levels of management can only be identified in relation to a particular organisational structure, it is not always possible to reach a definite conclusion as to what constitutes a senior management position. For instance, in a recent British study of management in universities and colleges of further education, heads of departments were not included amongst those designated as senior managers (Slowey 1995). Within the context of TAFE in Australia, positions at the level of head of studies have been defined as senior management positions (Rice 2000a).

The term ‘frontline manager’ has been employed to denote a diverse group within VET organisations who have responsibility for overseeing and co-ordinating the work of others. This responsibility does *not* normally include managing other managers. Frontline managers’ responsibilities within VET providers include course or program co-ordination, professional and organisational development, business and industry services, research and evaluation, and budgets and income.

Frontline managers are first-level managers or managers of work teams. They are directly involved at the operational or service end of the organisation. They oversee the actual doing of work; they

really know the work and are in a position to take something of an overview. They are numerically the largest category of managers and are typically staff who are described as:

- ✧ program co-ordinators
- ✧ program managers
- ✧ head teachers (New South Wales)
- ✧ field officers
- ✧ team leaders
- ✧ course leaders, and other similarities.

Management development

Management development is a broad concept, where work experience and learning from others at work are integral parts of the process. Management development has been described as ‘the sum of all activities available to individuals, to help them to meet their growth needs and keep the organisation viable’ (Jones & Woodcock 1985, p.136). Management development can be distinguished from management education and management training.

Middlehurst uses definitions from Constable and McCormick (1987) to describe three processes:

Management education—those processes which lead to qualifications

Management training—formal learning activities which may not lead to qualifications

Management development—a broader concept, where job experience and learning from others are integral parts of the process. (Middlehurst 1995 cited in Lumby 1997b, p.359)

Contemporary definitions see management development as generic, encompassing both education and training (Garavan, Barnicle & O’Suilleabhain 1999, p.193). For the purposes of this study, we thought it appropriate to view the concepts of training, development and education as an integrated whole, with the concept of learning as the glue which holds them together (Garavan 1997).

Limitations of the study

The selection of states in which to collect information constitutes one of the limitations of the scope of the study. In the context of management and leadership, different challenges may arise in small states and territories and require strategies and skills somewhat unlike those presented in large states. Financial and time constraints were a deciding factor in influencing the size of the survey, the number of interviews and case studies, and the number of states.

The sample of interviewees for the telephone interviews and case studies in any one provider location was not random or necessarily representative, so its findings cannot be generalised to all VET managers and leaders. As a staff member in a TAFE institute stated: ‘I can only really talk about this department and this campus that I’m sitting in’. Nevertheless, around 150 telephone interviews were conducted with senior managers and frontline managers and a further 50 face-to-face interviews were conducted with a cross-section of personnel from various levels of participating organisations, providing a large data set. Moreover, these organisations represented a cross-section of providers in vocational education and training, that is, public VET providers and private VET providers, including private, not-for-profit providers (group training companies).

At no time however, is a warrant taken for generalising more widely than the sites involved in the study. The results are not generalisable beyond the specific samples studied. They are indicative of general patterns of managerial and organisational behaviour that hold across the VET sector, but not definitive.

Literature review

Introduction

Management and leadership in vocational education organisations, both in Australia and overseas, remains relatively unexplored research territory (Rice 2001; Falk & Smith 2001; Gleeson 2001). Little attention has been given in VET research to the changing nature of the role of the VET manager, and the expertise that leaders (and followers) might now need to lead in the VET context. Very little is known about management and leadership in the registered training organisations within the vocational education and training sector. If, as various commentators argue, effective leadership of change in these organisations will become increasingly important for their capacity to survive, the role of managers and leaders is crucial.

The review incorporates a range of research studies in the fields of management, leadership, education, and organisation and looks at the extent to which various theories and practices have been adopted within the Australian VET sector. Different perspectives on management and leadership have been taken into account, including functionalist, socially critical, and postmodern perspectives. Functionalist perspectives, by their nature, are concerned with the dynamics which make management effective and organisations successful. Socially critical and postmodern perspectives move beyond this frame of reference and take in the wider social relations of management and organisation. They are commonly concerned with asking questions about the distribution of benefits from a process/approach/change.

By reference to major works in the field, the review served to establish a theoretical basis for the empirical research undertaken.

Traditional and emergent views of leadership

While conceptually distinct, practices of management and leadership overlap and intersect. As Kotter observes, ‘leadership and management are two distinctive and complementary systems of action. Each has its own function and characteristic activities. Both are necessary for success in an increasingly complex and volatile organisational environment’ (1990, p.8).

Leadership as transformational

Managers who exercise leadership skills are claimed to be ‘transformational’. Transformational leadership is credited with a concern for values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals. It ‘emphasises a leader’s ability to create a vision, to bind organisation members to the values of the organisation, and above all, to transform it. Transformational leaders are said to elicit performance “beyond expectation”’ (Lakowski 1999, p.5). Leaders and followers unite in pursuit of higher-level goals common to both (Northouse 2001).

Part of the ‘new leadership’ paradigm, this approach to management has become prominent in contemporary educational administration as a model suitable for confronting the changes faced by systems of school education. It is commonly used in secondary schools and in that context, termed ‘self-managing schools’ (Caldwell & Spinks 1988, 1992). The particular sets of skills and qualities

required of leaders in these organisations includes strategic thinking and planning, participatory decision-making, and accountability.

Limitations of leadership as transformational

Some researchers have reservations about the attributes associated with contemporary management theory which has glamorised managers and transformed them from bureaucratic time-servers into dynamic leaders. ‘The discursively-reconstructed functionary is now a charismatic change agent and risk taker, associated with innovation, corporate culture, and enterprise’ (Morley & Razool 2000, p.179). Lakomski, in a recent professorial address, argues that ‘rather than studying leadership, we should be studying *effective organisational practice*’ (Lakomski 1999, p.10, emphasis in original). She notes that leaders in traditional studies (which tend to examine leadership by studying the attributes, actions, and attitudes of potential leaders) as well as ‘new leadership’ studies (which are identified with transformational leadership and expressly locate it in the ‘heroic’ top executive or office bearer), have been considered as superior individuals whose superior knowledge flows down and through the organisation (1999, p.9).

New leadership concepts: The centrality of context

Contingency theory suggests that leading effectively depends on how a leader’s style fits the appropriate context (Northouse 2001). Gender differences in leadership and management have also become a significant management and management development theme (Rice 2000a; Prichard 2000a; Shain 2000; Kerfoot & Whitehead 2000; Cole 2000; Leathwood 2000; Whitehead 1999; Smith & Hutchinson 1995). Thus, in a recent study of women and leadership in Australian universities, TAFE and schools, Blackmore and Sachs (2000, pp.2–3) report that ‘women continue to move into leadership in middle and executive management more through accident than design, by proven rather than potential performance’.

Leadership as distributed

Leadership is not solely the property of individuals (Falk & Smith 2003). Ogawa and Bossert (1995) offer a view of leadership that does not treat it as the province of a few people in certain parts of organisations, but rather as a quality of organisations—a systemic characteristic (p.225). In their view:

Leadership flows through the network of roles that comprise organisations. The medium of leadership and the currency of leadership lie in the personal resources of people.

(Ogawa & Bossert 1995, p.225)

New leadership concepts are emerging. These include ‘post-heroic leadership’ (Huey 1994), ‘situated leadership’ (Falk 1999) and ‘enabling leadership’ (Falk 2000) which challenge the notion of the (heroic) transformational leader. Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001) argue that leadership is best understood as a distributed practice, stretched over an organisation’s social and situational contexts (see also Gronn 2000). Falk (2000, p.2), writing from a community leadership perspective, states that ‘leadership is normally distributed, dispersed and diffused rather than concentrated in one or few hands’. In association with Smith, he suggests that effective leadership is ‘related to the ways in which a group of people interacts to enable a common purpose to be achieved’ (2001, p.8). Somewhat similarly, Spillane, Halverson and Diamond (2001, p.27) claim that leadership ‘emerges in and through the interaction of leaders, followers, and situation’.

The studies of management and leadership in the VET sector tend to give priority to management rather than to leadership and, if taking leadership as their focus, tend to treat leaders as individuals who possess certain attributes. Here, leadership is a quality that individuals have apart from a sociocultural context. It is related to organisational roles, or offices, and focussed on positions at

the top of organisational hierarchies. As a consequence, studies of leadership tend to be studies of top-level managers (Ogawa & Bossert 1995, p.228).

Table 2 presents the two broad perspectives on organisational leadership which guided the research reported here. Both perspectives provide useful understandings of leadership and allow scope for differential emphasis, either on factors within the individual, or on factors relating to the broader context and environment.

Table 2: Perspectives on organisational leadership

Person-oriented	Practice-oriented
Focusses on leader characteristics and attributes	Focusses on organisational conditions and practice
Takes position or role as its ground	Takes activity as its ground
Asks what	Asks how and why
Assumes that leadership lies in the hands of a few	Assumes that leadership 'leaks' or flows
Highlights importance of generic skills	Highlights practices specific to local context

New management concepts and practices

The last two decades have witnessed the growth of new concepts and practices in management and management development in Australian organisations. In the Australian public sector in the 1980s, a particular view of management became prevalent (Leggett 1997). This has variously been referred to as corporate managerialism (Yeatman 1991; Marginson 1993, p.56), the new public management (Kirkpatrick, Whipp & Davies 1996), and simply, managerialism (Pollitt 1993). Farnham and Horton (1993) suggest that new public sector management has three main components: tighter control of budgets, the decentralisation of managerial responsibilities, and the strengthening of management functions, including target-setting processes, performance indicators, and appraisal.

New management policies in public organisations have placed importance on active management, performance measurement, and strategic management (Sadler 2000; Bush & Coleman 2000). According to Sadler:

The key changes to the management of publicly funded organisations include a strategic management focus, a shift to quantifiable output measurement, the devolution of management controls within an agreed performance framework, a preference for private ownership and contestability in public sector service provision, the imitation of private sector management practices and an emphasis on cost-cutting and efficiencies.

(Sadler 2000, p.2)

New public sector management

It is widely argued in the educational literature that the emphasis on efficiency and best ways of achieving outcomes has resulted in education being organised according to business principles. Educators are expected to adopt 'best practice' according to industry standards (Brown et al. 1996). This emphasis differs from traditional client-centred, public service values, based on the needs of clients as interpreted and formulated by professionals (Deem 1998). Hoyle (1995) has argued that there is now a 'new' discourse of professionalism in which skill is given priority over knowledge, and compliance over judgement. Williams (2000) cautions that change concepts borrowed from organisations primarily concerned with production may have limited success in educational, or people-changing, contexts. Schaafsma (1995) also questions the assumption of the management change literature—that theories of change can be transferred from one setting to another.

The pressures for increases in resource efficiency have been greater in the TAFE sector than in schools, and TAFE institutions have been under particular pressure to behave in more entrepreneurial and outward-looking ways. Strong emphasis has been placed on the development

of individuals and management teams as key elements of organisational success (Garavan, Barnicle & O'Suilleabhain 1999). Elliott (1996) claims that in Britain, government pressure has resulted in wide-ranging reforms designed to increase efficiency and meet quantitative performance indicators. Seagren et al. (1994) maintain that cost constraints, public accountability, and increased regulation have also been imposed in community colleges in the United States.

In recent years, the academic literature on public sector educational institutions in various countries has reported on the powerful tendency, as a result of changes in the policy environment, towards managerialism (Holloway 1999; Leggett 1997; Power, Halpin & Whitty 1997; Simkins 2000). But Campbell (1999) argues that despite government promotion of managerialism, in practice education management has not blindly applied business practice to education. Gleeson and Shain (1999), in looking at changing teaching and managerial cultures in further education in the United Kingdom, argue that managerialism is not as complete or uncontested as is often portrayed. They warn against adopting a determinist stance which assumes an over-controlled view of the further education workplace. '[D]evolved forms of managerialism both negate and draw attention to a wide variety of leadership and management responses at organisational level' (Gleeson 2001, p.194). Similarly, Seddon (1997) claims that the contemporary changes in education are often double-edged. Decentralisation and marketisation drive diverse responses and produce unanticipated outcomes, bringing both good and bad together in uncomfortable and confusing ways.

In summary, the new view of management consists of a package of management ideas, skills, strategies and styles. As Leggett notes, it:

... holds that management involves a set of generic skills which can be applied to a wide range of contexts. The associated body of knowledge is about 'good' corporate and strategic planning, processes which are seen to be necessary for running any efficient and effective organisation. According to this construction, the chief executive officer does not require a detailed professional knowledge or first-hand experience ... Instead the particular set of skills and qualities required of managers includes being strategic thinkers and planners, being good managers of people and of financial resources, and being responsive and accountable to government and the community. (Leggett 1997, pp.277-8)

Managerial roles and responsibilities

Recent research has shown that the roles of educational personnel, most particularly education managers, have changed significantly as a result of systemic change (see for example, Cranston 2000; Seddon 1999a; Paterson 1999; Gleeson & Shain 1999; Lumby 1997a). The various reform initiatives introduced by governments over the past decade have been the impetus for much of this change (Mitchell & Young 2001; International Labour Organisation 2000; Lundberg 1996; Seddon 1999a, 1999b). Shaw and Velde (2000) argue that reform in Australia is now settling in two broad directions: the fundamental reform of the Australian system of apprenticeships and traineeships and the transformation of upper secondary school so that it delivers education courses which are based upon national industry competency standards. 'These trends have necessitated a growing and expanding need for vocational education managers to acquire managerial and leadership competencies in order to operate effectively in their roles' (Shaw & Velde 2000, p.270).

Diversified roles and responsibilities: Critical issues

Managers' roles and responsibilities in education and training sites are becoming more diverse (International Labour Organisation 2000; Cranston 2000). The range of VET managers' responsibilities has widened and the actual demands of the management role are growing more exigent (Lumby 1997a; Gleeson & Shain 1999). Work expectations have grown, with VET managers' efforts being increasingly directed outwards (Hamerston 1999; Seddon 1999a). Networks and alliances are becoming increasingly important to the way in which business is

conducted (Allen Consulting Group 1999, p.11; Marginson 2000, p.25). Evidence from various studies (see for example International Labour Organisation 2000; Seddon 1999a, 2000; Lumby 1997a) supports the view that the work of educational managers, most particularly senior managers, is now more intense, the emphasis of their work altered, and there has been a devolution of administrative responsibilities. This intensity arises from the increasing need to link with authorities and agencies outside the organisation:

[E]ducational administrators ... are required to augment their capacity to establish new policy directions at the behest of politicians or the public, create and monitor performance criteria of whole systems, manage reporting and feedback ... and make adjustments in the system's functioning. As a consequence, the forecasting (planning), advisory and communication responsibilities of administrators have increased substantially.

(International Labour Organisation 2000, pp.23–4)

Senior managers and leaders

A small number of studies have looked at the role of senior managers in the Australian VET sector with the purpose of identifying how the various changes have impacted upon their managerial responsibilities (see for example Brown et al. 1996; Lundberg 1996; Rice 2000a, 2000b, 2001). Some of the main challenges, as reported by the managers themselves, included: the management of change itself; a lack of power in the decision-making process; insecurity and uncertainty; a lack of consistency associated with restructuring; inadequate resources; workload; and a lack of time to complete work (Brown et al. 1996; Lundberg 1996; Rice 2001).

Lack of time to complete tasks was a major concern (Lundberg 1996; Lumby 1997b; Rice 2001), despite claims in the research literature that it was important for managers to allocate time for reflective planning. Gasskov (2000) observed that a negative effect of market-based financing, due to competition policy, is that administrators are greatly involved in preparing tenders for public funds and have less time for other functions. The key elements of an increased workload were increased time spent at meetings, increased communication, especially via email, dealing with teaching sections, strategic work, and educational development (Rice 2001).

In both the United Kingdom and Australia, it was alleged that financial and competitive issues had sharply focussed decision-making, led to less open management, and estranged many senior managers from their colleagues (Brown et al. 1996; Randle & Brady 1997; Simkins 2000; Seddon 1999a, 2000). Senior management teams were said to now form a small and cohesive group concerned with the broad policy of the institution (Simkins 2000). 'It appears that a growing divide between teachers and managers is one of the conspicuous features of the new power relationships in both TAFE and schools' (Brown et al. 1996, p.321).

Seddon claims various research projects indicate that:

Teachers' and managers' work practices have changed ... Work expectations have proliferated, with significant increases in administrative, organisational, and marketing activities. These have shifted the roles that teachers and managers see themselves playing. The institutional redesign processes, and their relay effects through management within different workplaces, have centralised control and authority but increased the responsibilities of staff lower down in organisational hierarchies. The recognition that institutional survival depends on income-generation in an increasingly uncertain financial context appears to have been generalised across the workforce. (Seddon 1999a, p.2)

In a further paper, Seddon (2000, p.248) reports that managers in TAFE talk of their organisation's 'struggle for survival', the difficulties of funding cuts and the challenges of managing workplace relationships in which teachers and managers are increasingly understood in 'them-us' terms. She notes elsewhere that significant changes have occurred in the nature of educational organisations, their practices of organising and managing and the way they define and undertake their core

business (Seddon 1999b, p.1). ‘Workers in FHE [further higher education] *are* involved in a fundamental reconstruction of the sector from public service to public enterprise’ (Prichard 2000b, p.29, emphasis in original).

In polytechnics in New Zealand, governance issues have been identified as having highest priority in relation to the needs for leadership development of executive managers. ‘There has been a high demand placed upon CEOs within a deregulated environment and governance issues remain one of the main areas of interest’ (Tyrrel 2001, p.14). Lumby observes that since incorporation of the British further education sector in 1993, an unprecedented emphasis has been placed on the need for effective management (1997b). Simkins (2000) claims that the new centrally driven policies emphasise the overall performance of the institution above all other measures of success. Individual leaders are now held responsible for that performance to an unprecedented degree. There has been a transfer of responsibility for policy effectiveness, and likewise for policy failure, from the government to the institutions themselves (Gleeson & Shain 1999; Simkins 2000).

This is not to say that senior institutional managers cannot influence government policy. It is important not to lose sight of the initiatives that individual managers actually take within individual institutions. As Gleeson (2001, p.194) argues in the context of an emerging culture of ‘collaboration within competition’ in the further education sector in the United Kingdom, ‘the danger is one of treating principals and senior managers as victims of funding led or managerialist reform, rather than strategic interpreters of policy in the reconstruction of FE practices at college level’. The principals and senior managers involved in his study mediated changing education policy agendas by creating joint co-operative ventures and links.

Similarly, Lumby (1999, p.71) notes that critics use ‘managerialism’ as an accusation of ‘the inappropriate adoption of business values and practices’. Commenting on the United Kingdom experience, she argues that the term ‘manager’ is problematic in the (further education) sector, having become associated with ‘managerialism’, a ‘critique which characterises managers as having sacrificed their educational values to a rational, resource-driven approach which does not have staff or students at its heart’ (2001, p.13). In association with Tomlinson (Lumby & Tomlinson 2000), she confronts ‘the acceptance that all senior managers within the further education sector are functioning in a way described as managerialist’ (p.140) and suggests that ‘generalisations about senior managers are in any case unsafe given the complexity of human behaviour and the range of college environments’ (p.150). Accordingly, the ‘theoretical hegemony of managerialism can be challenged’ (Lumby 2001, p.13).

Frontline managers and leaders

Gleeson and Shain (1999, p.466), commenting on changes occurring within further education in the United Kingdom, report that, as senior management teams decrease in size as part of cost-cutting, and increasingly concern themselves with strategic planning, ‘middle’ managers appointed from the lecturing ranks are taking on broader managerial roles: ‘they not only manage budgets and people in the pursuit of greater efficiency, but also mediate tensions and dilemmas associated with rapid and unpredictable change’. These findings match other findings on the increasing demands now being made of frontline managers (Paterson 1999; Lumby 1997a; Turcato 1998; Karpin 1995). Among other things, they must ‘get the best out of their staff during a time of rapid change, increased competitive pressure and increased uncertainty about job security and future career paths. They must influence, persuade, “sell” new visions, coach, counsel, mediate, and represent the team in dealings with others’ (Saul 1995, p.10). These demands may account for frontline managers placing more emphasis than senior managers on introducing change slowly and limiting the amount introduced at the one time (Saul 1995, p.14).

In some cases, flatter organisational structures have resulted in redefined roles for frontline managers. Recent research of management in colleges of further education in the United Kingdom

has indicated that the greatest pressure arises at the lowest levels of management where curriculum managers must exhort staff to teach more students with fewer resources (Deem 1998). In a study of course leaders in the United Kingdom, Paterson (1999) found a major concern was the growing administrative workload and the effect this had upon their teaching. She claims that there is a need to ensure that frontline managers are not used regularly to carry out low-level, non-professional, and routine duties. In another study of frontline management in colleges of further education, Lumby (1997a) reports that, while the use of the title ‘manager’ is not necessarily owned by all those so named, ‘the responsibility of line managers to develop their staff has become the new orthodoxy’ (p.353). A competitive ethos has been introduced following incorporation, resulting in pressure to make efficiency gains through the employment of part-time staff.

Responding to new roles

It is widely acknowledged that those responsible for steering VET organisations in the future will need a number of new skills in addition to those general leadership and management skills common to any organisation. An American study into the leadership behaviours of successful vocational education administrators found that while ‘there are a number of vocational education administrators across the United States who are quite successful, a certain segment of the administrator population may be only marginally qualified or less than adequately prepared for their current jobs’ (Finch, Gregson & Faulkner 1991, p.31). Similarly, Australian studies suggest that VET managers need to be better prepared for their positions and for the higher-level duties they are expected to perform. Thus, Rice (2001) in a study of nine TAFE institute managers from five colleges and an institute office argues that institute managers must be developed and supported in their roles if they are to make a positive contribution to the future of TAFE. She challenges the assumption that managers in TAFE are driving the changes needed in the new operating environment.

Daws (1995) believes that the demand for flexibility and responsiveness combined with the imposition of tighter management structures to ensure accountability, has led to tensions within VET organisations. These tensions have sometimes been experienced differently by those operating at the senior and frontline management levels. At frontline management level, Turcato (1998, p.18) reports that ‘middle and senior managers have been quick to recognise that many of their frontline managers do not have the competencies required for today’s frontline management role and that these same frontline managers will face an increasing struggle to cope with the demands of management into the future’.

Essential capabilities

The human resource development, organisational and management literatures reflect a growing interest in competence and capability and many organisations are reported to have invested in a range of activities designed to enhance the competencies of managers at all levels (Garavan, Barnicle & O’Suilleabhain 1999). This interest stems, in part, from their quest for competitiveness—their search for new corporate resources of competence and capability and new flexible strategies (Hamel & Prahalad 1994; Hamel & Heene 1994; Prahalad & Hamel 1990). The new operating environment presents particular challenges for VET organisations and their managers and leaders (Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment 2000; Fawcett, Parrott & Strahan 1998). A recently commissioned Australian National Training Authority report presents the view that VET organisations need to become high-skilled and high-performing (Mitchell & Young 2001).² Accordingly, VET managers need substantial skills in strategic

² The Business Council of Australia defines high performing workplaces as ‘workplaces that are characterised by creativity, innovation, flexibility and competitiveness’ (2000, p.1). High-performance work organisation is a defining feature of the high-performance workplace. ‘A high-performance workplace can be defined as having two or more of the following practices: self-managed teams, problem-solving groups, job rotation, and total quality management’ (Kirby 2000, p.31).

management and change management (Mitchell & Young 2001; see also Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment 2000, p.77). They need to exercise managerial leadership in the workplace (Business Council of Australia 2000) and to 'find new and better ways of producing enhanced outcomes with fewer resources' (Sadler 2000, p.6). Altogether, there is now a demand for managers who can develop corporate strategy and demonstrate the behavioural characteristics associated with entrepreneurialism, innovation, and enterprise (Sisson & Story 1993).

Various studies have identified the competencies and capabilities required of VET managers and leaders (Desjardins 2001; Tyrrel 2001; Callan 2001a, 2001b; Shaw & Velde 2000). Some of these studies include a gap analysis of the required versus actual levels of proficiency as perceived by these managers. Thus, Shaw and Velde (2000, p.276), in a study of 103 VET managers occupying positions such as head of department, assistant director and VET co-ordinator, found that competency needs lay particularly in areas such as verbal and written communication, a knowledge of organisational culture and procedures, and personal development skills.

More specifically, the results indicated that VET managers needed training in:

persuasion, conflict resolution and negotiation skills; time and stress management, managing information systems, productivity monitoring; developing an awareness of environmental factors affecting the organisation and strategic planning in order to effectively manage change in a complex environment. (Shaw & Velde 2000, p.276)

In a study of management and leadership capabilities required of senior managers, directors and departmental heads in vocational education and training, Callan (2001a, 2001b) identified five major challenges facing the managers; namely, managing and leading change, personal qualities (for example, the need to be resilient), strategic thinking and alliances, interpersonal and team-building skills and business and entrepreneurial skills. In a follow-up survey of 396 of these managers, Callan found that the major areas of developmental need were in the four capability domains of 'corporate vision and direction', 'achieves outcomes', 'focusses strategically' and 'develops and manages resources'. While the developmental needs of the three levels of managers were generally similar, directors were generally more likely than other managers to identify needs in 'corporate vision and direction', 'achieves outcomes' and 'develops and manages resources'.

VET organisations: Competencies and capabilities

Modern managers are increasingly encouraged to take more responsibility for development, both the development of individuals and the development of the organisation. As Smith (1999) reports, Australian managers are searching for ways of improving the performance of their enterprises by managing the resources of the enterprise better—particularly their human resources. 'It is now increasingly being acknowledged that human resources represent the key competitive advantage for many organisations' (Younger & Hill 1999, p.18).

In a resource-based view of strategy, human resources are strategic capital which can be used for the purpose of attaining competitive advantage. A company's competitiveness derives from its core competencies and core products. These competencies necessarily cross functions, and, in so doing, cut across traditional hierarchies of command and control:

The hallmarks of the industrial era, consistency and control, and organisations best served by deeply hierarchical models of management with clear lines of control, responsibility and accountability, are being eroded. (International Labour Organisation 2000, p.67)

Ellinger, Watkins and Barras (1999, p.1) claim that, given the emergence of learning organisations, a new style of leadership and management is required: 'This new style of management must shift from a command and control orientation to a facilitate and empower orientation in which leaders and managers focus on the development of people and on facilitating their learning'. Bureaucratic control and one-way communication have been superseded by an emphasis on organisational learning and the collective improvement of quality.

There is now a demand for managers who demonstrate the capacity to lead learning and development within organisations. In much of the contemporary management and organisation literature, knowledge is conceived as a resource. Learning, in turn, is ‘the ongoing activity that enables new knowledge to be created from that resource’ (Younger & Hill 1999, p.18). Core competences are the collective learning in the organisation. Core competence is communication, involvement, and commitment to working across organisation boundaries (Prahalad & Hamel 1990).

Inasmuch as organisations are being increasingly challenged to leverage learning through knowledge creation, dissemination, and continuous innovation (Nonaka 1991), they have need of managers with a new body of management knowledge. Clarke and Clegg (1998) claim that managers must now sponsor the creation of ‘collaborative cultures, group technologies, supportive infrastructures and sensitive measurement systems to facilitate the effective acquisition and deployment of new knowledge’ (p.431).

Using VET organisations as their focus, Younger and Hill (1999, p.17) argue that ‘the new attributes that are vital for organisations to have are all centred around people’. They propose a strategy of organisationally integrated learning and development for TAFE organisations. Similarly, Rice (2000a, p.68) claims that TAFE’s ability to respond to the challenges of the new training system depends largely upon the people within the organisation, particularly those in senior managerial positions. These managers must create a learning environment that supports learning at a number of levels. They must identify ‘staff training and development as strategically important goals of TAFE institutes’ (Younger & Hill 1999, p.20). The management competencies required in these institutes are summarised as:

Strategic and operational planning is regarded as a core management competency, as is leading and facilitating teams, facilitating and capitalising on change and innovation, establishing and maintaining effective workplace relationships and contributing to the development of a workplace learning environment. (Younger & Hill 1999, p.20)

While clear directions for leadership and management within VET organisations are provided in the literature, little attention is given to inter-organisational arrangements, which are becoming increasingly important in VET. The Australian National Training Authority notes that ‘the most successful outcomes in VET (including in new apprenticeships, group training and VET-in-schools) have been built from the foundations of partnerships between equal stakeholders’ (ANTA 2000, p.19). In the schools sector in Victoria, the management of partnerships has been included as an overarching skill or area of competency in the competency standards that form the basis of the principal class performance and development process (Department of Education, Employment and Training 2001). School principals are now expected to engage their schools in building and maintaining relationships and networks with other schools, education providers and community agencies and demonstrate a contribution to a professional culture of collegiality.

Developing leaders, managers and organisations

While management development was once considered to be mainly supportive of the change process, its potential as a major driver of change is now increasingly recognised (Garavan, Barnicle & O’Suilleabhain 1999, p.194). McClelland (1994, cited in Garavan, Barnicle & O’Suilleabhain 1999, p.195) observes that management development is now viewed as one of the key organisational processes intended to deliver successful organisational adaptation and renewal. A ‘functional performance’ view of management development holds sway in the mainstream corporate and academic literature. As Garavan, Barnicle and O’Suilleabhain explain: ‘A functional performance rationale has as its aim the direct improvement of managerial functioning and thereby corporate performance’ (1999, p.193).

The view that management development is a strategic activity, and that the development of managers is critical to the development of the organisation as a whole, is now well established.

HRM [human resource management], in its concern with the integration of people with business goals and strategies, and its conceptualisation of human resources as strategic capital which can be used for the purpose of attaining competitive advantage provides an important justification for management development.

(Garavan, Barnicle & O'Suilleabhain 1999, p.194)

According to Cockerill (1994, p.71), 'dynamic environments in which organisational success is harder to achieve and resources are scarcer mean that we must use approaches to the selection and development of managers which have a demonstrable link to organisational performance'. Competency requirements for management development should be linked to performance requirements in the workplace (Turcato 1998, p.19). Similarly, management learning should be pragmatic and located within the organisational context and reality (Beckett 1998).

Although the Karpin taskforce (1995) recommended linking management learning to the workplace, Beckett suggests there is little research evidence that this has occurred. He asks: 'What do we know about management learning?' and argues that research has been driven by traditional management models based on structures and applied theory which no longer capture the dynamism of the contemporary workplace in which new styles of management are emerging (Beckett 1998).

Development strategies

A multi-stranded approach

Lumby (1997b) found that two main processes were used to identify the developmental needs of managers in colleges of further education in the United Kingdom: a systematic approach based on appraisal, and an *ad hoc* process based on individual initiative and serendipity. The range of forms of development used in the colleges surveyed included short courses, competence-based programs, academic study, and mentoring and coaching. Lumby (1997b) found that short courses of up to 30 hours were the most frequently used form of development in further education colleges which used the competence approach. It was cost that drove the process and the choice of means.

While noting 'the determination to link the development activities more strongly with the strategic priorities of the institution', she concluded that a multi-stranded approach to management development which offers a stimulus to undertake development from several sources (for example, line managers, individual managers, strategic plan, corporate direction) seems realistic in colleges. 'Colleges will need to evolve a method of supporting development which involves matching against not only concrete college goals but also against the underpinning personal development needs of managers' (Lumby 1997b, p.362). Overall, she warns that if the development needs of managers are to be addressed, then the involvement of all managers is crucial:

The need for a two-way process is indicated, with both senior managers and those at middle and first-line levels acknowledging the nature of the managerial role, its relationship to leadership and the legitimacy of leading teamwork as a managerial role.

(Lumby 1997a, p.349)

Garavan, Barnicle and O'Suilleabhain (1999) observed that no management development would succeed without the support of senior managers. Similarly, frontline management development strategies need substantial senior management support (Barratt-Pugh & Soutar 2001).

Tyrrel (2001, p.10), in a study of 38 executive and senior managers in Australian TAFE institutions, concluded that 'a range of leadership development experiences will be necessary to meet the needs of senior managers in the VET sector'. In looking at what these managers would like to do in terms of their own professional development, 'the most popular options were in the informal learning

areas of attending conferences, networking ... and visiting VET organisations in Australia and overseas' (p.8).

Developmental experiences

The need for effective leadership in vocational education in the United States has long been recognised. Federal legislative mandates have been enacted to provide for leadership development and leadership research. One study of 69 vocational education administrators in 12 states revealed the importance of on-the-job experiences in developing leadership capabilities (Lambrecht et al. 1997). Five types of experiences were identified by successful vocational education administrators as most helpful to their development as leaders:

- 1 new positions that offer new and/or increased responsibilities
- 2 special start-up work assignments
- 3 handling personnel problems like conflicts and firings
- 4 being mentored, counseled, supported
- 5 working with a supervisor.

(Lambrecht et al. 1997, p.ii)

Somewhat similarly, in a recent Australian study, work-based learning proved to be the most popular methodology for Victorian VET managers (Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment 2000 cited in Mitchell, Henry & Young 2001, p.2). However, Armstrong (1998), commenting on the development needs of public sector managers, cautions that top executives will require experiences other than learning on the job. With the flattening of the hierarchy of management and a reduction in career paths via middle management, they will need to acquire the necessary knowledge and skill using other means (in formal courses, workshops). Saul (1995) argues that it is necessary to create a climate where people feel they have a need for training and feel free from day-to-day demands to participate. In the context of TAFE, Rice (2001) recommends that emphasis be placed on the importance of the role of the institute manager and consideration given to formal and informal programs of development:

A formal mechanism should be in place to enable all Institute Managers to learn from the experiences of others. ... Professional development should be tied to both the needs of the organisation and the needs of individuals within the organisation. An individual needs analysis should be conducted with each IM [institute manager] to determine their deficiencies in terms of competencies required by the organisation (both for their current positions and for positions they may hold in the future). This procedure should be aligned with ... career planning.

(Rice 2001, p.8)

Conclusion

It would appear from the survey of the literature that the range of responsibilities of VET managers and leaders has widened and the everyday demands of their roles have increased. Various forces for change in the VET sector such as market-based financing, increased competitive pressure, increased institutional autonomy and external scrutiny, new principles of funding, new governance practices, and new management practices have created a demand for a more strategic perspective on management and leadership within VET organisations, most particularly public sector organisations, to assist them to adapt and change.

Throughout the review, emphasis is placed on the need to improve the management and leadership of VET organisations, where improvement tends to mean increasing their operational effectiveness and enhancing their performance. Individual managers and leaders are now held responsible to an unprecedented degree for that performance. Their effectiveness has appeared of central importance and the development of strategies to ensure such effectiveness is an obvious imperative. Managers and leaders in public VET organisations are under particular pressure in

relation to the operational effectiveness of organisations. In Victorian TAFE institutes, it is claimed, devolved responsibility means that there is no one else to take responsibility (Victorian TAFE Association 2000, p.13).

Taking the literature reviewed into account, the knowledge requirements of VET managers and leaders are summarised below. These requirements broadly match the development needs of these managers and leaders as identified in this literature:

- ✧ change concepts and practices (for example, organisational change and renewal, change leadership)
- ✧ productive working relationships (staff/community/industry links)
- ✧ corporate and strategic planning
- ✧ business and finance
- ✧ customer/quality service (for example satisfying the needs of clients)
- ✧ entrepreneurship (for example, marketing, sourcing clients)
- ✧ innovation, including educational innovation
- ✧ performance management (systems/staff)
- ✧ governance
- ✧ ethics and ethical decision-making
- ✧ organisational learning and development
- ✧ staff training and development.

Shaw and Velde (2000, p.271) summarise the development needs of VET managers and leaders, in this way: 'There is a need for training in higher level competence needs such as strategic, entrepreneurial and problem solving and people skills, and the ability to change a culture in an organisation?.'

Currently, little attention is given in the vocational education management and leadership literature to the classic concepts of pedagogy and curriculum and associated aspects of educational leadership. Educational leadership can be understood as the 'capacity to nurture a learning community' defined broadly to include a nation, state, system or organisation (Caldwell 2001, p.11). In the schools sector, new initiatives vis-a-vis school-based leadership are currently being taken. As thinking about school-based management has 'matured':

The concern has shifted to changing classroom practices and the ways in which a teacher professional learning community within the school, along with external systemic supports, can encourage 'authentic pedagogy' which achieves improved student outcomes.

(Lingard, Hayes & Mills 1999, p.6 citing Newmann & Associates 1996)

Research on school-based leadership and management serves to highlight some of the issues and controversies surrounding leadership and management at large as well as identify some gaps in the literature in the area of leadership and management in the VET sector. In striving to sustain valued management and leadership expertise in the VET sector, we might learn from initiatives being undertaken in both business and industry organisations and school organisations. There is a major and urgent need for further research in the VET arena on inter-organisational and educational aspects of management and leadership. The demands upon VET managers and leaders posed by the structural and systemic changes in the VET sector are many and various and require extensive examination. The relationship between management and leadership practice and educational practice, in particular, remains to be explored.

Data and methods

Introduction

In order to achieve a breadth and depth of understanding in the research, both quantitative and qualitative research methods were used in the study. Furthermore, it is commonly agreed that it is good research practice to obtain data related to a given situation from a variety of sources. Thus, our understanding of situation, participants and actions will be as informed by differences in perspectives as by similarities.

This staged study involved three empirical components. In this chapter, the techniques adopted in each of these components are outlined and results describing the characteristics of those who participated in the study presented. Accordingly, we will focus on demographic data analysis as a backdrop to the further and substantive analyses reported in the next chapter.

The survey questionnaire

A review of management and leadership research was used to guide the development of a survey questionnaire (see appendix F in volume 2 for a copy of questionnaire).

In addition to the demographic items on VET managers and VET organisations, the questionnaire incorporated questions designed to gather information on the attitudes and perceptions of VET managers in relation to:

- ✧ the changing operating environment, that is, the challenges that VET organisations have faced in the recent past, and issues relating to management and leadership presented by these challenges ('The VET context')
- ✧ the nature and extent of their management and leadership roles, including the tasks and activities that senior and frontline managers are commonly engaged in ('The changing roles of VET managers')
- ✧ the skills/capabilities needed to perform these roles and processes for developing these skills ('Responding to changing roles').

The questionnaire included eight closed and five open questions on the themes outlined above. The closed questions also included various items relating to aspects of management and leadership in VET providers which had emerged from the literature review.

Method

The questionnaire was designed to be:

- ✧ completed by an executive manager (chief executive officer, managing director, director) or senior manager with responsibility for educational development/training and development
- ✧ completed by a VET manager, that is, a manager in a registered training organisation

- ✧ self-administered (completed in the manager's own time)
- ✧ semi-structured, in that provision was made for open questions
- ✧ short, in that it could be completed in under 15 minutes
- ✧ confidential, in that no names were requested and assurances of confidentiality were given in the covering letter accompanying the questionnaire.

A copy of the questionnaire, with a covering letter and a return-paid envelope, was sent to 1551 provider locations, in the states of New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Victoria and Western Australia in May 2001. A targeted follow-up reminder, along with a further copy of the questionnaire and a return-paid envelope, was sent to particular provider locations in June 2001. These locations comprised the campuses and offices of institutes of TAFE and group training companies, respectively.

Designing the sample selection

The research sample was composed of three sub-sets of providers—TAFE institutes, private providers and group training companies—and stratified by sector and state. A census of TAFES (including universities with a TAFE division) and group training companies was conducted. One thousand assorted private providers were also surveyed, mainly private commercial providers, along with some enterprises, and other private sector organisations (for example, industry providers, community not-for-profit organisations). Table 3 summarises the number of provider locations surveyed with respect to type of provider and state.

Table 3: Survey sample—provider locations by type of provider and state

State	Type of provider			Total
	TAFE/TAFE division of university	Private providers	Group training companies	
New South Wales	128	286	47	461
Victoria	95	291	61	447
Queensland	59	222	26	307
Western Australia	48	156	23	227
South Australia	56	45	8	109
Total	386	1000	165	1551

With regard to TAFE institutes, the numbers included institutes or colleges and associated major campuses. Small provider locations such as annexes were not included in the sample. With regard to group training companies, the numbers included metropolitan and regional offices.

Sample criteria

The sample was drawn from lists of registered training organisations supplied by the state training authorities of each of the five major states. Given that TAFE and other government providers³ comprise the largest provider group and attract 75.5% of all VET students (NCVER 2001b), they formed a key sample group.

Group training companies employ over 14% of all new apprentices currently employed nationally (NCVER 2001c, p.22). Inasmuch as vocational education and training is their 'core business', they too comprised a key sample group. Group training companies have diversified and expanded their roles and functions which, presumably, has created a number of issues with respect to management

³ 85% of VET provision is delivered by TAFE and VET-in-schools programs (Falk & Smith forthcoming); universities with a TAFE division account for 40% of TAFE teaching in Victoria (Doughney 2000).

and leadership. According to Cooney (2001, p.2), group training companies offer an alternative form of training provision which 'has been subsumed as simply a form of private provision in the training market, when in fact it is a unique form of provision which, in Australia, merely takes the institutional form of a private training company'.

All in all, the sample was drawn from a variety of sources: public VET providers and private VET providers, including not-for-profit private providers.

Results

In total, 365 questionnaires were returned, representing a response rate of 23.5%. The background or demographic data collected from the questionnaires only will be reported here. Firstly, the characteristics of respondents as a whole will be described. Secondly, the characteristics of 'key respondents', that is, managers in TAFE institutes, private commercial providers and group training companies, will be presented.

Some general comments about the data, the data analyses, and findings are as follows:

- ✧ There were 355 respondents, with a small amount of missing data.
- ✧ The respondents were principally managers at executive or senior level.
- ✧ The respondent organisations were registered training organisations.
- ✧ The data for all 355 respondents were analysed using the SPSS 10.0 package of statistical procedures. Particular attention was given in the data analyses to key respondent groups: TAFE managers, managers in private commercial providers and managers in group training companies.

Throughout the report, inferences are based on cross-tabulation and frequency analyses. Chi-squared tests of association were also run in order to determine whether there was a statistically significant difference between particular types of provider (and particular types of manager for example, TAFE manager) and particular practices of management, for example, building business, industry and community links.

Characteristics of respondents as a whole

The type of position held by respondents within their organisations was identified variously as:

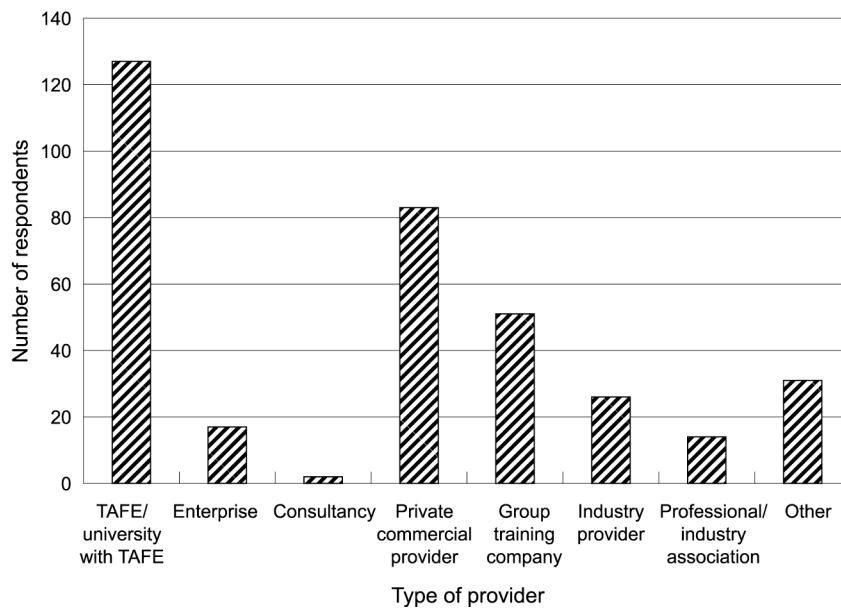
- ✧ chief executive officer
- ✧ campus manager, director, general manager
- ✧ head of campus
- ✧ manager
- ✧ managing director
- ✧ principal
- ✧ training manager.

Of the 355 respondents, the largest group described themselves as a chief executive officer (11.3%), general manager (5.6%), director (5.4%) and managing director (3.7%). (See appendix A in volume 2 for the full list of managerial titles.)

Of 342 respondents, 202 were males and 140 were females. Of 351 respondents, the largest group (127 respondents or 36.2%) were from public sector providers, principally TAFE institutes. The next largest group were from the private sector. Of this group, 23.6% of respondents (83

altogether) were from private commercial providers and 14.5% (51 altogether) from group training companies. Figure 1 summarises the number of respondents by type of provider.

Figure 1: Respondents by type of provider



In response to the question: ‘What type of training organisation is your organisation?’, group training companies were identified in various different ways, namely:

- ✧ group training company
- ✧ industry provider
- ✧ private commercial provider
- ✧ the ‘commercial’ arm of a ‘TAFE’ institution
- ✧ not-for-profit RTO (registered training organisation)
- ✧ not-for-profit company
- ✧ group training/business enterprise centre/job network.

The multi-purpose character of these companies and their dual-sector location (the commercial arm of a TAFE institution) suggests that a certain fluidity is emerging in VET around the category of provider type. Interestingly, in group training companies, managers can hold joint positions (for example, joint chief executive officer of a group training company and private commercial provider). This fluidity accounts, in part, for the relatively large proportion of respondents from industry providers (7.4%) and ‘other’ provider types (8.8%). The bulk of the respondents from the relatively large ‘other’ category of provider were from private, not-for-profit organisations, including group training companies. For example, in the state of South Australia, respondents from group training companies (two altogether) categorised these companies as ‘industry provider’ and ‘not-for-profit RTO’ (which was how they were coded for purposes of analysis).

Of a total of 341 respondents, 59.2% were located in the metropolitan area, 34.6% in the non-metropolitan area, and 6.2% in other locations, which were identified variously as: ‘both’; ‘mixed rural and metropolitan combination’; ‘rural’; ‘remote’; ‘regional’; ‘regional/rural’; ‘statewide’; ‘all of state’; ‘regional and remote’ and ‘Indian ocean territories’.

By state, respondents were from five major states. As table 4 shows, the largest group of respondents were from Victoria and New South Wales. Of 345 respondents, 28.4% and 27.0%

respectively, were from these states. A relatively small proportion of respondents (7.0%) were from South Australia.

Table 4: Respondents by state

State	Number	%
NSW	93	27.0
QLD	79	22.9
SA	24	7.0
VIC	98	28.4
WA	51	14.8
Total	345	100.0

A high proportion of respondents were from organisations operating across a number of sites, for example, a number of campuses or a number of regional offices. As table 5 shows, of 340 respondents, 67.6% identified their organisation as multi-site and 32.4% as single site.

Table 5: Respondents by site of provider

Site	Number	%
Single site	110	32.4
Multi-site	230	67.6
Total	340	100.0

Table 6: Respondents by size of provider

Size	Number	%
10 or less	79	22.7
11–20	32	9.2
21–50	43	12.4
51–100	29	8.3
101–500	89	25.6
501–1000	37	10.6
Over 1000	39	11.2
Total	348	100.0

The high number of multi-site VET organisations may reflect the occurrence of amalgamation, most particularly institutes of TAFE, in some states in the recent past. In Victoria, for example, five TAFEs have merged with universities.

As table 6 indicates, almost half of the respondents (47.4%) were from large organisations (> 100 employees). Inasmuch as multi-site organisations are generally large, this finding is not unexpected. It should be noted however, that there may have been some slippage when specifying size of organisation. Some respondents denoted size in terms of the number of employees at particular sites or locations. Thus, questionnaires were returned with comments like: '(number of employees) at x campus'. Respondents from group training companies, in some instances, included apprentice and trainee numbers in answer to the question: 'How many employees (full-time, part-time and casual) does your organisation employ?'

A sizeable proportion of respondents (31.9%) were from small organisations (< 20 employees). Indeed, 22.7% were from ‘micro’ organisations. These organisations were typically private commercial companies, a finding which will be discussed more fully below.

Characteristics of key respondents

As table 7 indicates, by type of provider, roughly half of the respondents were from the public sector and half from the private sector. Private sector providers comprised private commercial providers and not-for-profit providers (group training companies). The majority of private sector managers were managers in private commercial providers.

Table 7: Key respondents by sector

Type of provider	Sector			
	Public		Private	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	127	48.6		
Private commercial provider			83	31.8
Group training company			51	19.5
Total	127	48.6	134	51.3

As table 8 demonstrates, of 251 respondents, 60.1% were male and 39.8% female. More males than females responded to the survey in each type of provider, possibly reflecting the predominance of male managers at senior level which has long been a feature of the vocational education and training (previously TAFE) sector. A little less than half of the respondents from group training companies were female.

Table 8: Key respondents by gender

Type of provider	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>%</i>
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	72	28.7	51	20.3
Private commercial provider	45	17.9	34	13.5
Group training company	34	13.5	15	6.0
Total	151	60.1	100	39.8

As shown in table 9, respondents were from the five major states. Of 257 respondents, the largest groups of respondents were from Victoria (28.0%), New South Wales (26.5%) and Queensland (21.4%).

Respondents from South Australia comprised just 7.0% of the sample overall. Given the small sample sizes, no firm conclusions can be drawn in relation to key respondent groups by state. Two questionnaires were returned by managers from group training companies in South Australia. For reasons already discussed, these responses were not included in the sample analysed.

Table 9: Key respondents by type of provider and state

State	Type of provider						Total	
	TAFE/uni with TAFE		Private commercial provider		Group training company			
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
NSW	29	23.0	26	31.7	13	26.5	68	26.5
Qld	29	23.0	18	22.0	8	16.3	55	21.4
SA	13	10.3	5	6.1	0	0	18	7.0
Vic.	36	28.6	23	28.0	13	26.5	72	28.0
WA	19	15.1	10	12.2	15	30.6	44	17.1
Total	126	100.0	82	100.0	49	100.0	257	100.0

Figures 2 and 3 summarise the number of respondents by size of provider, type of provider and type of site. Over half of the respondents were from large organisations (>100).

The vast majority of the respondents (72.7%) were from multi-site providers. Of 47 respondents from group training companies, 31 were from multi-site organisations.

As noted earlier a sizeable number of respondents were from small organisations (< 20 employees), indeed very small organisations (< 10 employees).

While there may have been some ambiguity attached to the specification of size of organisation in the survey, most particularly for respondents from group training companies (should they, or should they not, include apprentice numbers?), the data demonstrate that the private commercial providers sampled were predominantly small.

Figure 2: Respondents by size of provider

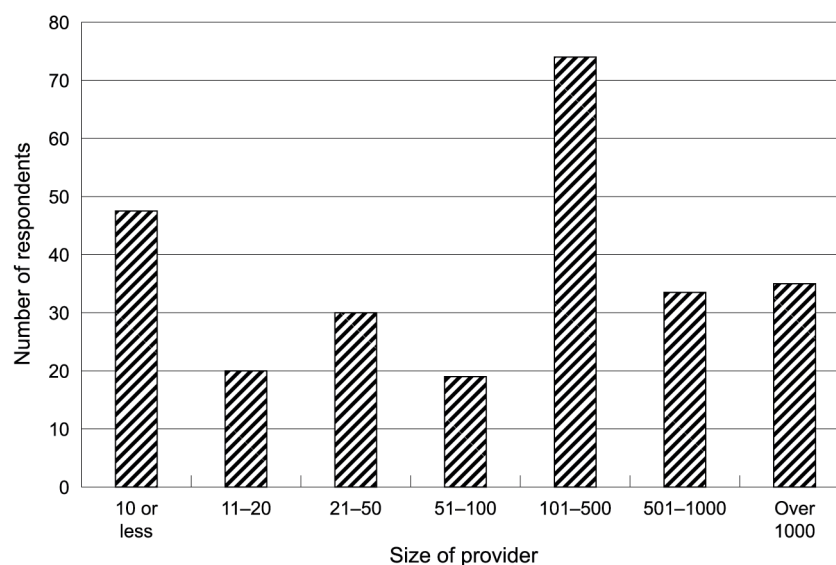


Figure 3: Respondents by provider type/site

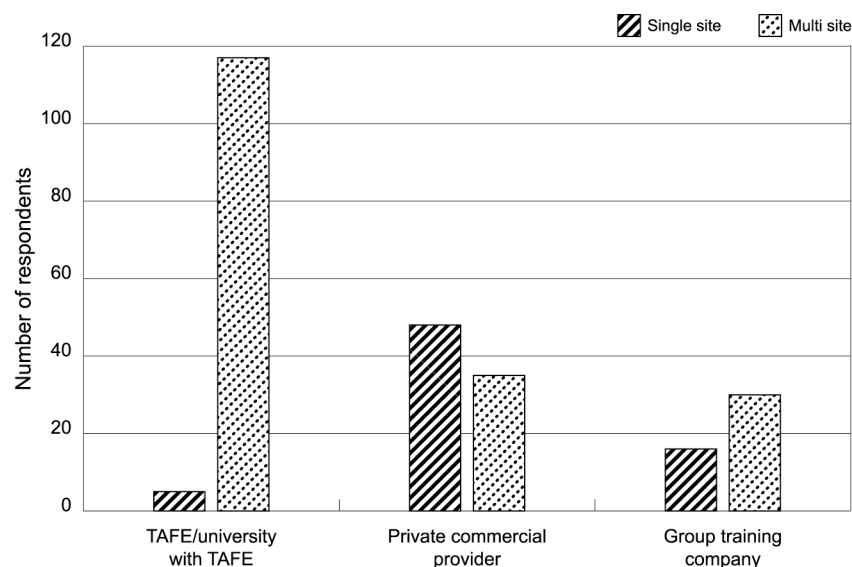


Table 10 summarises the number of respondents according to type of provider and size of provider. Of 257 respondents, 67 were from small organisations. Of these 67 (<20), the bulk were from private commercial organisations (55 altogether).

Table 10: Respondents by type of provider and size of provider

Type of provider	Size of provider							Total
	10 or less	11–20	21–50	51–100	101–500	501–1000	Over 1000	
TAFE/uni with TAFE	2	2	2	6	52	29	32	125
Private commercial provider	40	15	14	10	3	1		83
Group training company	5	3	14	3	19	3	2	49
Total	47	20	30	19	74	33	34	257

Telephone interviews

The second empirical component of the research consisted of telephone interviews. These interviews were intended to expand the broad body of information obtained through the survey and provide a detailed picture of leadership and management in VET providers from an individual and organisational perspective.

The telephone interviews employed a naturalistic, qualitative approach premised on the idea that individuals construct their own meanings from their lived experiences (Van Manen 1997).

Provision was made for a top-down/bottom-up view of organisational management and leadership. Thus, we sought to gather data from managers with different roles and responsibilities within VET organisations. In essence, we were interested in documenting any differences with respect to management and leadership from a senior management and frontline management perspective. Senior and frontline managers were asked to identify the skills they now need in order to perform their management and leadership roles and to comment on the extent of change to these roles.

In all, information was gathered on the changing nature of management and leadership roles, the impact of these changes on individual managers and the organisation, the expertise required to perform these roles, the requirements of the organisation with respect to management and leadership, what counts as managing and leading in VET organisations, what makes for a ‘good’ VET manager and leader, the perceived need by managers for management and leadership development, and preferences with respect to this development as well as strategies that might be used (see appendix B in volume 2 for a copy of the telephone interview schedules).

Method

The telephone interviews were designed to:

- ✧ be undertaken by an executive or senior manager and a frontline manager, within a registered training organisation
- ✧ be semi-structured, thereby making provision for the collection of closed respondent data and open-ended questions (see appendix B in volume 2)
- ✧ short, in that they could be completed in under 30 minutes
- ✧ confidential in that no names were to be used (assurances were given that responses would be reported in a format that ensured that no individual or organisation could be separately identified).

Selection of sample

The criteria used for the selection of managers and organisations were as follows:

- ✧ type of manager that is, executive/senior/frontline
- ✧ sectoral location with a mix of public and private sector managers (around 50% of each public sector managers and 50% private sector managers)
- ✧ majority of public sector managers to be TAFE managers, including at least two to be managers in TAFE providers, for example, university with a TAFE division
- ✧ type of provider; that is, TAFE, private commercial provider, group training company
- ✧ provider to be a registered training organisation
- ✧ size of provider (number of employees): small/medium/large (small 1–19 employees; medium 20–99 employees; large over 100 employees)
- ✧ location by state
- ✧ location by area: metropolitan area/non-metropolitan area.

Procedure

One hundred and forty-seven telephone interviews were conducted in the same states as selected for the survey. Approximately thirty interviews were made in each of these states. Participants in the telephone interviews were sourced from the survey. All managers surveyed were invited to participate in a follow-up telephone interview. Contact was made with those executive and senior managers who, after completion of the questionnaire, indicated interest in being interviewed. Using a process of snowball referral, each of these managers was asked to identify a frontline manager within their organisation who might be prepared to take part in an interview. These managers were then be contacted and their agreement to participate was sought.

Direct quotations were recorded on the interview schedule and records of interview were made immediately following the interviews.

The demographic data for all 147 respondents were analysed using the SPSS 10.0 package of statistical procedures.

A preliminary analysis of the qualitative data was conducted using manual thematic techniques whereby categories were developed from a process of open coding (Strauss & Corbin 1990). Initially, the data were conceptualised, that is, discrete meanings made in response to the interview questions were given a name. Conceptual labels were then grouped into categories and the categories named. The categories derived from each individual record of interview were compared across the 147 records towards identifying shared themes and areas of difference among managers' accounts (see Ely et al. 1991, in particular, here). Characteristics of different categories were identified for different groups (for example, senior managers and frontline managers).

The 'constant comparative method of analysis' (Glaser & Strauss 1967, pp.101–16) was used throughout.

Data for all 147 interviews were analysed using the ATLAS.ti 4.1 package of qualitative procedures. The records of interview were inductively analysed for themes (Patton 1990, p.390). Accordingly, the themes identified through the manual analysis were cross-checked. A count of the codes used to capture meaning in the data was made.

Results

Characteristics of interviewees

The results in relation to demographic data only will be reported here. As table 11 shows, the largest group of interviewees were executive and senior managers in TAFE institutes and TAFE providers. Four interviews were conducted with managers in TAFE providers (for example, universities with a TAFE division).

By type of provider, roughly half of the interviewees were from the public sector (47.0%) and half from the private sector (53.0%). Managers from the private sector included managers in private commercial providers and managers associated with not-for-profit providers (group training companies). A good mix of each type of manager was achieved.

Overall, a greater number of interviews were conducted with senior managers than frontline managers. In very small providers (for example, private commercial providers), a distinction between managerial levels is not commonly drawn. Consequently, it proved difficult to interview an equal number of senior and frontline managers in all providers.

Table 11: Interviewees by type of manager and type of provider

Type of provider	Type of manager				Total (% of all managers)	
	Senior manager		Frontline manager		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%		
TAFE/TAFE provider	38	46.3	31	47.7	69	47.0
Private commercial provider	23	28.1	16	24.6	39	26.5
Group training company	21	25.6	18	27.7	39	26.5
Total	82	100.0	65	100.0	147	100.0

A suitable spread of interviewees across the five states was achieved. As shown in table 12, managers were relatively evenly distributed across the five states.

Table 12: Interviewees by type of provider and state

State	Type of provider						Total (% of all interviewees)	
	TAFE/TAFE provider		Private commercial provider		Group training company		Number	%
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
Vic.	18	25.7	6	15.0	8	20.5	32	21.5
NSW	9	12.9	9	22.5	11	28.2	29	19.5
Qld	14	20.0	9	22.5	8	20.5	31	20.8
WA	14	20.0	8	20.0	6	15.4	28	18.8
SA	14	21.4	7	20.0	6	15.4	27	18.4
Total	69	100.0	39	100.0	39	100.0	147	100.0

A smaller number of TAFE managers were interviewed in New South Wales than in other states. On the other hand, a greater number of managers from group training companies were interviewed in New South Wales than in other states.

Of the 147 interviewees, 58.5% were male and 41.5% female. An almost equal number of male managers and female managers were interviewed in TAFEs. More male managers than female managers were interviewed in private commercial providers and group training companies.

As table 13 shows, a little less than half of the managers from group training companies were female.

Table 13: Interviewees by provider type and gender

Type of provider	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
TAFE/uni with TAFE	35	40.7	34	55.7
Private commercial provider	23	26.7	16	26.2
Group training company	28	32.6	11	18.1
Total	86	100.0	61	100.0

Table 14 illustrates that, more male managers than female managers were interviewed at executive and senior levels. Slightly more than 60% of the male managers interviewed were located at senior management level and above. Slightly less than 50% of the female managers interviewed were located at these levels.

Of the six women interviewed at executive level, four were located in TAFEs, one in a private provider and one in a group training company. Of the 24 women interviewed at senior level, 11 were from TAFEs, seven from private providers and six from group training companies.

Table 14: Interviewees by type of manager and gender

Type of manager	Gender			
	Male		Female	
	Number	%	Number	%
Executive	20	23.3	6	9.8
Senior	32	37.2	24	39.3
Frontline	34	39.5	31	50.8
Total	86	100.0	61	100.0

Interviews were undertaken with 147 managers from 79 separate VET organisations. As table 15 indicates, 35 of these organisations were TAFEs or TAFE providers, 23 were private commercial providers and 21 were group training companies.

A balance was sought between large, medium and small providers. As table 15 shows, small providers were under-represented in the categories of TAFE/TAFE provider. They were over-represented in the category of private commercial provider. Overall, a little over half of the organisations contacted for the telephone interviews were large organisations (54.4%). There were very few differences in size of organisation by state.

Table 15: Interviewees by type of provider, size of provider and state

State	Type of provider									Total (% of all providers)	
	TAFE/TAFE provider			Private commercial provider			Group training company			No.	%
	Large	Med.	Small	Large	Med.	Small	Large	Med.	Small		
Vic.	9	0	0	0	2	2	2	2	1	18	22.8
NSW	6	0	0	0	2	4	2	2	2	18	22.8
Qld	6	1	0	1	1	3	2	2	0	16	20.2
WA	7	0	0	0	1	3	1	1	1	14	17.7
SA	6	0	0	0	2	2	1	1	1	13	16.5
Total	34	1	0	1	8	14	8	8	5	79	100.0

In the context of the location of providers, table 16 indicates that most interviewees were from the metropolitan area. A balance was sought between providers in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas and achieved in the case of TAFE institutes. With respect to private commercial providers, providers in the metropolitan area were over-represented.

Overall, the majority of the managers interviewed were based in the metropolitan area (65.8%). This pattern of representation was similar in each state.

Table 16: Interviewees by type of provider, geographical location and state

State	Type of provider						Total (% of all providers)	
	TAFE/TAFE provider		Private commercial provider		Group training company		No.	%
	Metro.	Non-metro.	Metro.	Non-metro.	Metro.	Non-metro.		
Vic.	5	4	3	1	3	2	18	22.8
NSW	2	4	6	0	2	4	18	22.8
Qld	2	5	4	1	4	0	16	20.2
WA	4	3	4	0	3	0	14	17.7
SA	4	2	3	1	3	0	13	16.5
Total	17	18	20	3	15	6	79	100.0

Case studies

The third empirical component of the research consisted of intensive case studies of organisational practices of managing and leading in registered training organisations (see appendix E in volume 2 for reports of these studies). A multi-case study approach was chosen to explore the potentially different perspectives of participants in public VET providers and private VET providers, including non-profit providers (group training companies).

The ten case studies were intended to provide a detailed understanding of management and leadership roles and their requirements in different organisational settings in the VET sector. Like the telephone interviews, they employed a naturalistic, qualitative approach premised on the notion that individuals construct their own meanings from their lived experiences. The case studies involved:

- ✧ *observation of organisational practices*: an observation schedule was developed focussing on skills demonstrated by senior managers and frontline managers as they went about their everyday work; the arrangements for management and leadership development; specific management and leadership practices and the contribution of these practices to ‘followers’ and the organisation (see appendix C in volume 2 for a copy of the observation schedule.)
- ✧ *in-depth, semi-structured interviews*: 50 in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with various individuals; for example, senior manager, frontline manager, manager developer (for example, coach), staff members or ‘followers’. Interviews were intended to provide a ‘thick description’ of the conditions that enable effective leadership and management in VET organisations and the skills required to operate in these conditions (see appendix D in volume 2 for a copy of the interview schedules.)

Methodology

Case study sites

The selection of sites for the case studies was made using purposeful sampling to obtain maximum variation and increase the scope or range of data gathered. This sampling involves selecting information-rich cases for study in depth; that is, cases ‘from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research’ (Patton 1990, p.169). In purposeful sampling, the sample, by definition, is representative of the questions that lie at the heart of the research.

Criteria for selection of the case study sites were designed to ensure the inclusion of a diverse range of VET providers. These criteria were as follows:

- ✧ type of provider: TAFE/TAFE provider; private commercial provider; group training company
- ✧ size of provider (number of employees): small/medium/large
- ✧ location by state: two sites in each of the five major states
- ✧ location by area: metropolitan area/non-metropolitan area
- ✧ distinguishing features with respect to management and leadership, for example, a provider with a reputation for innovative programs/innovative delivery; a provider that is publicly recognised as well managed and led
- ✧ ease of access to site and participant availability given budget constraints.

Table 17 summarises the ten sites from which case data were collected.

Collecting case data

Researchers observed organisational practices of management and leadership over two or three days using a protocol developed for the purpose (See appendix C in volume 2 for a copy of this protocol). Observations were informal and unstructured.

Table 17: Summary of sites by provider type, location, size and organisation

State	Type of provider
Vic.	Large urban TAFE division of university Small urban group training company
NSW	(i) Large rural TAFE (ii) Small rural TAFE
Qld	Large urban private commercial provider Medium-size urban group training company
WA	(i) Large urban TAFE (ii) Small rural TAFE
SA	Small urban TAFE Medium-size urban private commercial provider
Total TAFE/TAFE providers	6
Total private commercial providers	2
Total group training companies	2

Interviews

Five in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted in each case study site with the following individuals:

- ✧ executive or senior manager
- ✧ frontline manager
- ✧ manager developer, that is, a person who has responsibility for staff development, with particular attention to management and leadership development
- ✧ staff members or ‘subordinates’ (two altogether). Attempts were made to choose staff who report to either of the two managers immediately above.

Our general method for obtaining interviews was to ask those who had taken part in the telephone interviews (that is, executive/senior managers and frontline managers) to participate in a further interview and nominate other managers and staff who might be willing to be interviewed and who held the positions described above. It should be noted that in some case sites, managers had not participated in the earlier stages of the study, or, those who had done so, chose to recommend another (senior, frontline) manager for interview. We also consulted contacts where possible to seek their recommendations regarding key people to interview.

All interviews were conducted on the basis that we could record, transcribe and quote from them with due regard to issues of confidentiality of information and identification of organisations and individuals. Consent in writing was obtained from those who agreed to participate in the interviews. Particular care was taken when interviewing ‘subordinates’ of senior and frontline managers. Assurances were given that the information these staff members provided in the interview would be kept strictly confidential. Interviews ran for approximately 45 minutes.

Analysing the data and limitations of the data

The processes used to analyse the case data were similar to those used for the telephone interviews. Thus, the transcripts of interview were inductively analysed for themes. The case data were synthesised into major themes to make the best use of material gathered from different providers and to expressly address the research questions pertaining to the research project. The themes resulting from this interpretive analysis are reported in the next chapter.

Although recurring themes relevant to management and leadership arose in these data, it might be noted that each case is also an individual enactment of management and leadership. Large multi-site organisations such as TAFEs can be organised on a federated delivery model where teams of staff work across campuses, or a faculty delivery model which tends to be college- or campus-based. The model of delivery in place clearly affects the roles and responsibilities of staff and the skills they require to perform these roles. The unit from which the interviewees were drawn—for example, the directorates, the functional units, and the educational delivery areas of the organisation—might also be thought to affect staff perceptions and responses. No warrant is taken for generalising more widely than the sites involved in these studies.

A particular limitation of the case data was that, in the context of group training companies and private commercial providers, no rural sites were sampled. However, a good balance of metropolitan and regional colleges of TAFE was achieved.

Results and discussion

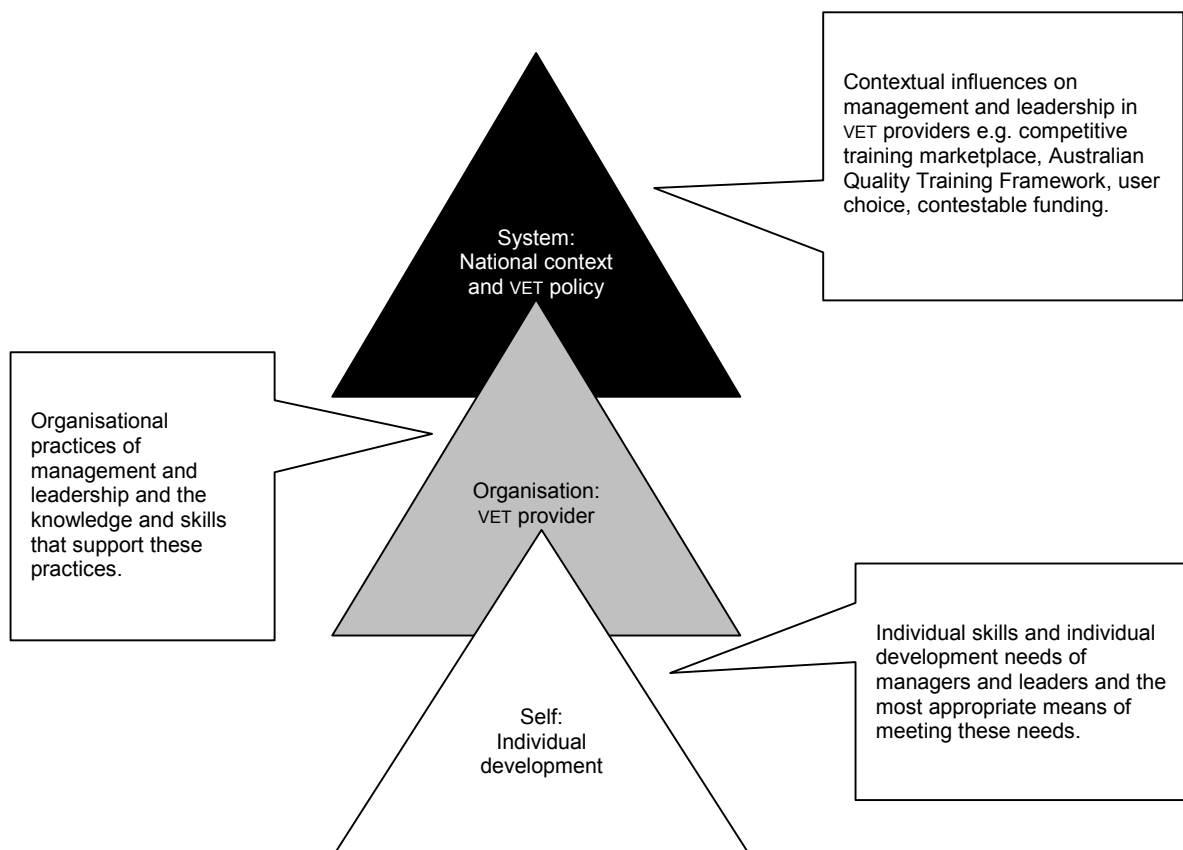
Overview

The project aimed to address the following four questions:

- ✧ What are the roles and functions of senior and frontline managers within VET organisations and how are they changing?
- ✧ What are the requirements of VET organisations for expertise in management and leadership, in relation to this change?
- ✧ What practices of management and leadership, and approaches to management and leadership development, can best serve these organisations?
- ✧ How do we sustain valued management and leadership expertise in the VET sector?

In addressing these questions, information was collected at the following three levels. The results reported in this chapter refer to these levels.

Figure 4: Levels of organisational management and leadership in VET



The findings in relation to each of the four questions are reported as follows: firstly, the key finding and contextual influences on management and leadership within VET organisations will be outlined. The subsequent section ‘Individual analyses’ includes a comparative analysis of responses to selected survey items by key respondents—TAFE managers, managers in private commercial providers and managers in group training companies. Finally, the contours of the contemporary VET organisation will be sketched as a backdrop to findings with respect to organisational management and leadership. This material is presented in the section entitled ‘Organisational analysis’.

Key finding: The salience of strategy

Much of the discussion of the significance of the project’s findings revolves around the key finding. Strategy—the strategy concepts that underpin practices of strategic management and strategic leadership—was found to be the main driver of management and leadership processes in VET providers. The majority of managers participating in the study assumed the importance of a strategic approach to management and leadership in VET. Definitions of strategy generally agree it is concerned with assembling the resources available within, or to, an organisation to achieve its future goals (Hutchinson 2001). Broadly, VET managers and leaders were found to be using strategy to better position their organisations by reading the ‘policy play’ in the VET sector and mobilising resources to achieve an effective response.

The regularity with which the term ‘strategy’ and the expanded form of the term, ‘corporate strategy’, were used in the data indicated that it was a key issue for VET providers. Among many others, terms such as ‘strategic planning’, ‘strategic focus’, ‘strategic framework’, ‘strategic perspective’, ‘strategic priorities’, ‘strategic vision’, ‘strategic role’, ‘strategic goals’, ‘strategic boundaries’, ‘strategic directions’, ‘strategic opportunities’, ‘strategic thinking’, and ‘strategic action’, permeated the talk of managers and staff in providers. Strategy, it appears, is common currency in vocational education and training.

A growing number of commentators in VET note the significance of, and necessity for, strategic management within VET organisations: ‘VET organisations need to develop a responsive culture and an appropriate structure, which requires the use of both change management and strategic management strategies’ (Mitchell & Young 2001, TAFE Frontiers 2001; Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment 2000). In a formal sense, strategic management may be described as: ‘The process of identifying, choosing and implementing activities that will enhance the long-term performance of an organisation by setting direction and by creating ongoing compatibility between the internal skills and resources of the organisation, and the changing external environment within which it operates’ (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.5). Strategy is commonly implemented as a set of techniques for managing and leading increasingly complex businesses in an increasingly competitive environment. As a frontline manager in TAFE comments: ‘If it doesn’t get built in at the strategic level, there is a good chance it won’t happen’.

Contextual analyses

Recurring themes and issues

Government policy

Federal and state government priorities and initiatives tended to ‘top’ the list of contextual influences on the strategies of VET management and organisation. These initiatives impact significantly on small providers and private providers:

The impact of the GST on VET has been horrendous in the small business area.

(General manager, group training company, Queensland)

The government and the changing legislation has always been an issue. The government demands of a private institution are very strict—taxation issues, superannuation issues. There are many factors.

(Senior manager, private commercial provider, Queensland)

Table 18 provides a summary of the mean ratings for all survey respondents (355 altogether) of challenges which have played a critical role in their organisations. Of the ten given challenges, ‘policy’, ‘partnerships’ and ‘funding’ were rated highly on the 5-point scale, where ratings of 3 represented ‘critical’ and 5 ‘most critical’.

Table 18: Challenges facing providers

Challenges	Mean
Building partnerships with business and industry	4.17
Expanding access to VET for disadvantaged groups	2.95
Seeking extra funding	3.97
Utilising new management techniques	3.39
Delivering off shore	3.19
Utilising new technology	3.57
Implementing VET policy	4.19
Delivering training on demand	3.80
Competing with other training providers	3.63
Restructuring	3.22

Respondents were invited to list challenges other than those stated in the questionnaire. Across the range of responses (50 altogether), the major issues highlighted by managers were:

- ✧ accountability/compliance, for example, ‘complying with registered training organisation requirement/ paperwork’
- ✧ dealing with bureaucracy, for example, ‘keeping up with bureaucracy and variations state to state’
- ✧ change, for example, ‘change—organisational’, ‘culture change’, ‘constant changes for RTO’
- ✧ flexible learning/e-learning, for example, ‘flexible learning, e business’
- ✧ funding, for example, ‘growth through efficiency—core funds’, ‘stable cash flow’
- ✧ staffing, for example, ‘staff changes’.

Government policy is implemented through a range of specific initiatives such as legislative and regulatory requirements, funding models, performance measures, and quality and auditing practices (Australian Quality Training Framework). These initiatives were frequently perceived as demands made by government on providers and as unnecessarily strict.

Commerce and competition

Managers of training providers are juggling the often-competing demands of meeting government priorities and maintaining organisational viability in an increasingly competitive operating environment. Market activity tends to define this environment. Thus, private providers are competing with TAFE institutes for market share, particularly in the area of apprenticeships and traineeships. Government training organisations no longer have a monopoly when it comes to accessing public funds. Both government training organisations and non-government training organisations need to ‘be run like a commercial entity’:

It doesn't matter what the product is, from a managing director/business point of view. A college or a company these days needs to be run like a commercial entity. All the major institutions seem to be going that way. And being a privately owned company as well, we have a responsibility to shareholders which larger institutions don't if they are government funded.

(Senior manager, private commercial provider, Queensland)

What we need is a more effective tendering unit or more effective commercial unit ... Just in terms of when someone rings the Institute and says: 'I want this training for my employees, can we start on Monday?' You know, in this Institute, well in TAFE anyway, you chase all around for three weeks and then run into them down the service station!! So I think that's the main issue, how can we be more responsive in the competitive training environment? I don't see the issue of government funding not increasing or not retaining its value as, as much of an issue, as remaining competitive.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Funding

The government tends to be the major external force in shaping VET providers. In relation to group training companies, external agencies are particularly influential: 'Industry governs us, schools govern us, government governs us'. Funding tends to be a 'hot' issue for VET managers and VET organisations today. This is certainly the case for group training companies and TAFES where 'core funding, commercial funding' are 'the things that drive the institute':

The funding issue is probably the biggest one for us at the moment because we are still funded on traditional face-to-face mode and we're delivering on an individual basis to ... trainees.

(Program manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Part of the problem is that with the VET sector now, certainly in Victoria, the funding model through successive productivity cuts over the last 10 years ... [has] driven the funding of VET down to a point where it's unsustainable. We're now having to really use non-government money to keep the institutes going.

(Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

TAFE has changed, in regard to all the things that are happening in the world. The things that drive the institute, such as core funding, commercial funding, are changing and you will never go back to the old days.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Resources and funding are the biggest issues. Meeting your profile⁴ for government-funded training.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

You have this vision for where your organisation is likely to be with absolutely no certainty that there will be any funding support for that.

(Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

Well, issues that group training companies are facing are more to do with funding and the levels of funding. When group training [companies] started 20 years ago, they were supported fairly well by government in regards to setting them up, having funds available for them to then grow in apprenticeship numbers because traineeships weren't about then. Probably over the last 5 years, funding has been cut back in a number of areas.

(Field officer, group training company, Victoria)

⁴ The term 'profile' refers to curriculum hours or student contact hours purchased from providers by state government training authorities.

Culture shift

An executive manager reported on the changes occurring in TAFE in New South Wales over the past decade in this way:

I have been with the organisation five years and just prior to me arriving ... they had undergone two major restructures from state level. They were put into regions and then they were transferred within a short period of time to networks, and then that only lasted for about 18 months, and they were formed into institutes.

With continual 'changes in the structure, there has been a big push for culture change'. The culture of TAFE is changing from 'being an old fashioned public sector, highly bureaucratic "I tell you what to do, you do it type of operation", more to a teams base'.

One of the biggest challenges that we have is the issue of the culture being a large complex public sector organisation and people are not willing to change ... The responsibility is very, very difficult in terms of looking at that culture shift that we have to implement ... The difficulty with TAFE is the competitive environment that we now find ourselves in where the non-treasury funds are becoming increasingly important and it gets back to [the] culture of the organisation.

(Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Market and managerialist discourses in the vocational education and training sector are seeking to redefine organisational culture such that there is less emphasis on community values and more on commercial ones. This redefinition is characteristic of both public providers and private providers, particularly private not-for-profit providers:

Critically, the public service has a very strong history in New South Wales and pervades all that we have done. A difficult ask has been to address a business-type approach in management and that has escalated over the past few years.

(Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

I know I have a commitment to the business and I know I'm not soft-hearted when it comes to some of the warm and fuzzy stuff that we're involved in. I can be quite hard-nosed with my staff. When I say: 'I'm sorry, you've gone far enough in helping that person, you can't hold their hand for the rest of their life', or: 'We don't get funding to do what you're doing, I know you feel for this person, you work with them, but when they don't do what they have to do, we have to be able to step back'.

(Executive manager, group training company, Victoria)

Partnerships

There was some evidence to support the view that new forms of co-operative relationships are emerging at provider level. As discussed more fully below, VET managers mediate policy agendas, such as the introduction of the competitive training marketplace by creating joint co-operative ventures and links. In striving to meet market needs, competition is not the only strategy pursued by providers. The growth of 'co-operatives', 'networks' and 'hubs' illustrates the emergence of collaboration within competition (Gleeson 2001) and the potential in the VET sector for change:

Some TAFES don't talk to each other, but I see TAFE as a whole rather than as a geographical delivery unit. I've done a number of co-operatives with TAFES that are joining our area. So a leader needs to be able to think: 'If I can't do it myself, how can I do it, to meet a market need?' Sometimes you can't do it by yourself but you can do it in co-operatives.

(Senior TAFE manager, Queensland)

I have gathered [together] 3 or 4 smaller RTOs [registered training organisations]. We share the work we have to do and standardise it amongst ourselves, except change the names and so forth. That's the only way that I have seen to break this enormous [administrative] burden that we have. We have a local education and training network which is geared towards

marketing the region as an education hub. Now, we are trying to use that network to help the smaller RTOs. (Senior manager, private provider, Queensland)

'Partnerships' are emerging as a key site of organisational activity in VET: 'The most successful outcomes in VET ... have been built from the foundations of partnerships between equal stakeholders' (ANTA 2000, p.19). The growth of inter-organisational relations and inter-sectoral associations such as those between VET providers and schools, VET providers and universities, was discernible in the data. These developments suggest that we can expect to see more and more of a different kind of provider taking shape in the VET sector and consequently, a different kind of VET manager. It remains to be seen whether this provider assumes the form of a commercial provider, a community provider, or both.

Audit and accountability

New patterns of work organisation (for example, 'teams of staff that work across one or two campuses'), new patterns of training delivery (for example, workplace delivery, 'just-in-time' delivery), and increased emphasis on accountability and reporting, have resulted in additional administrative responsibilities for managers and staff. One of the most significant effects on staff was the shift of time and attention from core teaching tasks to administration: 'Often there is more admin. to do than actual teaching'.

If we could pull some of the admin. pressure off the teaching staff that would be good. There is all this pressure on you to deliver your hours and then there is pressure to do the administration. For instance, because of AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework], we are having an assessment audit and I just don't honestly have the time.

(Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

Given increased auditing, various administrative systems have been put in place such that 'the record keeping has become paramount and we've all become paranoid':

Each student, even if they've just had a telephone contact regarding a particular module, we get funding for that module for that student, even if they haven't attended. So the record keeping has become paramount and we've all become paranoid, because the teachers now have become more administrators, they have to keep their Accurate Records Process registers up to scratch.

(Staff member, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Auditing functions as a central mechanism that can be used to shape the business performance of the organisation: 'If we don't come out of the audit [well] we'll lose funding'. In the Victorian TAFE provider above, extra administrative work does not attract extra administrative staff to do the work. The work has 'increased three/fourfold', one outcome being that: 'I don't care anymore and I'm very sceptical'.

Individual analyses

Roles and responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of VET leaders and managers have changed considerably as VET providers endeavour to operate in a highly competitive, market environment.

It was widely agreed that 'there is a much more complex range of functions than managers were involved in five years ago'. Many managers commented on the 'breadth of issues' significant today.

The job has become more complex. The old-style manager was very collegial and you made the rules as you went along. What is required [now] is breadth of understanding in things like quality assurance measures, accrual-based accounting, basic financial management. Considerable breadth of expertise is required in marketing and public relations, knowledge of

equal employment opportunity principles, knowledge of audits and Treasury Department requirements. There has been a huge growth in the breadth of one's knowledge base in order to meet modern demands. (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

These changes would appear to impact most on those staff who are required to perform a dual role, that is, middle and frontline managers:

Now there are fewer management structures, not only do the tasks have to go somewhere but the roles and responsibilities have to go somewhere as well. While I think a lot has gone up, I think a hell of a lot has been delegated down. Most of the grunt happens at the frontline manager level. If I think about my area, HR, we have pulled out the supervisor level; that means that people like myself are a supervisor and a manager rolled into one. I also have to work at both a strategic and an operational level.

(Staff development manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

I would have to say that I think that at the frontline management level in VET, the responsibilities and challenges are quite onerous, in fact, they are excessive. I think at my level, which is senior level ... [they are] less so. (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

The discourses of strategic management and strategic leadership define the roles and responsibilities of VET managers and leaders. It is commonly claimed in the business literature that strategic management requires (strategic) leadership: 'Because strategic managers are concerned more with effectiveness than efficiency, they need to be leaders in addition to managers' (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.27).

In the context of flattening organisational structures, where a lot of responsibility has been 'delegated down', the distinction between management and leadership appeared increasingly irrelevant:

Look five to ten years ago, I would have said they would be different, because there is that difference from being a manager to [being] a leader, but these days the requirement put on managers is to have that leadership visionary role.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

To be a good leader, you have to be able to manage as well. You have to have your finger on the pulse.

(Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Somebody who is a good manager is also somebody who is able to take up passionately the goals and strategies that the organisation puts into place, which is what I have identified as leadership.

(Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

Senior management and above

In line with the constructs and dimensions sketched in the following section senior managers were found to perform five broad leadership and management roles. Unlike frontline managers whose roles were more dispersed, senior managers' roles were relatively integrated: each affected the other and all were interrelated.

Business management

First and foremost, the senior VET manager cum leader is a business manager: someone who is 'opportunity focussed' and says: 'How can I take this and make it work for our business'. Business management also involves 'monitor[ing] processes and procedures, targets and goals, ensuring other people do what they need to do to keep the organisation performing most effectively'.

Achieving good business outcomes is the lifeblood of VET organisations: 'The outcomes of performance mean the existence of the organisation'. The greatest change that senior managers in VET have experienced over the last few years in terms of their current role concerns 'the increase in

business focus': 'There has certainly been a shift towards a business-like approach, commercial, as in fee-for-service, but certainly business' (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

Strategic leadership

Secondly, this manager is a strategic leader—able to visualise strategic objectives and communicate them within the organisation. 'Although the college sets the vision and sets the strategic objectives, you have got to be able to visualise that and communicate it to your staff. You need to see how that can be applied and inspire and lead your staff (Senior TAFE manager, Western Australia).

More broadly, s/he is a *strategist*—able to take opportunities and make them work in a way that will ensure the success of the organisation in the future. Senior management is said to be 'much more strategic' than other kinds of management.

Strategy has secured a foothold in VET providers, both public providers and private providers, including private not-for-profit providers. As part of envisaging future directions, it involves market analysis and systems analysis: 'looking at industry trends that are emerging, future-casting, research on a daily basis—newspapers, industry and community perspectives'. It also involves introducing systems and measures for monitoring outcomes: 'The strategic focus has impacted most significantly on the accountability of the Centre. We are accountable for what we deliver, how we deliver, and how long it takes to deliver'. Accordingly, 'a good manager keeps a good eye on ... performance indicators' (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland).

Change leadership

In conjunction with the above, the senior VET manager has responsibility for bringing about, or better perhaps, leading organisational change: 'The old bureaucratic-type management style doesn't work when you're wanting to pull people through change. You can't drive them and push them, you have to lead them (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia). This manager must also communicate the need for change, and assist staff to accept it and 'go forward with it'. The need for change leadership was strongly expressed in TAFES:

TAFE has two cultures, the old culture and a new culture. There are people that are willing to accept change and go forward with it and take the positives, and a lot of the older staff are very, not to be union bashing but unionised from the old days [they] have the old culture: 'what TAFE owes me'.
(Frontline manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

The ideal product of a cultural change process in TAFE was depicted as:

[He/she] must be flexible, and must readily accept change. The market is so dynamic ... Therefore, people's willingness to get out there, risk manage, take the opportunity, wear the consequences if it doesn't work but plan for it to work, and not be so concerned about maintaining an even keel. The kind of person that we want is the person who is switched on, is alert and is willing to take appropriate risks at appropriate times, and move into uncharted waters.
(Business development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Change leadership has both an internal and an external focus. The latter can involve attempting to change public perceptions of the provider and promoting it in new ways:

We are an organisation that ... aims to surprise and delight. We're changing our culture to go for a reputation of excellence, innovation and dynamism. We're doing that because we feel that people have had various fixed ideas about TAFE and in fact everyone calls us 'the TAFE' or attempts to make every TAFE synonymous with every other TAFE. We're wanting to differentiate ourselves.
(Executive manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

People stuff (human resources)

'People stuff is really what being a manager is all about'. The interpersonal dimension of leadership was widely acknowledged as critically important. VET organisations are professional organisations where 'teaching staff and others like to have access':

Then I think there's a whole lot of communication skills that are required within the organisation so that you're visible and are seen to be visible. It's a professional organisation—our teaching staff and others like to have access and understand where their directors are coming from. (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

You certainly have to have really good interpersonal skills, you have to be people focussed. You have to be team oriented (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Boundary spanning

Managers have responsibilities across the organisation. A particular focus of senior managers is managing outwards: 'I think you have got to have an external focus ... I have found the most effective strategy in my school has been to be community based' (Senior TAFE manager, Western Australia). Networking and liaison are critical functions. Industry consultation takes up a large proportion of senior managers' time: 'I need to be out and about dealing with industry and communicating'. Political lobbying and purchaser negotiations (negotiations around purchasing agreements) are significant aspects of the executive manager's job.

Executive and senior VET managers also have an important advocacy role. They need to promote educational ideas, most particularly vocational education ideas, and articulate 'the value of public TAFES'. This role was strongly supported in group training companies: '[Employers] won't try [us] out or follow us, if they don't believe group training is good'. Performing this role involved brokering boundaries between registered training organisations, industry and employers such that a culture of commitment to training is created that all parties share.

Managerial tasks and activities

The senior managerial role was well summarised by an executive manager as:

Project planning, meeting deadlines, and being good on detail. A capacity to deal with the big picture stuff ... to look outside as much as inside ... negotiation and communication skills, being able to market and promote the organisation and to network. (Private commercial provider, Queensland)

Similar points emerged in relation to the tasks and activities integral to performance of their management and leadership role that respondents identified in the survey questionnaire. Senior VET managers were found to be chiefly engaged in the tasks of 'quality and planning', 'finance', 'marketing and development' and 'business development'. Of 355 respondents, 84.8% nominated 'quality and planning' as the major senior management task and 83.9% nominated 'finance'. One respondent added the comment that these tasks were not performed by each and every senior manager 'but across [the] senior group'. With respect to activities in which senior managers are engaged, of 336 respondents, the highest ratings were given to the two items 'promoting a clear vision' and 'building business, industry and community links'.

Respondents were also invited to list tasks and activities in addition to those stated in the questionnaire. Across the range of responses (63 altogether), the major areas addressed were:

- ✧ educational delivery, also described as 'program delivery', 'training delivery'
- ✧ educational leadership, also described as 'facilitating VET education'
- ✧ government requirements, also described as 'government reports', 'government compliance'

- ✧ dealing with government, also described as ‘political strategy and input’; ‘managing DETIR [Department of Employment, Training and Industrial Relations]’
- ✧ maintaining community interests, also described as ‘community/cultural diversity’.

It might be noted that the more traditional roles of VET managers surfaced in these comments. Attention was given not only to educational leadership but also ‘curriculum development’, ‘educational development’ and ‘learning development’.

Current and future roles

Managers surveyed were also asked two open-ended questions with respect to changes in management and leadership role, namely:

- ✧ What 3 major changes to your management and leadership roles have you experienced in the recent past?
- ✧ What will be the main changes to these roles in the next five years?

Across the range of responses (307 altogether), the major recent role changes mentioned were:

- ✧ *strategic focus*: ‘providing strategic direction’; ‘from operational to strategic planning’; ‘external focus’; ‘increasingly strategic role’; ‘decision-making founded on sound information’; ‘move away from operational roles’; ‘improving corporate strategy’
- ✧ *technology and e-commerce*: ‘e-learning’; ‘utilising new technologies’; ‘the impact of ICT [information communication technology]’
- ✧ *accountability and reporting*: ‘increasing accountability in qualitative & quantitative reporting requirements’; ‘managing [government] audit processes’; ‘paperwork overload’
- ✧ *implementation of systems and standards*: ‘managing a quality system’; ‘increased audit requirements’; ‘introducing performance appraisals’
- ✧ *financial management*: ‘growing importance of non-recurrent income’; ‘increased emphasis on pursuit of efficiencies’; ‘more time chasing funding’; ‘sourcing external funds’; ‘securing commercial clients’; ‘seek[ing] more commercial contracts’
- ✧ *focus on leadership*: ‘leading by example’; ‘much less educational leadership, much more leading change’; ‘lead a diverse group of people (as opposed to manage)’; ‘educational leadership to business management leadership (from programs to paperwork)’; ‘much more emphasis on leading the organisation, for example, setting goals’; ‘need to consistently demonstrate leadership’; ‘less direct line management, more portfolio leadership’
- ✧ *human resource development*: ‘shift in focus to development of human resources’; ‘HR strategy’; ‘micro human resource management’; ‘human resource issues’.

Responses from managers based in different types of provider were not greatly different. The issues raised with respect to role change were widely shared. Various projections were made by managers (273 altogether) about their future management and leadership roles. The following list represents a small, random selection of these projections:

- ✧ doing role electronically, being more entrepreneurial (TAFE manager)
- ✧ e-commerce, greater autonomy, greater business focus (TAFE manager)
- ✧ greater emphasis on external relationships and business growth (TAFE manager)
- ✧ greater local accountability, greater community input, less emphasis on industry links (TAFE manager)
- ✧ increased focus on off-campus delivery, partnerships with others (TAFE manager)
- ✧ greater accountability for quality of delivery (very welcome) (Head of campus, TAFE)

- ✧ communications management via e-commerce & virtual campus (Manager, private provider)
- ✧ greater industry partnerships (Manager, private commercial provider)
- ✧ managing partnerships/managing change (Manager, private commercial provider)
- ✧ more administrative work, more record-keeping, more compliance (Manager, private provider)
- ✧ wider planning—strategic partnerships to allow for bigger \$ base & larger scale of operation (Manager, private provider)
- ✧ continuing emphasis on commercial aspects (Manager, group training company)
- ✧ greater specialisation of function, higher level of expertise for each staff member (Manager, group training company)
- ✧ further multiskilling in areas of responsibility (Training manager, group training company)
- ✧ managing funding reduction and maintaining service standards (Manager, group training company)
- ✧ technology, increased competition, market demand (Manager, group training company)
- ✧ greater emphasis on contract management rather than people management, joint operational planning (Manager, group training company).

Comparative analyses: Managers in TAFEs, private commercial providers and group training companies

Senior management and above

A selection of findings from the key respondents to the survey is presented in this section. Drawn from TAFE institutes, private commercial providers and group training companies, these respondents were largely senior managers and above (see appendix A in volume 2 for a full list of managerial titles). Their responses are compared in an attempt to identify variations or differences between respondent sub-groups and to explore the implications of these differences for the senior managerial role. The significance of these differences was determined statistically using chi-square tests of association.

Table 19 summarises the mean ratings by key respondents of challenges with respect to management and leadership which have played a critical role in their organisations in the recent past.

‘Building partnerships with business and industry’ was rated more highly by managers in TAFE than managers in private commercial providers and group training companies. Managers in TAFE were significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view ‘partnerships’ as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. Managers in TAFE were also significantly more likely than managers in the other providers to view ‘expanding access to VET for disadvantaged groups’ as such a challenge.

Managers in private commercial providers were significantly less likely than managers in the other provider organisations to view ‘seeking extra funding’ as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. Commonly, private commercial providers deliver training to individuals on a fee-for-service basis: ‘Students are our clients; they are paying customers’. This may account for the greater emphasis given to competition by managers in these providers—they compete for customers or clients, rather than public funds.

As the mean ratings indicate, ‘delivering off-shore’ was perceived to play a far less critical role in group training companies than in TAFEs and private commercial providers. Managers in group

training companies were significantly less likely than managers in the other provider organisations to perceive off-shore delivery as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. Unlike these providers, group training companies are not commonly involved in international education and training. Accordingly, this finding is not unexpected.

TAFE managers were significantly more likely than the other provider managers to view new technology as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. Given the emphasis in VET on flexible learning, which includes (but is not confined to) online learning, this finding is also not unexpected.

As reported earlier, of the ten given challenges, ‘implementing VET policy’ achieved the highest mean rating. Managers in TAFE were significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view ‘policy’ as a challenge that has played a critical role in the organisation. They were also significantly more likely than managers in these providers to view ‘training on demand’ in this way.

As table 20 indicates, the main issues for key respondents with respect to management and leadership were ‘ensuring targets are met’ and ‘providing strategic focus and direction’.

Managers in TAFE were significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view ‘client focus’ as an important issue. Client focus can be understood as part and parcel of the ethos and culture of private commercial providers. Accordingly, it might be thought that no great need exists in these providers for work along these lines.

Issues around ‘leadership in teaching and learning’ were perceived to be very important by managers in TAFE and managers in private commercial providers. Group training company managers were significantly less likely than TAFE managers to view these issues in this way. The core activity of group training companies is managing the employment and training of apprentices and trainees (not necessarily delivering this training). As a result, this finding is not unlikely.

‘Planning for succession’ was not perceived by managers in private commercial providers to be a particularly pressing issue. This perception may relate to the generally smaller size of these providers and their ‘flatter’ structures. Managers in these providers were significantly less likely than managers in TAFE to view succession as a critical issue.

In line with the findings on new technology reported above, TAFE managers were significantly more likely than other provider managers to view ‘harnessing the power of new technology’ as an issue that is pressing for the organisation.

Table 21 provides a summary of the mean ratings by key respondents of activities with respect to the performance of the senior managerial role.

Broadly in line with the findings on change leadership below, managers in TAFE institutes were significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view leading organisational change as an activity that is important to the performance of the senior managerial role.

Managers in TAFE and managers in group training companies rated the activity ‘developing middle and frontline managers’ more highly than managers in private commercial providers. The former managers were significantly more likely than the latter managers to view this development as an activity that is important to the performance of the senior managerial role. Given that the majority of private commercial providers surveyed were small, this finding is not unexpected. Managers at these levels may simply not exist in these providers.

‘Sourcing new clients’ was rated more highly by managers in group training companies and private commercial providers than managers in TAFE. Managers in TAFE were significantly less likely than managers in private commercial providers to view sourcing clients as an activity that is important to the performance of the senior managerial role.

Table 19: Challenges by key respondent (ratings)

Type of respondent	Partnerships	Access	Funding	'New' management	Delivering off-shore	Technology	Policy	Training on demand	Competition	Restructuring
TAFE/uni with TAFE	4.33	3.12	4.37	3.46	2.69	3.90	4.48	3.87	3.62	3.39
Private comm. provider	3.84	2.05	3.13	3.25	2.39	3.26	4.09	3.53	3.85	2.83
Group training company	4.31	2.52	3.96	3.36	1.31	3.00	3.98	3.70	3.70	3.07
Total	4.17	2.70	3.94	3.37	2.43	3.55	4.26	3.73	3.71	3.15

Table 20: Issues by key respondent (ratings)

Type of respondent	Client focus	Leading teaching and learning	Devolved decision-making	Meeting targets	Balancing entrepreneurship & education	Alliances	Succession	Strategic focus	Technology	Creating shared vision
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	4.14	4.11	3.42	4.35	3.72	3.98	3.41	4.21	4.00	4.02
Private comm provider	3.63	4.02	2.90	4.25	3.98	3.69	2.96	4.10	3.44	3.75
Group training company	3.92	3.43	3.27	4.06	3.45	4.00	3.15	4.04	3.21	3.59
Total	3.94	3.95	3.23	4.26	3.75	3.89	3.22	4.14	3.67	3.85

Table 21: Senior management activities by key respondent (ratings)

Type of respondent	Leading org. change	Promoting clear vision	Developing managers	Product development	Sourcing clients	Strategic initiative	Education leadership	Accountability	Linkages	Obtaining financial resources
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	4.26	4.33	3.78	3.70	3.85	4.07	4.23	4.01	4.26	4.20
Private comm. provider	3.83	4.37	3.23	3.97	4.47	4.01	4.26	3.95	4.03	3.74
Group training company	3.87	4.18	3.89	3.77	4.51	4.02	3.34	3.73	4.31	4.10
Total	4.06	4.31	3.64	3.80	4.17	4.04	4.07	3.94	4.20	4.04

Table 22: Senior management capabilities by key respondent (ratings)

Type of respondent	Corporate vision	Strategic focus	Achieving outcomes	Managing resources	Change leadership	Interpersonal relations	Personal development	Business/entrepreneurial skills	Staff development
TAFE/uni. with TAFE	4.62	4.65	4.69	4.50	4.54	4.55	4.50	4.46	4.66
Private comm. provider	4.57	4.66	4.66	4.50	4.12	4.39	4.58	4.65	4.65
Group training company	4.69	4.53	4.61	4.47	4.29	4.35	4.59	4.55	4.62
Total	4.62	4.63	4.67	4.49	4.36	4.46	4.54	4.54	4.65

In line with issues around 'leadership in teaching and learning' above, the activity of 'providing educational leadership' was rated more highly by managers in TAFE and private commercial providers than managers in group training companies. The highly casualised character of the teaching workforce in these providers may account, at least in part, for this finding. Group training company managers were significantly less likely than the other provider managers to view this activity as important to the performance of their managerial role.

'Obtaining financial resources' was rated considerably less highly by managers in private commercial providers than managers in TAFE institutes and group training companies. In line with the finding on seeking extra funding above, the managers of the former were significantly less likely than the latter managers to view this activity as important to the performance of their managerial role.

Table 22 summarises the mean ratings by key respondents of nine capabilities which recent research suggests are required by senior managers in vocational education and training in order to perform their management and leadership roles (Callan 2001a, 2001b). All items were rated highly. Like the ratings given by respondents overall, the highest rating was given to 'achieving outcomes'. 'Staff development' and 'strategic focus' also rated highly.

The items 'change leadership' and 'interpersonal relationships' achieved significantly higher ratings from TAFE managers than other provider managers. TAFE managers were significantly more likely than other provider managers to view change leadership as a capability they require in order to perform their management roles. Managers in TAFE were also significantly more likely than managers in private commercial providers to view interpersonal relationships as a required management capability. By comparison with other providers, there would appear to be a particular call for skills in communicating the need for change, gaining the commitment of staff to change, and negotiating desired change in TAFE institutes. This finding is consistent with findings from the interview and case data: 'Managing change is an expectation now' (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland).

Frontline management

A good deal of overlap was found between the roles of executive/senior managers and frontline managers. Like executive/senior managers, frontline managers' efforts are increasingly directed outwards. Again like these managers, frontline managers are expected to lead organisationally: 'These days, the requirement put on managers is to have that leadership visionary role'. Frontline managers' roles are both strategic and operational. The balance of time spent on these roles is somewhat different of course.

Frontline management is 'where the rubber hits the road, as far as doing business is concerned'. With the introduction of flatter management structures, managerial roles and responsibilities have accumulated at first-line (frontline) management level: 'Most of the grunt happens at the frontline manager level'. Frontline managerial roles are now so diverse—teaching, administration, operational planning, strategic planning etc.—that work 'just seems to be covering your butt each day of the week':

You either need to have a head teacher with a non-teaching role so that the paperwork and things could be done on time, ahead of time, so that you then have time to sit and plan for the future, what we can change, what is changing, how we can do it, look at courses coming up, see how we can get staff involved, but it just seems to be covering your butt each day of the week.
(Head teacher, TAFE, New South Wales)

My role has changed significantly from the person who used to go out and visit the kids on site to see how they are going, more or less, to more managing the training of the apprentices and trainees. There is a lot more negotiation these days with RTOs [registered training organisations], development of training programs, selection of competencies, signing of a lot

more documentation, a lot more reporting to the State Training Board, so that has taken over from the pastoral care, mentoring, making sure the kids are okay sort of situation.

(Field officer, group training company, Victoria)

Frontline managers in VET spend the bulk of their time implementing system changes such as training packages, the Australian Quality Training Framework and off-campus/workplace delivery. However, their managerial role is not exclusively implementational. They are involved in ‘everything to do with staff’ as well as ‘building up business’. ‘I think the pressures on the frontline manager are to be a bit of everything’ (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

Program managers in TAFE reported that ‘probably about forty, fifty per cent’ of their time was dedicated to developing relationships with industry and the community. ‘My role includes liaising and meeting with industry groups, trouble-shooting, planning, budget forecasting, tendering for projects, and a lot of administrative work’ (Frontline manager, TAFE, Victoria).

Discourses of human resource management were evident in the data collected from frontline managers:

Human resource management, financial management—that’s what we do basically ...

Ultimately, the responsibilities are financial, human and physical resource management.

(Program manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

It is a management role—it’s a human resource management role because that’s really what you are doing, you’re managing people, you’re going through the recruitment process with people, dealing with industrial relations issues, occupational health and safety issues and you’re also looking after the pastoral care of the apprentices and you’re doing appraisals and feedback on performance, and those types of things.

(Field officer, group training company, Victoria)

Among other things, frontline managers in VET function as human resources managers. Part of their job is to integrate individual staff with organisational goals and strategies: ‘mak[e] sure that the future directions for the individuals in the particular unit are within the whole organisation’s strategic direction’.

Accordingly, they can be caught between the initiatives of upper management and the preferences of staff:

[Frontline managers] are unfortunately sandwiched between two layers of management: there is upper management pushing down directives and policies, plans and procedures [which] they are told to activate, implement, organise the operational aspects of, then underneath them, they have a team reporting back to them about the delivery aspects of these instructions and they have to handle everything to do with that at the same time. ... On the occasions I have deputised ... I couldn’t wait to get back to my own job because of the stress.

(Principal lecturer TAFE, Western Australia)

I wouldn’t have their job for quids. [It’s] not an easy job; they have to deal with us, with our everyday issues, and then they have to go to the other side—upper management. They have to take the business plan and implement it and make sure it runs smoothly. There are lots of issues and politics; it is a very stressful job. I have seen a few burn out. They have a lot of pressure on them to perform but then they are there for us too. I think there is a part of them with us and then they have their own criteria to meet. They have to be both strategic and operational.

(Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

A manager has responsibilities across the institute. A lot of that day-to-day organisational work has to be done by staff in a team, not by the manager. So they [staff] would much prefer not to do any administration and have someone else do all the timetabling, the co-ordination of student placements, etc. The reality is, that is now part of staff workload, not a manager’s role. ‘Just let me get on and teach, my job’s just teaching’ is not valid any more.

(Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Frontline managers are placed in a line of authority:

Every time there is a new change to the system, it comes down to the program manager to roll [it] out. (Program manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

They are 'the lieutenants and drivers of all the initiatives'. The specific roles and functions of the frontline manager in TAFE (Program manager, head teacher) were well described in the following:

So now we are having to do mandatory staff performance appraisals three to four times a year, we have to do OH&S [occupational health and safety] inspections, and attend training, and committees, and whatever else. Fee-for-service or commercial work is now a real focus that every program area [has]. We are expected now to set targets at the beginning of the year and not only monitor and achieve those, but increase our business on a yearly basis. And there's a lot of reporting back to the Director on that. ... And certainly from the profile side of things, we are much more accountable for our budgets. Now that is both budgets, that is, making sure that the profile is coming in with the student enrolments and payments. It is also making sure that we are spending according to what is coming in and that we are spending according to the budget that we were given. (Program manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Managers and staff acknowledged a plurality and diversity of roles at frontline level, uneasy allocations of priority with respect to these roles, and the shifting identities that accompany them ('lieutenant', 'driver', 'a bit of everything').

Summary of roles and functions

The roles and functions of senior and frontline managers are summarised in table 23.

It should be noted at this point that the kind of knowledge and skill that is crucial to expertise cannot be made fully transparent (through, for example, statements of knowledge and skill or competency/capability frameworks). The expertise required to perform management and leadership roles in VET providers relies on experiential and implicit knowledge which is not readily recognisable. Nevertheless, the data gave a clear indication of the knowledge and skills that managers themselves perceive they require in order to perform their current roles. It is these that we will report on here.

Business skills

VET managers at all levels were claimed to need business skills concerning planning and budgeting, resource management (for example, allocating resources to achieve outcomes), marketing and business development, and enterprise and entrepreneurship ('looking for breakthrough stuff'). Some of these skills were also perceived to be required in staff:

As we are being pushed more and more to develop our own cash flows, we need to be better business managers. (Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

If I look at the program managers out there, I have to say that the ones who are successful in TAFE have those business capabilities. They are good financial managers, good people managers, and they are good resource managers. It is great that they have that academic background too so that they can understand the issues and challenges that the lecturers and the students face but an increasing amount of their job is the business management side. (Staff development manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

For those who have come through the system, just been promoted from a lecturer upwards, I think the aspects of operating a business need to be approached. (Frontline manager, private provider, Queensland)

I don't like accounting but I know if I understood more about accounting and how our financial systems operated, I would be a little bit better off.

(Frontline manager, group training company, Queensland)

I need the skills to chase business, I guess you would call that sales and marketing. I have an educational background and I am not confident in the management and business side of VET.

I don't feel comfortable to be able to say: 'We are running this course, please pay us your money'. If we need to do that, then we need to develop these skills.

(Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

Table 23: Roles and functions of senior and frontline managers in VET

Managers	Roles	Functions						
Senior managers	Business management and development	✧ Strategic planning and budgeting						
		✧ Financial management and accountability						
		✧ 'Identify[ing] training opportunities'						
		✧ Winning industry contracts						
		✧ 'Preparing tenders, proposals'						
		✧ 'Looking for breakthrough stuff'						
		✧ 'Deal[ing] with the big picture stuff'						
		✧ 'Look[ing] outside as much as inside'						
		✧ 'Keep[ing] a good eye on those performance indicators'						
		✧ 'Creating a vision for change'						
Senior managers	Strategic leadership	✧ Creating readiness for change						
		✧ 'Adding value to what [staff] do'						
		✧ Networking: 'You need to be in constant contact with industry'						
		✧ 'Promoting the college'						
		Senior managers	Change leadership	✧ 'Planning, budget forecasting'				
				✧ 'Tendering writing'				
				✧ 'Tendering for projects'				
				Senior managers	People management (HR)	✧ Administration: 'signing off on requests'; 'paperwork'		
						✧ 'Balanc[ing] the budget'		
						✧ 'Profile management: the courses that are run, the hours generated from [them], the HR allocation to the budgets'		
Senior managers	Boundary spanning					✧ 'Taking people in the direction of the college strategic focus'		
						✧ 'Everything to do with staff': recruitment and selection, training, reviewing staff, appraisals		
						Frontline managers	Financial management	✧ 'Liaising and meeting with industry groups'
								✧ 'Getting out there and generating income'
		Frontline managers	Administration and operational management					✧ 'Resource development for training packages'
								✧ 'Strategic management'
								✧ 'People management (HR)'
				✧ 'Consulting (internal and external)'				
				✧ 'Educational leadership'				

Strategic skills

Strategy emerged as the overarching element in prescriptions for successful management and leadership in VET. Throughout the data, business skills appeared to underscore strategic skills such as setting corporate directions, promoting a corporate vision, providing a strategic focus, undertaking strategic planning, 'looking for breakthrough stuff' and 'be[ing] one step ahead':

You need to have a very good strategic focus, so you've got to be a strategic thinker and you've got to have planning skills. You've got people who support you doing this but you've got to have the capacity to develop and run the organisation from a strategic perspective and then use that strategic framework to establish the contributions the various parts of the organisation are going to make to achieving that.

(Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

[Also, you must be] able to identify training opportunities or initiatives like taking training to a particular industry in the workplace [or] getting a flexible delivery project. It is about going beyond the current delivery performance agreement and operational plan because we also have to be ... one step ahead. We are also looking for breakthrough stuff, innovative and creative ways of doing things.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Strategy 'is more than planning, it is strategic thinking and strategic action':

Bureaucracies are very good at strategic planning but they are not very good at strategic thinking sometimes and strategic action. That is part of the leadership skills that we really need and we are trying to develop in [this region], strategic thinking and strategic action.

Industry now wants people who have leadership and project management skills.

(Manager, professional development, TAFE, New South Wales)

Staff and managers at all levels are involved in strategic action, although not necessarily strategic planning:

The things that we look to [our line manager] for are suggestions of tactics of how we are going to achieve strategies that have been put in place as an institute goal, and to help us keep our focus on those.

(Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

There is strategic planning. [It] happens at upper management level. ... Very few lecturing staff would be included in strategic planning.

(Principal lecturer, TAFE, Western Australia)

The 'portfolio' of skills that strategic managers require was well summarised by this TAFE manager:

One of the key ones is you've got to keep informed. You've got to make sure that when you are trying to influence the organisation, you actually are influencing it in ways that are moving it forward. So you have to keep reading and researching and looking at what the next trends are. And getting that information out to the people who can do things with it. Sometimes you've got to change some of that and customise it for your own organisation. 'Here's the big trend; what might it mean when it gets to here? And what might it look like in three to five years time? Have you got the vision, do you know what it's going to look like when it happens? Have you got at least the general idea?' What often happens is, if you can get things started, the people you get it started with can take it a whole lot further than you can ever imagine and that's when you really have to step out of the way and make sure you are not impeding people.

People management skills

All participants in the study emphasised the importance of 'people skills' in VET: 'You can never have enough people management skills and business management skills'; 'We are working with such diverse groups of people, both employees and clients, so people skills are really critical'. A TAFE manager in South Australia expressed the view that 'people are more important now ... More investment is needed in them and their management'.

Interpersonal and communication skills were perceived to drive people management: ‘The other thing I think that you need to do is, you need to be good at providing feedback to people. Letting them know when they are doing the right thing’.

Communication skills were emphasised time and time again throughout the data: ‘Negotiation and communication skills, being able to market and promote the organisation and to network—all that stuff’:

What we like to see is good consulting skills, so not only listening and building a picture of the client and what their needs are but also being skilled in negotiation to get the best deal out of it for the organisation as well.

(Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Western Australia)

You can’t go anywhere without the people wanting to come with you. I guess it’s leadership. You’ve got to be able to have the support of the people through their recognition of what you’ve achieved or what you’re about.

(Chief executive officer, group training company, Victoria)

Including staff in decision-making—‘making the whole team feel part of the decision-making’—is a very important part of relationship building within VET organisations:

We’re re trying to make sure that it’s all really inclusive and everyone has their say. We have staff meetings at the end of each term, as well as other meetings.

(Frontline manager, private provider, South Australia)

The most important quality is inclusivity, making the whole team feel part of the decision-making, including them in decisions and directions, strategic plans, etc.

(Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Human resource management

Currently, TAFE is caught up in concerns for productivity and accountability: ‘At the moment, there is much more focus on productivity, on accountability, that has come through over the last 3 or 4 years’. Priority was given to skills associated with ensuring the sustainability of TAFEs, including attending to the currency of the skills of those working within them.

In response to the question: ‘What kinds of management development, if any, would benefit frontline managers in VET?’, a frontline manager in a group training company responded: ‘I think human resources probably, and in general terms, how to deal with people, understanding of people, understand that people come from diverse backgrounds’.

Other responses were:

The huge issue at the moment is the human resource management skills, that would be number one. Conflict management skills are a huge issue and they certainly need training in that area. Conflict management skills are tied in with HR skills ... being able to defuse situations and handle people and communicate is one of the biggest areas.

(Principal lecturer, TAFE, South Australia)

There’s probably some industrial relations issues. We really need to have a new look at the whole enterprise bargaining arrangements here, being arranged with our teaching staff—they’re very much based on old models and need some new thinking. I’m not saying we want to be exploiting staff, we just want to be able to use staff in a different way than the current framework for that EBA [enterprise bargaining agreement] which is still largely 21 hours face-to-face teaching. We won’t be doing that in 10 years time—we simply won’t be teaching that way. So the challenge is to get that changed and get the change in attitude.

(Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Compared to how things were years ago, far more of the staff are sessionals or casuals. There is not the funding around that allows you to fund infrastructure, that is having trainers on

staff. You basically have to recruit them as you need them and it is very difficult to guarantee anyone any continuity. This is a challenge in how you manage those people.

(Senior Manager, group training company, Western Australia)

Change leadership

Change leadership was widely held to be an essential part of contemporary management in VET providers:

The big issue is change and getting people to follow. It's change management at the moment insofar as all these new staff procedures that we are bringing in. We have a casualised working staff ... They are very good people but there's an inclination to run in, teach, and run out. I don't blame them for that because they are only paid so much an hour. So trying to get them engaged with the institution and trying to lift the academic standard is a big one.

(Senior manager, private provider, Queensland)

[Frontline managers require skills in] change management: making sure that the future directions for the individuals in the particular unit are within the whole organisation's strategic direction.

(Program manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Change management is constant. [We] need to be adept at that.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

Change management is not an addition now. It's stock and trade for a VET administrator now, it really is.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

In accord with the views expressed in the section directly above, the need for change leadership arises, in part, from the contingent nature of the contemporary workforce. It might be noted here that the casualised working staff who 'run in, teach, and run out' appear to be the focus of change leadership efforts, not the new working arrangements.

Expertise in change leadership was perceived to be required by managers in order to ensure 'different ways of doing things' in the new operational environment. While change leadership emerged as a theme in all providers, it was particularly prominent in TAFE institutes:

There is a need for people to operate at higher levels and with increased competence across a wide range of operational specific skills. The inability to effectively change some people, due to their conscious diffidence to meet the needs of the new environment [needs to be addressed].

(Senior TAFE manager, South Australia)

As a manager, I've been change-managing staff into different ways of doing things and educating community and industry to understand that [curriculum] is no longer modular and structured, but now it is skills and competency-based. It's totally changed managing teachers and curriculum.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Queensland)

For many TAFE managers, it would appear that the greatest hindrance are the people who have been working in the system for a very long time and see no personal advantage for themselves in changing as they are due to retire or resign within the next five to ten years. These staff were seen as significant obstacles to reform.

Essential capabilities

Table 24 summarises the mean ratings by the survey respondents of nine capabilities which recent research (Callan 2001a; 2001b) suggests are essential for those who manage training organisations. Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agreed that they require these capabilities. All items were rated highly on the 5-point scale where ratings of 4 represented 'agree' and 5 represented 'strongly agree'. As one respondent declared: 'All of these capabilities are so essential'.

Of 342 respondents, the highest rating was given to the item 'achieving outcomes'. 'Corporate vision and direction' and 'strategic focus' were also rated very highly.

Table 24: Senior management capabilities

Capabilities	Mean
Corporate vision and direction	4.64
Strategic focus	4.63
Achieving outcomes	4.68
Developing and managing resources	4.48
Change leadership	4.35
Interpersonal relationships	4.45
Personal development	4.55
Business and entrepreneurial skills	4.54
Staff development and empowerment	4.62

Other capabilities mentioned by respondents (21 altogether) as required capabilities included:

- ✧ ability to identify educational trends
- ✧ apply excellence in corporate governance
- ✧ auditing skills
- ✧ cultural awareness
- ✧ developing line succession
- ✧ a focus on quality culture
- ✧ developing teamwork
- ✧ doing whatever it takes to meet objectives
- ✧ finance skills and expertise
- ✧ financial analysis
- ✧ financial genius
- ✧ government compliance—making it simple
- ✧ improved knowledge and use of e-business
- ✧ patience when dealing with government VET sector
- ✧ project management
- ✧ remembering what education is about
- ✧ see clearly and assess the situation the company is in currently
- ✧ survival skills
- ✧ transparency in all dealings.

The capabilities required of frontline managers were reported to be the same as those for senior managers ‘but to a lesser degree’. Comments such as the following were not uncommon: ‘The abilities that these officers require are similar to what is required for a senior position but with a more hands-on feel’. Emphasis was placed by respondents on frontline managers developing ‘a sense of the whole operation, not just their teaching area/training responsibilities’. The view expressed in the statement ‘capacity to be a generalist as well as frontline manager’ was widely shared.

Making managers and leaders

Similar issues concerning leadership and management development were raised by managers. In essence, the majority of managers perceived that there is a serious shortfall in VET organisations

relating to management and leadership development. As a regional manager from a group training company commented: 'I believe there needs to be a significant increase in training for practitioners in this field'. These findings match the findings of recent research (Mitchell & Young 2001). While shared by all providers, this perception was particularly pronounced in TAFES:

[Development] needs are being met in a very *ad hoc* way by involvement in committees, attending seminars, workshops etc. to keep up to date.

(Executive manager, group training company, Western Australia)

[There are] considerable needs. [I] would like to see all managers [to] be made aware of their skills and what they haven't got and what they should be trained up in. We should offer training but we won't train our own staff for free. A standard of qualification level should be set—in communication, financial skills etc. These should be minimum standards that are met.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Victoria)

There is a huge professional development requirement across the board from senior managers to teaching teams and that's not being met. For business managers, it's leadership; for the teachers it's team development, teaching strategy and assessment.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

A staff member in TAFE made the useful point that managers in VET need to have skills in management and leadership before they are placed in management and leadership roles, rather than acquiring them on the job:

I would like to see future managers have the skills before they get here, rather than acquire skills while they are here; rather than moving by default from a position within the area into management, [they should have] those skills before they get in there, so they are ready to go.

(Principal lecturer, TAFE, South Australia)

Preferred processes of professional development

The trend towards customisation of training (Mitchell & Young 2001, p.41) was reflected in the data on managers' preferences for processes of professional development. In relation to strategies for management and leadership development, managers expressed clear preferences for practical, work-related learning:

I prefer the hands-on approach. I need to be able to see it, hear it, and do it. ... I need to put it in place and try and work it out for myself.

(Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Western Australia)

Action learning, experiential learning, so that you can contextualise knowledge on the job. We have professional networks set up.

(Senior TAFE manager, Queensland)

[I prefer] tailored programs using on-the-job experience that is relevant and valuable.

(Executive manager, TAFE, Victoria)

[I prefer] high-level participation in seminars and workshops as opposed to being lectured to. Action learning programs, case studies, scenarios and group work. Working with peers and others who are aspiring to the same heights, and networking with people who have already achieved that high level.

(Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Western Australia)

I prefer professional development in terms of courses, mentoring, research, action learning and exchange or work shadow with other managers.

(Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Mentoring; project-based training—not where you go into a classroom and be lectured [at]; case study research and discussion.

(Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

They favoured group problem-solving approaches (virtual and 'real') where networking opportunities were provided.

I like work-shopping with group activity, group problem solving. ... Expanding your network of people in similar positions who are being presented with similar problems is a great resource. (Frontline manager, group training company, Western Australia)

Involvement in seminars and workshops to encourage networking and the ability to share ideas and talk to peers and colleagues. (Executive manager, group training company, Western Australia)

I would prefer to meet with other managers from this and other institutes in a non-formalised, non-agenda-ed meeting and talk over coffee ... Sometimes in this job you can feel that you are working in isolation. A mentor would be useful. I feel I need someone to bounce ideas off who can understand management issues from my level. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Victoria)

A staff development manager in TAFE commented on the success her institution was having with a particular strategy for management development—'one-on-one consultancy' or 'just-in-time training':

Whilst we find that it is quite resource-intensive, it is having a much better effect than group training. Just-in-time training, on the job as needed. Those sorts of initiatives have worked well.

The preferences of the managers surveyed (301 altogether) with regard to processes of professional development are summarised in table 25.

Table 25: Processes of development

Development processes	Mean
Self-directed learning	3.30
Work-based projects	3.55
Structured personal support (e.g. mentors and coaches)	3.51
Workshops/seminars/conferences	3.50
Formal courses	3.23
Informal learning (e.g. networking with peers)	3.66
Programs tailored to need (i.e. mix of options above)	3.86

As can be seen, all items rated relatively highly on the 5-point scale where ratings of 3 represented 'interested' in the stated processes of development and ratings of 5 represented 'extremely interested'. Managers expressed a clear preference for 'programs tailored to need' and 'informal learning'. While interested in formal courses, senior managers sought 'available relief for study'. No significant differences with respect to the professional development preferences of managers in TAFE institutes, private commercial providers and group training companies were found.

Other processes of professional development mentioned by managers (11 altogether) included:

- ✧ access to flexible ways of higher learning
- ✧ chat rooms for peers
- ✧ reading and discussing trends
- ✧ short courses by various organisations.

Current development arrangements

The data provided plentiful evidence of programs currently being delivered to ensure managers' and leaders' continuing development. A professional development manager in a TAFE explained what his institution is doing in terms of management training in this way:

Essentially, within this organisation we've started a massive cultural change program which was actually started about three or four years ago, and the idea at the time was to use a top-down approach and try to change the culture at the top which was a fair amount of a dismal failure to be quite honest. So then we took on a different approach where we thought what we need in this organisation is a critical mass of people with a new way of thinking, as in a new culture. Now we recognised that this was not going to come from a leadership of 12 or 15 people, so we developed a target group of 320 frontline managers and we put them into a five-day training program, intensive training program, which was called VET Managers of the Future.

The VET Managers of the Future program attempts to shift frontline managers out of the role of 'professional victim' into 'the problem-solving role'.

Now that program is, what it is about is that it works on a model that is a triangle and a circle and the circle is problem-solving and the triangle is a hierarchy. [It involves] looking at the hierarchy and seeing how, when people, the longer they are in the hierarchy, they learn to be helpless, they learn to be dependent, then when they learn helplessness and dependency on the hierarchy they become professional victims and then they blame the hierarchy. So what we are trying to do with this program is break them out of that into the problem-solving role. Now the movement from one side out of the triangle into the circle is probably 8 or 10 years, and we recognise that.

The program 'deals with pushing the boundaries, being able to challenge, it gives basic business skills, things like that':

So what we end up with is a frontline manager, who is hopefully pushing the boundary, pushing their campus manager in terms of change and innovation and empowerment, and we have pressure on those managers now from the team members doing the same thing.

Programs such as these are set within a strategic management model. Successful strategic management attempts to institutionalise ways of thinking (or mindsets) that will enable people to anticipate and implement change as appropriate:

The 'Challenging VET Managers' program was designed for the team members of the VET managers ... and the philosophy of that program was twofold: to continue the mindset shift ... and to give them the skills to challenge their immediate managers.

Professional development: Senior and frontline managers

There were discernible differences in the data with respect to the professional development requirements of executive/senior managers and frontline managers. Generally, executive/senior managers expressed a preference for learning 'in a practical context'. This might involve a combination of on-the-job learning and formal courses or, simply, networking with peers. Emphasis was placed on experiential learning:

I think an MBA would be very useful to a person in my role. I don't think I get this on the job alone. I am all for formal qualifications in a practical context and at my level I think an MBA is the next step for me and the same goes for other senior managers in VET.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Personal professional development is important. You have to personally be of a frame of mind that you need to keep an open mind and always be prepared to learn. And I think that comes also from mixing with peer-type people rather than doing traditional courses—for want of a better term.

(Chief executive officer, group training company, Queensland)

I think the ... senior manager's job is an experience job, both in time served and the variety of experiences.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

The general manager of a group training company promoted the idea of 'cross-pollination' between education and industry: 'An educationalist could take a sabbatical in a manufacturing plant, car plant or some company ... where they could look at the structure of a private enterprise company

that deals with the vagaries of world trade'. People from industry could spend some time looking at academia in an attempt to determine whether 'we can create a more meeting of the minds'.

Frontline managers, most particularly program managers in TAFE institutes, were reported to need business skills development of a relatively specific kind:

Because they come from an academic background, the type of development they need is the add-on to the business: how you manage your budget, how you manage people, how you go out and get fee-for-service, how you communicate with industry. ... They also need research and marketing skills so they are not making assumptions based on their own experience, [rather] they are based on definite need.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

New to their managerial roles, they were claimed to be interested in 'skills to do their job': 'What we are finding in our coaching roles, is that people want skills to deal with a particular critical incident or individual'.

The preferred processes for conducting this skill development were 'just-in-time training, on the job as needed'; in other words, one-on-one consultancy with a mentor or guide. A frontline manager in a private provider spoke of 'those obscure things' that are best learned through 'some sort of a mentor situation' in this way:

I think in terms of professional development, it's those obscure things: you don't necessarily just develop someone into being that. Sometimes it's coupled with giving people the knowledge of how to go about it, not so much that you'll turn them into someone who is a fantastic networker all of a sudden, it's how do you go about creating those networks, how do you ... deal with difficult situations but maintain a positive attitude. It's those really hard things that often you have to work with and it comes not so much through attendance at a one-day workshop. I would like to see ... some sort of a mentor situation, the sort of thing where you can gain a lot one on one. And you might have several mentors. I think that's probably as useful as any set programs *per se*.

More generally, the type and style of management and leadership development required by individuals and by VET organisations was found to be largely situational. The prior history of the manager and the particular requirements of the organisation have to be taken into account:

I'm not sure that I would gain a lot by going through a management development program other than the personal contacts. Also, I realise the time that's involved in those sorts of programs. I think for other people it would certainly be useful. I've actually been on the other side of the fence, where I've been developing executive leadership programs for people in universities and following up with them as to how useful it was in learning to manage their staff and lead. I think for people who haven't had some sort of developmental program, it gives them, particularly if they are education focussed, it gives them that link to business thinking.

(Frontline manager, private provider, Queensland)

The other thing we are trying to do is deliberately set up a network to nurture the next wave of managers, project co-ordinators, leaders, which you can only do in a general sense. What we are hoping to do there is support people to undertake some postgraduate courses, particularly online.

(Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Programs of leadership and management development were designed to support and deliver the strategic priorities of the provider. These priorities were different in different providers which may explain the interest in 'tailored programs' expressed in the survey questionnaire (see table 25).

Sustaining valued leadership in VET

Sustaining valued leadership in VET is not only a matter of strengthening the skills that leaders bring to their roles and tailoring programs of leadership development to meet their developmental needs, but also of supporting the leadership initiatives they are already taking place in the VET

sector. Despite widespread evidence of the growth of business management practices where one provider competes with another for an ever-decreasing pool of public funds, many VET managers supported the development of more collaborative models of management where different providers ‘work[ed] together on a range of activities’:

I think there’s some challenges about increased collaboration between institutes and moving from the competitive model that we were in, and forced into by governments, to now go back to something far more collaborative and work together on a range of activities and a lot more resource sharing and information sharing. If someone’s doing something well at [X institute], well we need to utilise some of that stuff. That’s coming back—a lot of us went through that very competitive period—whilst I quite enjoy that, I don’t mind that, it does keep you on your toes and does give you energy—from a public TAFE perspective, it’s not a system perspective, you’re just talking about a [particular institute] perspective. So if we succeed, I think it’s our whole sector that succeeds—I think that’s the way the philosophy needs to go in the future.

(Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

The comments of this senior manager suggest that a sustainable future for VET might lie more in collaborative activity than competitive activity. VET institutions can operate through collaboration in a competitive market situation and, in so doing, create conditions where ‘it’s our whole sector that succeeds’. Change literature points to the need for a collaborative culture as a precondition for successful change to occur (see for example, Fullan 2000; Hargreaves 1994; Hargreaves et al., 2001).⁵ It is commonly argued that cultures of collaboration strengthen people’s sense of common purpose and enable them to interact assertively with external pressures for change.

In a recent paper on the professional identity of teachers in Australia under conditions of significant change, Judyth Sachs comments that: ‘There is now some evidence suggesting that the market is no longer the appropriate metaphor nor structure in which education policies and practices develop’ (2001, p.159). Our evidence suggests that many managers have reservations about the appropriateness of a market structure in vocational education and training: ‘There are a lot of RTOs [registered training organisations] out there ... If we are going to be competing, we should be competing against them, not ourselves’ (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia). A senior TAFE manager in Western Australia stated that ‘there has been a shift [in Western Australia] towards co-operation rather than direct competition’:

The whole sector is currently in a state of flux. The new government has ordered a review of TAFE colleges and this could/will mean a more collaborative approach to education and training, using a shared services model. There may also be amalgamations of TAFE colleges.

Managers in various states are considering, and initiating co-operative arrangements as a basis for producing alternative approaches to the provision of VET. These managers supported a sectoral or systemic approach, rather than competitive, individual, institutional provision:

Sharing resources across the sector is an important one. You can share ideas and all that sort of thing. When it comes down to sharing intellectual property, sharing resources, some people get a little bit ‘Oh, you know, that’s what gives us our cutting edge’ is often what they say. In other words, that gives them their competitive edge.

(Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

VET leadership in the past has ... been very much focussed around pitch [one institution against another] institution [make them] scared of each other, competitive with each other.

(Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

I’ve really come to the belief that sharing is the only way to progress ... and that’s possibly why we are looking at so many partnership arrangements. ... So it is almost like that model is coming in now.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

⁵ According to Hargreaves (1994, p.245), ‘the principle of collaboration has repeatedly emerged as a productive response to a world in which problems are unpredictable, solutions are unclear, and demands and expectations are intensifying’.

Some TAFEs don't talk to each other, but I see TAFE as a whole rather than as a geographical delivery unit. I've done a number of co-operatives with TAFEs that are joining our area. So a leader needs to be able to think, 'If I can't do it myself, how can I do it, to meet a market need?' Sometimes you can't do it by yourself but you can do it in co-operatives.

(Senior TAFE manager, Queensland)

I have gathered 3 or 4 smaller RTOs [registered training organisations] [together]. We share the work we have to do and standardise it amongst ourselves, except change the names and so forth. That's the only way that I have seen to break this enormous [administrative] burden that we have. We have a local education and training network which is geared towards marketing the region as an education hub. Now, we are trying to use that network to help the smaller RTOs.

(Senior manager, private provider, Queensland)

Collaboration within competition: Networked relationships

The emerging interest in 'a more collaborative approach to education and training' may have as much to do with strategy and pragmatism—'building up business'—as with the development of a new form of governance in the VET sector.⁶ Networked relationships are a contemporary trend (Marginson 2000, p.25). Among other things, they provide organisations with ways to expand locally and globally:

The stuff that I think is more beneficial in building up business for my unit is out there, talking to people and networking. I mean tomorrow we are off to ... and all over the country ... We will end up with probably fifteen traineeships out of that trip.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Our vision is partnership with industries and communities. It is the external constraints that don't always allow us to be in partnership with industry and the community itself. It is that conflict between what needs to happen and what does happen, what needs to happen to get by on a day-to-day basis and what needs to happen on a more strategic level.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

A staff member commented that he personally had 'had to deal with building alliances and partnerships across the VET and the university sector'. A network-based approach to organisation may be emerging in VET (Office of Employment, Training and Tertiary Education 2002). These developments suggest that we can expect to see VET personnel reconstituting their power at the centre of alliances formed within and outside their organisations. A more distributed model of leadership may be emerging where VET managers and staff and other managers and staff work conjointly on shared tasks and problems:

Within our organisation we have leaders at a variety of levels. I don't believe the only leader is the Chief Executive Officer.

(Senior manager, group training company, Victoria)

Well you get leaders right across the college, you get leaders in students, staff who take on particular roles.

(Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

An executive manager of a TAFE institute spoke of the involvement of her executive management team in 'getting out ... to communities', in this way: 'We have a one-day meeting and the other day we spend out in industry. ... Over the twelve months we will have probably visited about 60 industries'.

Gleeson (2001), commenting on the impact of reforms in the further education sector in the United Kingdom, argues for the emergence of a culture of 'collaboration within competition' at college level. The principals and senior managers involved in his study mediated changing education policy agendas by creating joint co-operative ventures and links. 'The danger is one of

⁶ According to Marginson and Considine (2000, p.7), governance embraces 'leadership', 'management' and 'strategy'. 'Governance is concerned with the determination of value inside [institutions], their systems of decision-making and resource allocation, their mission and purposes, the patterns of authority and hierarchy, and the relationship of ... institutions to the different ... worlds within and the worlds of government, business and community without'.

treating principals and senior managers as victims of funding led or managerialist reform, rather than strategic interpreters of policy in the reconstruction of FE practices at college level' (Gleeson 2001, p.194). As discussed earlier, there was some evidence to suggest that a similar cultural change is taking place in Australia.

Good leadership encourages linkages

Leadership in the VET sector is matter of looking outwards to the industries that VET organisations serve. It is also a matter of learning from other educational sectors:

Good leadership clearly encourages linkages between the organisation and the area or the region and therefore the industry that it serves. That is very important.

(Staff member, TAFE, New South Wales)

I think one of the things we have to be a bit careful of in the VET sector is not getting a silo mentality. Not thinking that the only things that are relevant to us are the things that happen in VET. We have to be prepared to look at the university sector, look at what's happened there, and look at the schools sector, take those kind of things on board as well. I think we actually need to make sure that we are getting some depth to what we understand, so encouraging people to do management training, or go off and do a postgraduate degree [is important].

(Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

The need to link and look outwards would appear to be a new imperative in VET: 'The VET sector, of all the three sectors, tends to be a little more inward-looking'. A number of managers maintained that the VET sector should assert itself more, should get 'recognised for what it is', should show 'how important the technician and para-professional level is in supporting the nation':

We have to do a lot more in marketing vocational education [and] training, within the government. We have not got the profile that schools or universities have got. ... Yet there has been research done showing how important the technician and para-professional level is in supporting the nation. We are not getting that message across.

(Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

I certainly think that in vocational education and training there is no room for the traditionalist tunnel vision-type person. I think those days are long past. I think what we need now is people with vision. We need people who have passion and I think there has to be a belief in what we are trying to achieve.

(Chief executive officer, group training company, Queensland)

Amongst politicians, there's a fairly good understanding of schools and a very good understanding of university, but a poor understanding of TAFE. ... So part of the leadership issue is ... having a much broader perception about the whole VET sector ... and making sure that we're raising the awareness of that in politicians' eyes and redressing the role of public TAFE.

(Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Sustaining valued leadership and management in vocational education and training is also a matter of 'do[ing] a massive amount of work to create ... perceptions that VET/TAFE teaching is a worthwhile profession to attract people into it. I just think that's one of the major issues facing us' (Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria).

Organisational analyses

The contemporary VET organisation: Constructs and identities

Six key constructs of organisation were found as part of the analyses of the data collected on organisational practices of management and leadership.⁷ In eliciting these constructs, particular attention was given to answers provided to questions in the survey questionnaire concerning *challenges* that VET providers have faced in the recent past and *issues* in relation to management and leadership when dealing with these challenges. The data were not reducible to a stable label such as 'VET organisation'. Rather, our analyses uncovered dynamic and ambivalent aspects of organising in response to shifting contexts. While typical of all organisations sampled for the study, some aspects were more pronounced in some organisations than others. For example, some VET providers were more business-oriented than others.

The constructs shown in table 26 have implications for the roles and identities of leaders and managers in VET (for example, business leader, strategic manager, organisational learning leader). While it is useful for many purposes to distinguish these constructs, their integration in practice should not be overlooked. One construct can 'leak' or 'bleed' into another. Different constructs can co-exist, for example: 'We need to be more accountable because the bottom line is we have to make money or at least break even'. The link between the accountable organisation and the business organisation was especially well established in providers which rely on government funding.

Table 26: Constructs of organisation in the exercise of leadership and management

Organisational constructs	Description
The business organisation	An organisation that delivers a certain level of activity against certain targets: 'The bottom line is we have to make money'.
The strategy-focussed organisation	An organisation concerned to manage the interface between the external environment and internal areas and characteristics: 'We have identified key priorities'.
The accountable organisation	An organisation that delivers accountabilities: 'As one audit finishes another one starts'.
The lean organisation	An organisation with no surplus staff, 'flat' management structures and highly casualised: 'Staff are working longer hours. It's getting harder to keep morale going'.
The learning organisation	An organisation dedicated to the ongoing improvement of its existing operations: 'We are trying to ... set up a network to nurture the next wave of managers'.
The network organisation	An organisation that forms robust relationships with business, industry and the community: 'Our vision is partnership with industries and communities'.

The business organisation

Increasingly, VET providers are assuming the form of business organisations, with VET managers constituted as business managers responsible for delivering a certain level of activity against certain targets. The principal emphasis in the data overall with respect to the character of the new VET organisation was business:

I am also preparing tenders, proposals etc. I really work at developing a significant number of paying projects or initiatives ... [Also, you must] be able to identify training opportunities or initiatives like taking training to a particular industry in the workplace [or] getting a flexible

⁷ Other constructs were apparent in this data (e.g. professional organisation), however, meanings concerning them were not made frequently. Consequently, these constructs did not constitute key constructs.

delivery project. It is about going beyond the current delivery performance agreement and operational plan because we also have to be ... one step ahead. (TAFE)

Fee-for-service or commercial work is now a real focus that every program area [has]. We are expected now to set targets at the beginning of the year and not only monitor and achieve those, but increase our business on a yearly basis. (TAFE)

We are more expensive than some people but we don't believe they are getting the same outcome. That's how we sell our business. (Private commercial provider)

Students are our clients; they are paying customers. (Private commercial provider)

We are moving into a more business development approach. (Group training company)

The organisation is constantly seeking further business. (Group training company)

Findings from the survey questionnaire (342 respondents altogether) demonstrated the dominance of two constructs of organisation—'business organisation' and 'strategic organisation'. Thus, given a list of capabilities that managers at senior level are said to require in order to perform their managerial roles (Callan 2001a, 2001b), the highest ratings were given to the items 'achieving outcomes', 'corporate vision and direction' and 'strategic focus'.

To date, little empirical research exists on the extent to which VET providers in Australia are operating within a business model and the implications for vocational education of this operation. The notion that education can be considered a business or industry in the same way as any other economic entity is, of course, contestable. As Hawke notes: 'There is a growing body of experience that suggests that traditional business approaches are not always appropriate to educational provision. The primacy of rigid annual budget arrangements, for example, has largely negated longer-term planning of the sort that a developmental function such as education requires' (Hawke 2000, p.11). It remains to determine whether strategic business approaches are any more appropriate to educational provision than traditional business approaches. Certainly, balancing business performance with educational function would appear to be an ongoing issue in many VET organisations:

When I first came here, there was a lot more ready dollars available for helping young people who weren't job-ready, so that we could run programs to get those people up to speed—people who were homeless, people who had no qualifications, people who were depressed, for whatever reason [people who were] long-term unemployed. We were running a lot of programs way back then and a lot of them were focussed on self-esteem, confidence-building, setting goals, all of those sorts of things, and they were fantastic. I actually really felt that we could make a difference to people's lives. Now, I think it is unfortunately a bit of a numbers game, that we don't have those dollars available, and so employers are always looking for the best candidate and they don't want 'problem children'.

(Staff member, group training company, Victoria)

The strategy-focussed organisation

Strategy emerged as the overarching element in prescriptions for successful management and leadership in VET. 'Strategy generally concerns issues that stretch beyond the annual budget period' (Viljoen & Dann 2000, p.6). As noted earlier, references to terms such as 'strategic priorities', 'strategic goals', 'strategic objectives', 'strategic planning', 'strategic action', 'strategic focus', and 'self-managing work teams' were spread widely throughout the data: 'So we have those strategic priorities at the institute level and that is now built into every team. So each team in their annual planning has to identify what they are going to do about ...' (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia).

With respect to a question in the survey questionnaire about the pressing nature of various issues concerning management and leadership in VET organisations, the highest ratings were given to the items: 'providing strategic focus and direction' and 'ensuring targets are met'. The significance of strategy in VET organisations was supported fully by the telephone interview and case data. Thus, a

senior manager of a TAFE provider spoke of the necessity of TAFEs having ‘the capacity to develop and run the organisation from a strategic perspective’. Similarly, a senior manager in a group training company reported a need for ‘generic management skills with particular emphasis on the planning and visionary stuff. Basically, all the things identified by Karpin’.

A significant constraint with respect to strategic leadership and management is that ‘money is allocated on a twelve-month basis’. How does an organisation assemble resources to achieve its future goals in circumstances such as these?

We are still trying to get some funding for apprentices that we trained in 2000 and we won’t get final funding for our apprentices and trainees who have trained this year. If we are lucky, we will get it by about April next year. (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Strategy-focussed organisations seek to make strategy everyone’s daily job: ‘In our performance management with our program manager we have to come up with a business idea for fee-for-service. It is a big ask when you have everything else to do’ (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia). Managers are required to give close attention to detail: ‘You’ve got measures of what you’re trying to achieve and you are referring to those and monitoring those and changing what the organisation has to do so that you can achieve those activities’.

The accountable organisation

The accountable VET organisation is an organisation caught up in ‘compliance and increasing levels of bureaucracy in VET’. The systems of audit and quality assurance that accompany contemporary business and administrative practice tend to define the accountable organisation: ‘There is now greater accountability, a demand for performance management of the business. Government expects greater outcomes. Targets are clearly drivers of action’ (Senior TAFE manager, South Australia).

Private providers, including private not-for-profit providers, were the most constrained by what one manager called ‘[looking] in the rear view mirror’:

Initially my role was teaching half the day and administration half the day. I was lucky to find jobs in administration. Now with all the different changes that all vocational education and training organisations have had, we have huge amounts of admin. ... There has been a swing from class facilitator to far more of the management of overseeing the Department of Training’s paperwork for trainees. (Senior manager, private commercial provider)

You spend so much time naval gazing, looking backwards [looking] in the rear view mirror in lieu of looking forward. All accountability, all reporting aspects, are based on historical performance, not on what you are going to do in the future.

(Executive manager, group training company)

As one audit finishes another one starts. (Frontline manager, group training company)

We have become more administrat[ion] focussed rather than working on business opportunities and addressing challenges. (Executive manager, group training company)

As small business operators, these providers do not have staff to deal readily with ongoing changes to VET policy as well as other government policy which is perceived to have created an administrative burden. ‘The accountability factor is particularly onerous in businesses that are small’ (Senior manager, private commercial provider).

The situation of these providers is well illustrated in the two comments which follow:

At one stage, I could devote a full week to my students and management of my company. Nowadays, I would devote 50% of it having to deal with idiots. They introduce good things, but the way they do it!! Like, the AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework] has now changed which requires a substantial change by VET providers in the way we do things. [We

are] having to introduce paperwork trails that are unbelievable. Student files used to be an inch and a half thick. Now they are up to six inches thick

(Frontline manager, private provider, Queensland).

We have just ... been through two government audits simultaneously—five auditors were here! One works for the user choice contract, one is for the RTO and quality assurance. So to do what we do, we have to be a quality-assured place and that means we have got to fulfill all of those systems reviews. And at the same time, because we are ever-changing, what happens is, unless we have got the processes properly documented, things can fall through the cracks, if you like. So we are constantly looking at trying to introduce appropriate systems which enable us to do what we have to do.

(Chief executive officer, group training company, Queensland).

The demand for accountability in VET organisations has meant that managers 'have a more hands-on role than what would be preferable'. Concepts and practices of accountability can be in tension with concepts and practices of strategy. As a senior manager from a group training company commented: 'From an organisational point of view', complying with legislation and regulation 'has inhibited us from moving forward'.

The learning organisation

Without exploring in detail the concepts and practices associated with the idea of the learning organisation (see for example, Field 2000, pp.162–6), it is worth noting the trend to sponsorship of organisational learning by VET managers. Various learning processes were promoted in VET providers, including informal learning, formal training and human resource development (for example, processes of career self-direction such as individual professional development plans). 'There's a lot of opportunities for professional development but for a manager it's a question of time' (Frontline manager, TAFE).

It was very evident that an increasing premium is being placed on staff training and professional development which is aligned to the strategy and directions of the organisation:

[A good VET manager is] taking people in the direction of the college strategic focus.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

We have been trying to ... have managers and staff recognise that their primary loyalty and responsibility is to the institute. That may mean that sometimes what they want to do as a team doesn't fit the direction.

(Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

From the data, organisational learning and development appeared to be oriented to productivity and performance, the creation of the high-performance workplace. In practising teamwork, job rotation and 'synergy between personal missions and work challenges and organisational achievement' (Business Council of Australia 2000, p.1), TAFE institutes would seem to be good examples of such workplaces:

To create a culture of teamwork, we have tried to have PD that is, where possible, administration support staff mixed with managers [and] educational staff. Of course, we have targeted programs when it is appropriate.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

We create expressions of interest on an annual basis for staff to apply to do another person's job. We have a joint executive which identifies the twenty-five management-type jobs and we develop a suitability list, people are interviewed to help with the matching, and then when someone takes leave, there is job rotation available.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

We have a couple of other champions who are leading the way in online learning, so where they show an interest and a passion, then we try to clear the way for them to do it. That is shared, so we have academic forums where we have a particular theme and staff who are doing some interesting work on that theme, it might be online learning, we will have an

academic forum and staff from across 4 or 5 teams who deal with working online will give a presentation and that is open to all staff. (Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

VET managers at large are supporting their staff ‘and adding value to what they do’:

I am also looking at developing staff. There is core business going on and you are supporting your staff and adding value to what they do. (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

I hold training sessions for my staff in time management and team building. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Queensland)

[I am involved in] developing others in my role so that they can fill in for me if they need to. (Frontline manager, group training company, Western Australia)

If mentoring programs are put in place effectively, this is one of the best developmental activities you can do. It is probably also the most cost-effective. The only way you can pass on [the] history and development of the organisation is through mentoring, not training courses. (Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

TAFE institutes in particular are restructuring their workforce in order to maximise the use of staff skills through, for example, the implementation of self-managed work teams: ‘The organisation has moved away from the command control [approach] to more of a self-managed business type approach’. Self-managed work teams are required to manage within overall corporate requirements, however: ‘I think there has been a realisation within the institute that tends to be totally self-managing is a myth and has led to isolation’.

The lean organisation

Organisational structures are changing throughout VET organisations. In line with structural change in organisations worldwide, there has been a decrease in the number of middle management positions. Management and leadership are increasingly being seen as the responsibility of a wider range of staff. In the words of a senior TAFE manager: ‘Structure is becoming flatter and flatter. [We’ve experienced a] change from operational to true leadership’.

The notion of ‘true leadership’ is contestable from the point of view of staff who are ‘working longer hours’ and ‘going through hell’:

Organisationally, people are working harder and stress levels are rising. (Frontline manager, group training company, New South Wales)

The staff are overworked and I can’t give them time off. And because of lack of funding, we can’t pay overtime. (Middle manager, TAFE, Queensland).

People are working very hard. Staff turnover is very high—33%. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

It’s very hard for the lecturers at the moment. They are going through hell at the moment actually. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Staff are working longer hours. It’s getting harder to keep morale going. People are fine for a while but can’t keep that up. They lose enthusiasm. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

They don’t seem to have enough teachers and they quite often use teachers from one section, or who are skilled at teaching one job [and] just bung them onto another course because they don’t have somebody available. (Staff member, TAFE, New South Wales)

Most sections run on a high level of part-time staff. [Teachers] just go around with a crate, you know, with all their stuff in it or a basket or a box and that is their mobile office. (Staff member, TAFE, New South Wales)

We all still teach our full load and then we have to go and do our site visits. I have a colleague who is in the bush five days per week travelling between 2000 to 3000 km a week (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia)

Leading and managing at senior level within a lean organisation comes with its own complications: ‘Lots of things need to be done but with a flatter structure you find that a lot of your time, when you’d really like to be working on the high-level more strategic stuff, you keep getting pulled back into that operational “sign here” type stuff’ (Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales).

The network organisation

Plentiful evidence was provided of the importance of inter-organisational arrangements in VET. Thus, of the various ‘challenges that training organisations have had to face in the recent past’, as listed in the survey questionnaire, ‘building partnerships with business and industry’ was rated very highly. Managers and staff commented frequently on their increased involvement in relationships and partnerships with industry and other organisations: ‘We have a lot more relationships with other training providers in alliances and collaboration than we used to’ (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia).

The contemporary trend to networked relationships (Marginson 2000, p.25) was quite evident in the data overall. Providers are now moving in a common direction to achieve solutions to complex problems that they would be unable to achieve alone. Networks and alliances between industry and VET providers are becoming increasingly important to the way in which business is conducted. Networked relationships were of a formal and informal kind. It appeared from the data that private providers especially emphasise the importance of industry contacts towards ‘keep[ing] ahead of change’. Every effort is made in these providers to develop these contacts and maintain them.

The quotes that follow illustrate the different dynamics of partnership formation in public and private providers in VET. The commentators in each case are frontline managers.

You have got to have the sort of attitude of wanting to work with industry. All of the rest of management and leadership is all required, but I guess I would say that the key things are really these days—and even with commercial work—you really need to have that mindset and the attitude that you are happy to go out and you are happy to put proposals to people and look at what their needs are. ... A good VET leader from now into the future is going to be those people that are wanting to work with industry. (Public VET provider TAFE)

I think you’ve got to keep ahead of change, of what’s happening in the industry. Tourism and hospitality change on a daily or weekly basis. You need to be out and about, have your contacts out there. You need to change as change happens. I’m fortunate that I’m on all the fax streams of the airlines and I know a lot of middle management people there, so as soon as something happens, they’ll tell me right away. If something happens tonight, I can change my delivery method tomorrow. (Private commercial provider)

In terms of developing partnerships in training, especially with industry these days, you need to really listen and you need to understand that it is their business and what you are trying to do is to support them in their business. That is a difficult concept because in the back of your head you are thinking this does not quite fit into the mould, structure or systems. You need to keep pulling it back and encouraging them to look at it differently to come to some place in the middle. (Private not-for-profit provider, group training company)

Organisational leadership: Dimensions

In the section which follows, we explore different dimensions of leadership and management that could be clearly identified from the data. In keeping with the work of Caldwell (2001), these dimensions might be thought to form part of a blueprint for leadership and management for sustainable improvement in the VET sector. We take it that organisational leadership and management are multi-dimensional concepts and practices. Different dimensions shift in and out of view, depending on system changes and the priorities of the organisation. As already discussed, leadership and management were closely related in the data. The relationship between the two was generally one of interplay.

Strategic leadership

Strategic leadership emerged as the main concern of the managers participating in this study. Strategy largely concerns what an organisation does. Caldwell, writing in the context of school leadership, defines strategic leadership as: ‘seeing “the big picture”, discerning the “megatrends”, understanding the implications, ensuring that others can do the same, establishing structures and processes to bring vision to realisation, and monitoring the outcomes’ (Caldwell 2001, p.10). This view corresponds with the ‘VET view’:

I think of the role of leadership as being a role which provides a broad picture view, where a good leader will have a good understanding of the global direction. They will be the people who will help to formulate the strategies for the institute as a whole and how we are going to manage our business as we move into the future. I think these are the types of people who need to be visionary, who need to have the courage to take on new goals, to have the strength of personality to be able to enthuse other people. In that sense, I would also be looking to a leader to have a commitment to engage with people the whole way through the levels of the institute, so they are not distant but engage with people to help bring those things in to line.

(Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

Strategic leadership is set within corporate and business discourses. The strong trend towards a market orientation in VET means that corporate strategy—‘What is our business?’—and business strategy—in simple terms, being first or quickest or best—take priority in VET providers. ‘There has been a noticeable shift actually from the education leader to the business leader’. In essence, leadership in VET providers is a matter of managers staying focussed on strategy so that they’re ‘not just driving operational stuff’:

You’ve got to have the capacity to develop and run the organisation from a strategic perspective and then use that strategic framework to establish the contributions the various parts of the organisation are going to make to achieving that ... You’ve then got to be able to work with the team of senior executives you’ve got to bring them on board. They’re part of that process, but you’ve got to keep working with that group and keep them focussed on strategy so that you’re not just driving operational stuff, you’re staying focussed on your key directions. So there’s leadership in the sense of your team and developing the skills of that team so they can do that work.

(Senior manager, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Cultural leadership

Both government training organisations and non-government training organisations are caught up in a ‘business culture’:

It is a business culture these days. You have to survive, with all the non-government training organisations or the other RTOs, they have access to ANTA funds the same as TAFE does. It’s not a closed shop any more so it’s ‘get better or get out’.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

The biggest problem that we have from a financial point of view always is cash flow. We are solely relying on numbers through the door, so if we are struggling for that, we will struggle financially. We have to focus heavily on collecting fees otherwise we are out of business because we have no other income.

(Executive director, private provider, South Australia)

Issues surrounding cultural change and the leadership of this change were ‘hot issues’ in public VET providers and group training companies of the community-based kind. Managers often have to balance parallel and contradictory processes in order to effect cultural change:

In a public service environment where we have public accountability, we need that ability to create a culture of risk management and risk assessment when you are trying to operate in a business model but with the constraints of the public service.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

When you get teachers who say: 'I'm here to teach, I'm not a salesman, I'm not this or that, these budget concerns are not mine', guess again! They are. ... From a leadership and management position, that's a major cultural issue. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

Responsive leadership

Responsive leadership in VET involves understanding the requirements of clients and acting appropriately in response to them. VET leaders are required to respond to the expectations of various stakeholders including governments, industry and the community. Behaving responsively was thought to involve various qualities:

To be more responsive to industry, you definitely need to have a strong base in training and education, as well as very sound links with the broader community and industry and the various stakeholders. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

A good VET manager knows how the students, job seekers, companies, apprentices and trainees feel about the services you are providing. (Frontline manager, group training company, Western Australia)

To me, the big issue is how do we engage the students and how do we keep them engaged. (Senior manager, private provider, Queensland)

Many managers in TAFEs reported that they were 'doing a lot with partnerships with industry at the moment'. A 'whole change in the delivery culture' was claimed to have taken place in some teams, with 'probably 80–85%' of training being delivered in the workplace.

Educational leadership

The commercialisation of VET providers was well summed up by one manager who reported a shift in role from 'educational leadership to business management leadership—from programs to paperwork'. As the national survey established, issues around 'leadership in teaching and learning' were very important to managers (most particularly, managers in TAFEs and private commercial providers). The focus of these issues however, was different in different providers. In private commercial providers, educational leadership was perceived to be central to a client-oriented approach. In TAFEs, 'increasing tension between educational leadership and "business" functions' was reported.

The data demonstrated that educational issues are competing for attention with business issues in providers that rely, to a large extent, on government funding:

Because of the funding and the fact that we are having more pressure placed on us to develop our own business, therefore create a lot of our own income with fee-for-service and that sort of thing, there ends up being a lot more tension between how you are going to make money and how well you are going to deliver. (Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

A good deal of the VET manager's time these days is chasing the next dollar. So rather than spending time on delivery, delivery almost becomes a small part of the process. You have almost had your win when you get your funding and the delivery always becomes secondary, which is a fairly sad reflection on the sector. What you end up with is the most successful training providers are the ones who invest in very good tender writing skills, rather than invest[ing] in very good training and delivery skills. (Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

Commitment to the concept and practice of education was evident in all providers:

A good VET manager still has to be someone who has an educational agenda, but who is also in tune with the realities of being a good manager. It is a combination of educational leadership and management competencies. (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

As a director and program manager, you have to have an academic background. I don't think generic management is enough to assist in the academic delivery aspect of the job.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

A good manager knows all the stuff of normal business processes. [However], it is important to keep a link with teaching. The system breeds the notion that this isn't important. You have to live within the system but it is hard to. I still consider you can fight the good fight.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Victoria)

I think ultimately there is a need for greater educational leadership. Certainly in my role here, having the ability to understand how lecturers see it, helps [enable you] to move them through a process of change. If that's not there and you just become an administrator or someone who has no idea, it's very easy to set that 'them and us' situation up.

(Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Queensland)

We have to sell the company as a business, a provider of labour, but I think the true sense of it, it's still an education provider.

(Staff member, group training company, Queensland)

What appeared in question was who exactly should shoulder responsibility for this leadership and how it could be resourced.

The tendency in private commercial providers is for senior managers to take a strong interest in this leadership, for a range of reasons, including the fact that staff are employed more for their industry expertise than their educational experience:

Being the only trained teacher, much of my role is teaching people how to teach, classroom management etc. ... If a student has a difficulty, then a lot of my management role is dealing with that.

(Senior manager, private provider, Western Australia)

Apparently, the tendency in TAFEs is to assign this responsibility to academic staff:

We rely on our principal lecturers and advanced skills lecturers to provide leadership to the lecturers now. Our program managers have a more managerial, accountability, business [focus and role].

(Professional development manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

One thing that has changed [here], and it has to change even more, is the idea that leadership does not rest with the manager. Because we are so dispersed and because we are relying on a casualised workforce more and more, leadership can be from the part-time teacher.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Concerns were expressed in public VET providers that there had been a 'movement from delivery management concerns to financial management':

[Current changes to management and leadership roles have] meant less emphasis on students and student welfare and more emphasis on financial outcomes. There is less emphasis on the quality of the outcome and more emphasis on attracting students in the beginning. So the resources are being put into the front end rather than being distributed over the whole learning process.

(Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

The system has lost sight of the education focus. You must come in on budget, not [worry about] how good the education is for the students.

(Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Across the state, there are sixteen institutes and only three or four that have managed to cross the line in the last few years in terms of finances. And a number have huge quality problems, for example, teachers who aren't qualified.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

[The] AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework] is a big issue. We have neglected the educational qualifications of our staff for too long and it is catching up with us.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

By contrast with the above, other TAFEs are now achieving a good balance of 'business and education, dollars and quality'. While being 'very business orientated', they have not lost sight of

‘the education side’: ‘We have a leadership that is extremely focussed on the bottom line and they are now, in the last year, coming back to focussing on quality of delivery as well’ (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland).

Issues in common

One of the striking features of the issues facing organisations in the VET sector in Australia is that these are issues in common. There are important similarities between practices of management and leadership in public VET providers and private VET providers. These similarities flow particularly from various policy initiatives (fiscal, regulatory and audit) that have been taken in VET. It appears not to matter a great deal whether the organisation is a public VET provider or a private VET provider: common issues are apparent. ‘Marketisation is working its way through the public sector, and the funding mechanisms and accountability requirements of contemporary government reach across both public and private institutions’ (Marginson & Considine 2000, p.245). Furthermore, private sector businesses are forming alliances and developing ways of collaborative working which are perhaps more familiar to the public sector.

It would be wrong to argue that there are not significant differences between, for instance, a small TAFE institute in regional Australia and its large, metropolitan ‘counterpart’, or, a small private commercial provider and a small, not-for-profit group training company. There are however, overarching similarities. While TAFE managers are more caught up in changing the culture of their organisations than other VET managers, all managers face similar challenges and require similar skills.

Private commercial providers

Private providers would appear to have a distinct advantage over public providers inasmuch as all members of staff work actively toward making industry contacts and improving industry links. As an executive manager of a private provider in South Australia reported, the provider and the employer enter into a relationship of mutual obligation where the former delivers skilled people and the latter employs these people. A strategic alliance—a symbiotic relationship—develops between these two:

Over a number of years we have built up rapport with a lot of employers, so much so that we assist with placement of students. They know the skills a person coming from here will have, and they approach us directly, rather than advertise ... In the areas of multi-media and fashion, we have gone out and made contact with various organisations ... Some of the instructors who have had some industry contact have introduced us [executive managers] to them. I am happy for people here to feel that could part of their responsibility. We all have to make that good impression.

Leading these partnerships is a matter of sharing responsibility for industry linkages with the staff or taking their lead. The purpose and point of these partnerships is transparent to all involved: ‘[Education’s] got to be based on what the industry workplace wants. I believe industry needs to be involved in all education, not just the VET sector ... We try and make sure we keep those industry contacts up’.

From the data it appeared that private providers were very client-focussed and concerned to deliver effectively. Profitability was a key objective, but it was also the means to a more fundamental mission: to maximise the growth potential of the provider and secure its long-term future: ‘We want to be one of the main competitors of TAFE’. Private training organisations ‘don’t sacrifice quality’: ‘There is a balance in trying to provide a quality service and at the same time remaining competitive’ (Frontline manager, private commercial provider, Western Australia). The executive manager of the private provider above stated that he told staff that he would prefer to make less profit if it meant that education was well delivered:

[Managers] need to believe that the profitability of the organisation is a secondary consideration and the education has to come first. But they need to keep both in mind and there is a fine line between them. I have always told staff that I would prefer to make less profit if it meant that the education was delivered. But I can't have the education delivered in the best possible way and then make a loss. I have to deliver it the best we possibly can, being mindful of financial and resource restraints.

Government-funded organisations

Changes to management and leadership roles have occurred for all three types of VET manager sampled. Managers in TAFE institutes and group training companies however, appeared to be presented with particular challenges. Some typical responses from managers in these organisations with respect to their roles and the complex character of these roles were:

Increased responsibilities, pressure, diversity and complexity. Constant changes: nothing is the standard process any more. (Senior TAFE manager, Queensland)

There's a lot more pressure. Change is ever constant. There's an increasing desire to improve customer service standards, meet targets, time and financial. A pressure for innovation—finding new and better ways of doing things. (Frontline manager, TAFE, Queensland)

Managing information as well as people. [The role has] become complex in dealing with government and employers so it's a whole process of managing information and legislation. [I am] no longer managing a group of people. Whole systems need to be managed ... quality assurance, benchmarking. Ten years ago these systems were in but not to a large degree. (Senior manager, group training company, Queensland)

There has been an increase in complexity of the different things you have to manage. As an RTO you need to meet the various quality requirements for that. Because we are actually delivering on [a] number of contracts in different areas, like group training and job network, each of those contracts have their own quality requirements. The biggest challenge for managers is trying to balance the requirements of the various contracts that they are being offered ... It is not just about delivering the training, it is about how you report on the delivery of training. (Senior manager, group training company, Western Australia)

It would appear from the data that commercial training providers don't actively seek government assistance. They choose to deliver training to private individuals on a fee-for-service basis, and, in so doing, avoid the costs that attach to accounting for how government money is spent.

We don't do traineeships and we don't do anything that is government-assisted. We don't have the man- or woman-power to do a lot of the things that go to tender, we don't have those extra staff members to do that. It is impossible when we want to make our focus our students. (Frontline manager, private commercial provider, South Australia)

User choice: it's not cost-effective for us to take those sort of people [apprentices, trainees] on ... We have tried to make something that we believe will be better for the community, for us too I suppose, but also for the community and future skills base that they have available. (Senior manager, private commercial provider, South Australia)

Managing and leading VET providers in different states

There was some evidence to suggest that changes have been more marked in some states than in others. As the executive manager of a large Victorian TAFE explained:

I have been involved with three TAFE institutions in two states. Things vary in the different states. The Victorian institutions have more independence and therefore a wider range of responsibilities. There has been a change in productivity and a change in the organisational culture ... There has been a cutback in staffing. [We] needed to be effective and respond positively while the TAFE system was being run down and amalgamations were taking place.

Having to raise more revenue. Amalgamation posed a very significant challenge—a leadership challenge. There is also in Victoria a requirement to work out enterprise agreements with staff—enterprise bargaining.

Of the five states sampled, there were significant similarities in the issues raised. Across all states, ‘greater levels of accountability’ was a common theme in organisations that run on government money. In Queensland, as a senior TAFE manager commented, if audit requirements are not in place, ‘we lose our registration and there are also financial penalties’.

It was clear that government institutions which have been functioning as autonomous institutions for some time have adapted to the new operating environment and are now reviewing its benefits. In some states, notably, Victoria and Queensland, some of these institutions appear to be moving beyond what one senior manager called ‘that very competitive period’ where one institution was pitched against another and encouraged to compete directly. In other states, notably New South Wales, where public service values are still very strong, the business model of management looked less well embedded at the level of the organisation. Accordingly, in the view of one senior manager, ‘NSW TAFE is regimented and unionised, reserved and conservative. There is no risk taking which is to the detriment of the organisation’.

Conclusions

Introduction

Leading a VET institution is not an easy task, especially when managers feel they have to envision and plan for the future in an increasingly uncertain environment: 'It is very difficult to try and plan ahead when we live in such uncertain times'. Public providers, in particular, are trying to get to grips with the demands of institutional autonomy; market pressures; new management practices, most particularly private sector competitive practices; reduced funding; contestable funding; an increase in student numbers; changing patterns of demand for courses; and increased expectations from industry and individual employers (for example, the trend to 'employment-based training'). Work practices in VET providers have changed significantly. The following characteristics of the contemporary workplace are well evidenced in these providers:

[W]ork is organised around fluid teams rather than static departments; organisational decisions are made in cross-functional meetings as well as within management ranks; all employees are responsible for quality control; flexibility is central to all operations, processes and employee understandings of their work; employees are appraised and evaluated as job descriptions have given way to performance management agreements; and finally ... there is increased communication ... as employees are informed and inform.

(McIntyre & Solomon 1999, pp.7–8)

Changes are occurring at a number of levels, simultaneously. Changing work practices, including changes to the composition of the workforce (casualisation) are proving a significant challenge in VET providers, most particularly at frontline management level. Changing organisational practices, including changes to the character of VET organisations (for example, the shift to the business organisation, the growth of the network organisation) are also proving a significant challenge, particularly for executive and senior managers.

Findings

This section serves to summarise the findings from the study at large. Initially, three broad 'forces' that influence the practice of leadership and management in VET providers are identified. Short summaries of findings in relation to the four original research questions are then made.

Findings from the study at large

Strategic focus: Public sector reform

A particular view of management and leadership has achieved prominence in vocational education and training providers. The overarching element in prescriptions for successful management and leadership in these providers is found to be strategy.

A clear trend to increased adoption of strategic management processes is discernible in VET providers: 'We didn't have that strategic focus that we needed to work out where our growth was

going to come from. It was quite apparent to myself and others that our growth was going to be through our off-campus area which we've now developed to the point where it is now just exploding' (Executive manager, private provider, Queensland). In combination with competition in the training marketplace, the flattening of organisational structure appears to advance this trend.

Strategy concepts can be seen as an attempt to move providers from traditional management models (strictly functional, operational or task-based approaches) to one which is more businesslike and corporate in orientation and direction. They can also be seen as an attempt to build key private sector practices into the operation of the public sector. As Viljoen and Dann (2000, p.33) explain, the origins of strategic management lie in the private sector. This management provides a framework within which the aims of the public sector reform process (for example, improved efficiency and effectiveness, improved responsiveness, improved accountability) can be achieved. Like most organisations, VET providers now face the challenge of securing their long-term future in a climate of ongoing economic and social change. The incorporation of strategic processes is perceived to be an important means of coping with environmental change and, thereby, improving long-term performance.

The key changes to management and leadership in VET providers include:

- ✧ a strategic focus and approach
- ✧ an external focus
- ✧ a client focus
- ✧ an increased emphasis on change leadership
- ✧ an increased emphasis on accountability and reporting
- ✧ the devolution of administrative/management responsibilities to staff and teams
- ✧ the strengthening of management functions, including target-setting processes, performance indicators, and appraisal.

Given the corporatisation of public sector organisations,⁸ public VET providers and managers in these providers are under particular pressure to adapt and change. The kind of organisation that adapts well is the strategy-focussed organisation. Accordingly, the kind of manager required in this new type of organisation is the strategic manager: a person who keeps one eye on operational matters and the other on the 'big picture': 'I always say to my own staff, I will get involved in detail enough to understand it, but then, from a management point of view, I have to look forward ten years ... My value to the institute ... is for 10 to 15 years out, all the time looking forward' (Frontline manager, TAFE, New South Wales).

The discourse of strategy has a specific relation to corporate business (see Knights & Morgan 1991, for genealogical analysis of corporate strategy). The discourse of corporate strategy is characterised by the 'planned relationship between the market and the internal characteristics of the organisation' (Knights & Morgan 1991, p.257). In the data collected, the terms 'external environment' and 'market' tended to be used interchangeably, indicating the power and influence of the market approach in VET.

Environmental change: The primacy of policy

The external context of VET providers has changed dramatically over the past decade: 'There has been an increased focus on the external environment as opposed to the internal environment in terms of products and services offered for sustainable future business' (Senior manager, TAFE,

⁸ Corporatisation occurs when 'public sector production is reconstituted in the form of a private commercial company under the control of the ... relevant public authority. ... [T]he enterprise remains within the public sector and within the reach of government policies' (Marginson 1993, p.199).

Western Australia). Strategic management and leadership has been adopted as an adaptive response to managing increasingly complex businesses in an increasingly uncertain external environment.

Changes to management and leadership roles have occurred for all three types of VET manager involved in the study. Furthermore, the nature of these role changes is broadly similar. The similarities flow largely from the policy initiatives (fiscal, regulatory and audit) that have been taken in the VET sector. While many of these initiatives are welcome, they appear to act as constraints:

One of the tensions ... have as a Director is the accountability and at the same time being faced with either government-mandated or department-mandated decisions so that we have liabilities within our budget and we don't have any control over that.

(Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

They introduce good things, but the way they do it! Like, the AQTF [Australian Quality Training Framework] has now changed which requires a substantial change by VET providers in the way we do things.

(Frontline manager, private provider, Queensland)

Our vision is partnership with industries and communities. It is the external constraints that don't always allow us to be in partnership with industry and the community itself.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

External drivers for change arising from policy interventions and initiatives have a considerable influence on management and leadership in VET providers. This is not to say that VET managers cannot influence government policy. They are in fact passionate policy actors: 'Being able to be in a situation where you can influence the Department of Training as to the way they go, is really important'.

There are at least seven powerful external forces that providers must contend with today:

- ✧ *the changing work environment*: 'People are working harder and stress levels are rising.'
- ✧ *the changing policy environment*: 'One person [is] employed full time now working ... [on] Commonwealth Government compliance issues, tax issues, paperwork issues, forms.'
- ✧ *increased administrative responsibilities*: 'We've got checklists for just about everything that exists.'
- ✧ *reduced government funding*: 'You have this vision for where your organisation is likely to be with absolutely no certainty that there will be any funding support for that.'
- ✧ *increased expectations regarding corporate connections/industry links*: 'You have got to have the sort of attitude of wanting to work with industry.'
- ✧ *increasing use of technology and e-commerce*: 'Reusable learning objects is one of the newer kinds of directions in online learning.'
- ✧ *increasing expectation with respect to links with other sectors, agencies and organisations* e.g. universities, schools, adult community education providers: 'We have a lot more relationships with other training providers in alliances.'

Marketisation and beyond

One of the striking features of the issues facing organisations in the VET sector in Australia is that these are issues in common. There are important similarities between practices of management and leadership in public VET providers and private VET providers. As Marginson and Considine note: 'Marketisation is working its way through the public sector, and the funding mechanisms and accountability requirements of contemporary government reach across both public and private institutions' (2000, p.245).

While VET providers have not moved beyond a 'market' phase—for example, they continue to be concerned with efficient use of resources, closer management and measurement of outputs and performance, greater autonomy to compete for clients and greater accountability to government

and other stakeholders—many VET managers support the development of more collaborative models of management where different providers ‘work together on a range of activities’.

Managers have reservations about the appropriateness of a market structure in vocational education and training: ‘There are a lot of RTOs out there. ... If we are going to be competing, we should be competing against them, not ourselves’ (Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia). Managers in various states are considering, and initiating, co-operative arrangements as a basis for producing an alternative approach to the provision of vocational education and training. These managers support a sectoral or systemic approach, rather than competitive, individual, institutional provision: ‘I think there’s some challenges about increased collaboration between institutes and moving from the competitive model that we were in, and forced into by governments, to now go back to something far more collaborative’. These developments suggest that we can expect to see more and more of a different kind of provider taking shape in the VET sector, one that is reconstituting its power at the centre of alliances formed both within and outside the organisation.

Findings with respect to the research questions

In this section we present findings with respect to the original research questions. A short summary is made of each of the following:

- ✧ the changing nature of the roles and functions of managers and leaders in VET providers
- ✧ the expertise required to perform these roles
- ✧ management and leadership development
- ✧ sustaining valued management and leadership in VET.

Heightened responsibilities, expanded roles

The role of the VET manager has changed considerably over the past few years. There is a much more complex range of functions requiring greater breadth of expertise. The breadth of issues experienced by managers and staff is in line with the changing demands of the contemporary workplace and the pressure to implement external initiatives and improvements. The role of the VET manager is extremely complex and increasingly broad. It depends on balancing the demands of external pressures, internal priorities and individual and cultural values and commitments.

Senior managers are found to perform five broad leadership and management roles:

- ✧ business management and development
- ✧ strategic leadership
- ✧ change leadership
- ✧ people-centred management
- ✧ boundary management.

Unlike frontline managers whose roles are more dispersed, senior managers’ roles are relatively integrated. Senior managers also experience more autonomy in their roles than do frontline managers.

Senior managerial roles: Dual focus

Senior managerial roles are both externally and internally focussed. More time is given to the external focus which is seen as more strategic. Among other things, it involves being ‘out on the road a lot talking to stakeholders’. The internal focus includes leading middle/frontline managers and assisting staff ‘in implementing the college’s strategic directions’. The executive and senior VET manager ‘rarely sits at [a] desk for more than a day and a half a week’. ‘I am paid to look outside as much as inside’.

Frontline managerial roles: Dual focus, dual roles

Frontline managers not only have a dual focus; they also perform a dual role: one part strategic and the other part operational. They manage on the edges (Mintzberg 1997), on the interface between strategy and staff, core work and commercial work, business activity and educational activity. 'People like myself are a supervisor and a manager rolled into one. I also have to work at both a strategic and an operational level'. The impact of change has been felt more fully at frontline management level than executive or senior level: 'We place a huge strain on our frontline managers. They really do all the work for core business'.

Frontline managers perform six broad leadership and management roles: financial management, administration and operational management, strategic management, people-centred management, consulting (internal and external) and educational leadership. Ultimately, their responsibilities are financial, human and physical resource management (Program manager, TAFE). Their educational leadership role is particularly well established in some providers (private commercial providers) and some states (New South Wales). In other providers (TAFEs) and other states (for example, Western Australia) this role appears to be passing to the academic staff.

Business management skills, people management skills

The expertise required to support the practices of management and leadership in VET providers is similar for senior and frontline managers and managers in public and private sector providers. The expertise required for a first-line management position is 'similar to what is required for a senior position but with a more hands-on feel'. Frontline managers in publicly funded VET providers are increasingly required to perform managerial rather than educational/professional roles: 'My role has changed significantly from the person who used to go out and visit the kids on site to see how they are going, more or less, to more managing the training of the apprentices and trainees' (Field officer, group training company, Victoria). Accordingly, the peak expertise they need to resource their changed role is business expertise.

VET managers at all levels, are found to need business skills concerning planning and budgeting, resource management (for example, allocating resources to achieve outcomes), marketing and business development, and enterprise and entrepreneurship ('looking for breakthrough stuff'): 'Managers in RTOs have a large business responsibility. This has increased over the last few years. It's a huge thing in the sector ... Business management skills, people management skills make for a good VET manager' (Senior manager, private commercial provider, Victoria).

Frontline managers require expertise in 'the add-on to the business: how you manage your budget, how you manage people, how you go out and get fee-for-service, how you communicate with industry. ... They also need research and marketing skills' (Professional development manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

In total VET leaders and managers require expertise in seven domains of activity:

- ✧ *business management*: resource management; project management; contract management (for example, user choice); information systems management and maintenance (for example, implementing systems and standards) planning and budgeting; tendering; monitoring processes and procedures, targets and goals; utilising new technology and conducting e-business
- ✧ *business development*: identifying business opportunities; looking for 'breakthrough stuff'; sales and marketing; promoting the organisation
- ✧ *strategic leadership*: discerning trends; future-casting; setting corporate directions; providing a strategic focus; promoting a shared vision; undertaking strategic planning; engaging in strategic thinking and taking strategic action
- ✧ *change leadership*: creating a vision for change; creating readiness for change; building work cultures that support change

- ✧ *people-centred management/human resource development*: interpersonal relations; communicating information; consulting with staff; consulting with ‘clients’; including staff in decision-making; creating a learning environment for staff that encourages innovation; providing opportunities for development of individuals and teams; mentoring and coaching; conducting performance appraisals including providing feedback on performance and assisting with career planning; acknowledging efforts of staff; staff recruitment and selection; negotiating outcomes with a team; defusing difficult situations; dealing with industrial relations issues; supporting the work of teams
- ✧ *education management*: co-ordinating and scheduling teaching teams; co-ordinating courses and staff meetings; monitoring learner management plans⁹
- ✧ *boundary spanning*: forming productive alliances; consulting, liaising and meeting with industry and community groups; public relations; articulating the value of vocational education.

Work-related learning

There is a serious shortfall in VET organisations in the area of management and leadership development. Work-based learning or work-related learning, of a formal and informal kind, is the preferred means of development. Work-related learning approaches enable organisations to implement tailored solutions to specific business problems and conditions.

Four broad approaches to leadership and management development are endorsed by VET managers:

- ✧ *work-related learning of a formal kind*: mentoring, coaching, work shadowing, deputising, project based learning, action learning, experiential learning and one-on-one consultancy
- ✧ *work-related learning of an informal kind*: non-agenda-ed meetings, support groups, ‘chat rooms for peers’, self-directed reading and ‘be[ing] somewhere in another organisation [to] gain a perspective on how other leaders operate’
- ✧ *seminars and workshops*: participants drawn from different sectors to ‘cross-pollinate’, share ideas and talk, network and problem-solve, using case studies, simulations and scenarios as support
- ✧ *traditional courses and short courses*: from various organisations which provide ‘formal qualifications in a practical context’, for example, Master of Business Administration.

Teamwork is a particularly important feature of managerial work at all management levels. For example, senior managerial tasks are not performed by each and every senior manager ‘but across [the] senior group’. Management development needs to take teamwork into account. Developmental processes might well involve work-based projects, for example, action learning groups, but should not be exclusively ‘in-house’.

Senior managers in TAFE expressed the view that it is important to ‘network outside the system’. ‘We don’t network in the VET sector because there is quite a bit of competition between private providers and TAFE. We don’t network much in TAFE because there are a lot of non-successful TAFES out there. [It’s] better to network with successful organisations’ (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland). Strong management, it seems, grows out of cross-sectoral activity where information from ‘the broader world and the business community’ can be gathered and used to support innovation and creativity in VET. Other recent research (Tyrrel 2001) supports these findings.

⁹ In public VET providers, staff are increasingly required to perform an education management role, for example, timetabling, co-ordination of student placements. Managers at all levels in private commercial providers are expected to demonstrate expertise in education management (and educational leadership).

Staff training and professional development

Efforts are being made in VET providers to provide for a new generation of managers: ‘The other thing we are trying to do is deliberately set up a network to nurture the next wave of managers, project co-ordinators, leaders’ (Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia). An increasing premium is being placed on staff training and professional development, most particularly development which is aligned to the strategy and directions of the organisation: ‘[A good VET manager is] taking people in the direction of the college strategic focus’ (Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia).

Not surprisingly perhaps, a strategic approach to management development is popular in VET providers:

[There are some people] who we might choose not to develop because we find that we have to be more strategic and sometimes you can’t teach an old horse new tricks. So we are better off using our resources and helping that section by actually developing the leadership and skills in another person within that section, rather than focussing all the leadership and management training onto the manager.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

You have to look at your business ... and work out what you are going to reskill and redevelop and what you are going to buy in. The decision to maintain a high casual workforce is part of buying in those skills to service those particular customers, and that is what we can do.

(Professional development manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

It is widely acknowledged that succession planning is a pressing issue for leaders and managers in TAFE (Tyrrel 2001; Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training 2000). ‘The emergence of “new recruit” sessional teachers who see their role as business consultants, with a portfolio of jobs across several Institutes and in industry’ is central to this issue (Office of Post Compulsory Education and Training 2000, p.72). Given the ‘high casual workforce’ and the high level of staff turnover (reported to be running at 33% in one TAFE college), there is no guarantee that the existing pool of people in management positions will be replaced.

A senior TAFE manager expressed the view that we need to ‘do a massive amount of work to create ... perceptions that VET/TAFE teaching is a worthwhile profession to attract people into’. In the view of a senior manager in a private commercial provider, this work entails revaluing the profession of VET teaching by upgrading the entry requirement which, currently, is at certificate level: ‘[The practitioners] haven’t had much teaching experience. They’ve done a cert. 4 in workplace assessment training which is a crock of shit. Anyone can do it. Fred Nerk can do it and he’s never stood up in front of a class in his life and he gets the tick that he’s done it. That’s all you have to have in the VET sector’.

VET managers are of the view that managers require experience in education and training in order to successfully take up managerial positions in the VET sector: ‘As a director and program manager, you have to have an academic background. I don’t think generic management is enough to assist in the academic delivery aspect of the job’ (Senior manager, TAFE, Western Australia). While managers can be ‘bought in’ from outside VET, this creates tension: ‘We have a director of the area who is my manager, who has come in from outside VET in Australia, working in government in Australia, and he has a lot of good ideas and he is purely commercial-focussed. But whilst there are many good values in that, it causes tension’ (Staff member, TAFE, New South Wales).

Maintaining valued management and leadership in VET appears problematic at frontline management level. Where is the next generation of first-line managers to come from should ongoing staff choose not to take up management positions and the ‘high casual workforce’ choose not to enter the teaching profession? Existing frontline managers are under enormous pressure: ‘On the occasions I have deputised (as a frontline manager), and I have done this six times in the last five years, after about one month, I couldn’t wait to get back to my own job because of the stress’ (Principal lecturer TAFE, Western Australia). As witnesses to this pressure, some staff, at

least, are disinclined to undertake a management job: ‘They do a hell of a lot of work; it is not my thing ... I wouldn’t do their job, ever’ (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia).

Implications: Tensions and dilemmas

Given the heightened responsibilities attaching to managerial roles and the shortfall in VET with respect to management development, there is a clear need for greater leadership and management support. In planning for the future, attention also needs to be given to creating pathways for prospective managers and leaders, most particularly at frontline management level. Processes of change leadership and change management—the preferred processes for effecting organisational change in VET providers—may not secure the support of staff to develop their potential for management and leadership or their commitment to staying in VET.

Writing in the context of school education reform, Fullan (2000) claims that education institutions would be well advised to focus on reculturing: the process of developing professional learning communities within these institutions. The existence of collaborative work cultures (or professional learning communities) makes a difference to individual learning and student performance. Change literature points to the need for a collaborative culture as a precondition for successful change to occur (Fullan 2000; Hargreaves 1994). It is commonly argued that cultures of collaboration strengthen people’s sense of common purpose and enable them to interact assertively with external pressures for change.

More broadly, the ‘strategic turn’ in the management of VET organisations might be thought a welcome departure from a time when VET managers functioned more as managers than leaders. ‘In the past, TAFE has been well managed but poorly led. The system is complex and is managed well as far as managing resources and assets’ (Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales). The strong emphasis on strategic leadership in the data would suggest that a new model of manager is emerging, a manager who both aspires to and is required to lead: ‘These days the requirement put on managers is to have that leadership visionary role’.

In this section, we discuss some implications of this development and draw out key tensions and dilemmas surrounding it. Following Day et al. (2000, p.134), the tensions tend to be those over which VET providers and their managers have little choice or influence. In the case of dilemmas, possibilities for choice and influence exist, although making a choice can mean: ‘Damned if you do and damned if you don’t’.

Three broad tensions are identified: (business) strategy and education; national policy and local reality; and entrepreneurship and accountability. The fourth area discussed, managerialism and professionalism, is more a dilemma than a tension: the focus here is internal to the organisation. Arguably, clearer choices can be made with respect to what is ‘inside’ rather than what is ‘outside’ the organisation.

Strategy is the key, but is education the lock?

The new emphasis on strategic leadership can mean that other forms of leadership, notably educational leadership, are given less attention. As reported in the survey questionnaire, there is now ‘much less educational leadership [and] much more leading change’. Again, there has been a shift from ‘educational leadership to business management leadership’. Accordingly, there is now ‘much more emphasis on leading the organisation, for example, setting goals’.

There is considerable evidence to show that concern for business performance is competing with concern for student performance. Practices of education leadership are competing with practices of business management. These developments are very evident in public VET providers:

Say 3 years ago we had the time to focus on assessment and delivery, what our core business is all about. There wasn’t the focus on fee-for-service or commercial work. So it is those

things that have really changed is the last 2 years that I have been involved (as a frontline manager). My perception is that's where the pressure's beginning to increase.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

The system needs to change to put the focus back onto the learner.

(Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

From our main educational leaders' point of view ... they don't feel that they have enough time to devote to the educational leadership role that they are given and have to put too much into the operational budget stuff, so they are having to do the stuff that is urgent and not necessarily get into the important stuff, and with the much flatter structure more pressure is put on for that to happen.

(Campus manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

Because of the funding and the fact that we are having more pressure placed on us to develop our own business, therefore create a lot of our own income with fee-for-service and that sort of thing, there ends up being a lot more tension between how you are going to make money and how well you are going to deliver.

(Staff member, TAFE, South Australia)

In the view of a TAFE manager from South Australia, 'commercialisation of VET has fundamentally changed the balance between education and business'. A better balance between these practices seems to be achieved in private commercial providers. Educational functions, which are at the same time business functions, are central to the success of these organisations. Thus, a private commercial provider in South Australia competes on the basis of superior service: '[Parents] know that if their child is having trouble, then we can assist them one-on-one' and quality product: '[The staff] believe in the courses and the quality of the courses'.

The tension between an educational outlook and business outlook is more fluid than fixed, however. Some TAFEs are now achieving a good balance of 'business and education, dollars and quality'. While being 'very business orientated', they have not lost sight of 'the education side': 'We have a leadership that is extremely focussed on the bottom line and they are now, in the last year, coming back to focussing on quality of delivery as well' (Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland).

National policy and local reality

Providers that rely on government funding can be caught up in a tension between national policy and local reality: 'You are encouraged to act in direct opposition to the system. The policy is to be flexible but the reality is to be inflexible. The policy is to offer quality but the reality is we can't afford quality' (Senior manager, TAFE, Victoria). National policy initiatives can contradict and cut across the needs of local industries and communities. In public VET providers, the requirements of various stakeholders must be met. The management and leadership of TAFE institutions involves a complex trade-off of obligations to government, clients and the community:

I think there are some conflicting policies. For example, there is a strong focus on user choice, which is a national imperative, which conflicts with our prime student group. 80% of our students aren't in user choice, they are not apprentices and trainees. So how do you manage that tension between a national policy and a reality of a student body and an industry you are having to serve. So there is that constant tension.

(Executive manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Our biggest frustration is not being able to service the clients who we would like to service in that there has been no budget grace in the last three years in VET delivery and TAFE. We have had to turn away a massive amount of students in this last 12 months. Particularly in X area, the government has told us that we need to do more commercial programs and make revenue. But in X city, the majority of our students pay with a health care card. The wages aren't high and we find that we can't make revenue and can't service the students who need the training to get out of the poverty trap. We've had to turn away 150 applicants for a Certificate 3 in Aged Care. The industry is crying out for workers and we've got no funding to run anything.

(Frontline manager, TAFE, Queensland)

Business is very complex because of all the different funding sources and the different needs of various client groups. Also, being a public organisation creates conflict between [a] business culture and [the] political culture. Our business decision would be to close X college because we're not making enough money. But politically we're not allowed to do that.

(Senior manager, TAFE, Queensland)

Entrepreneurship and accountability

A further and related tension exists between the perceived need to be entrepreneurial and the requirement to be accountable. An executive manager of a private provider in Western Australia spoke to this tension in this way: "This organisation has a cultural issue in that they need to be entrepreneurial, however, they have systems in place, QETO (quality endorsed training organisation) processes, models and frameworks, that can inhibit them ... This is a conflict in cultures for this organisation which needs to be client focussed'. Other managers expressed similar opinions:

Since 1997, there have been no changes in funding. So we have been doing more with less.

And there's a major focus on private sector competitive management practices with public sector accountability.

(Senior manager, TAFE)

We have become more administration focussed rather than working on business opportunities and addressing challenges.

(Executive manager, group training company)

The requirement to be accountable, which is generally welcomed by managers, contributes to 'short-termism'. Entrepreneurship and strategic action call for longer lead times than are now available in the current climate:

There are reduced opportunities for long-term development. There is now more emphasis on short-term development—to develop opportunities to return advantages more quickly rather than over a longer period ... Personally it has increased the amount of time spent on 'hands-on' management.

(Senior manager, private commercial provider, Victoria)

Less time and attention is given to big picture issues because compliance and quality issues now predominate. There are performance agreements [that] we need to meet'.

(Senior manager, private commercial provider, Victoria)

Gleeson (2001, p.193), commenting on the United Kingdom experience, argues that in the immediate context of their work, senior managers often have to balance parallel and contradictory processes. These managers are required to work within ever-declining funding levels while, at the same time, respond to national demand for widening patterns of participation and learning provision.

Managerialism and professionalism

In recent years, the academic literature on public sector educational institutions in various countries has reported on the powerful tendency towards managerialism as a result of changes in the policy environment (Holloway 1999; Leggett 1997; Power, Halpin & Whitty 1997; Simkins 2000). Managers are encouraged to adopt private sector competitive management practices. This emphasis differs from traditional client-centred, public service values, based on the needs of clients as interpreted and formulated by professionals (Deem 1998). Professionalism is 'characterised by ... cross-cutting attachments to client-centred, professional and public service values, such as equity and care'; 'managerialism is characterised by commitment to the over-riding values and mission of the specific organisation' (Simkins 2000, p.321).

The tension between managerialism and professionalism is sharpest in TAFES and group training companies of a community-based kind.

I feel very comfortable with curriculum development because of my teaching background. It's just the business side of things—I don't feel confident at all. It's not what I want to do; it's

not why I did teaching. I would have done a business degree if I wanted to do that sort of stuff. (Staff member, TAFE, Western Australia).

When I first came here, there was a lot more ready dollars available for helping young people who weren't job-ready, so that we could run programs to get those people up to speed—people who were homeless, people who had no qualifications, people who were depressed, for whatever reason [people who were] long-term unemployed. We were running a lot of programs way back then and a lot of them were focussed on self-esteem, confidence-building, setting goals, all of those sorts of things, and they were fantastic. I actually really felt that we could make a difference to people's lives. Now, I think it is unfortunately a bit of a numbers game, that we don't have those dollars available, and so employers are always looking for the best candidate and they don't want 'problem children'.

(Staff member, group training company, Victoria)

The tension between these two plays out particularly in work cultures. Teachers tend to build cultures of collegial support. The creation of large multi-site organisations through restructures and amalgamations means that managers are less accessible and corporate strategy and direction has to substitute for this support. Restructuring in the TAFE sector has meant that the director has moved from the role of senior colleague to one of institutional or business manager:

The job has become more complex. The old-style manager was very collegial and you made the rules as you went along. What is required [now] is breadth of understanding in things like quality assurance measures, accrual-based accounting, basic financial management.

(Executive manager, TAFE, Western Australia)

Our managers now have to be on [various] campuses and that means we can't get to see them and so they're managing in absentia and that just seems to me to be hopeless too. It makes it really difficult if you need a decision on the spot; it can't happen.

(Staff member, TAFE provider, Victoria)

Teaching professionals have aspirations for participating in collegial decision-making, not decision-making where they are consulted on decisions made after the event and elsewhere:

Up until about 3 years ago, we always achieved our targets because, as a group, we arrived at how we were going to do it, what was possible, who could do what, looking at how many people leave, how many graduate, and how many we would need to put on to grow. As a group, if we came up with ways and means of doing that, then we always achieved our objective. The last three years we have been told by management and by the Board that our target will be 'this'.

(Staff member, group training company, Victoria)

The tension between what might be called corporate culture and collegial culture is playing out strongly in large public VET providers. For many TAFE managers, the greatest hindrance are the people who have been working in the system for a very long time and who see no personal advantage for themselves in changing as they are due to retire or resign within the next five to ten years. These people are seen as significant obstacles to reform:

One of the biggest challenges that we have is the issue of the culture being a large complex public sector organisation and people are not willing to change. In terms of that, there is a lot of dead wood that needs to be sort of floated off into the distance somewhere.

(Senior manager, TAFE, New South Wales)

There is a need for people to operate at higher levels and with increased competence across a wide range of operational specific skills. The inability to effectively change some people, due to their conscious diffidence to meet the needs of the new environment [needs to be addressed].

(Senior manager, TAFE, South Australia)

Managers and leaders are caught up in the complex issue of whether it is best to try to change staff perception with respect to the 'needs of the new environment' or attempt to give these 'needs' new shape and definition. To what degree can managers influence 'outside' the organisation? Where do managerial loyalties lie? What and/or whom do managers manage and lead?

End note: Strategy and beyond

A critical issue for VET leaders in the future concerns the creation of organisations which are sustainable. The goal is the fulfilment of a range of social, economic and cultural purposes: ‘Our biggest frustration is not being able to service the clients we would like to service’. Sustainability involves broadening rather than narrowing the scope of activities that VET providers, most particularly public VET providers, engage in. It goes beyond securing the strategic performance of the organisation to embrace the role that VET providers can play, and arguably, should play, in rendering service to stakeholders as part of the broader community.

The emerging interest in a more collaborative approach to education and training suggests a concern for sustainable development in the VET sector. This concern is, at the same time, a concern for strategic development: ‘The core business is delivery, training and education. ... If we don’t get the training and delivery in education right, we don’t have any services to offer, we don’t have any customers, we don’t have a business’. The notion of sustainability may prove a good guiding idea for governance in the VET sector. Strong leadership in VET requires acknowledging a sense of a ‘high tension zone’—the complexity of the relationships involved in simultaneous membership of different cultures (business, managerial, occupational, professional). Sustainability lies in the support of members of all of these cultures. In the final analysis, it is the passion expressed in the following comment that we need to preserve in VET:

I love my job. I love what I do. I mean I teach fire fighters, I teach people how to handle snakes and reptiles. I think VET skills hand on real life stuff.

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