
A WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK FOR VET PRACTITIONERS 2008 – 2013

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PURPOSE

The purpose of this document is to identify and prioritise whole of sector needs to enable implementation of a strategic approach to workforce development and learning in Western Australia. The document provides a scan of the change drivers within the vocational education and training (VET) sector and information relating to effective professional development strategies. VET providers will be able to utilise this information to inform their approach to workforce development. The framework informs the cascading of priority activities at a state, organisational and individual level.

INTRODUCTION

Western Australia has recently experienced a time of unprecedented economic boom, but cannot fail to be affected by the current international economic downturn. These rapidly changing conditions bring both opportunity and challenge to the State. In order to be effective the Training System needs to have the capacity and capability to be flexible and innovative. One component of the plan to develop such a system is to have a knowledgeable, highly skilled workforce that will allow the State to take advantage of the current opportunities and tackle the challenges with which we are faced. In order for this to happen the VET sector's professional development efforts need to be planned and address the sector's current and future needs.

The needs of the Western Australian Sector have been researched extensively in the recent past and reported in a number of documents including:

- *VET Teaching and Learning: The Future Now 2006-2010*, Department of Education and Training, February 2006
- *Professional Development Framework 2005/2006 for Vocational Education and Training in Western Australia*, Department of Education and Training, 2005
- *Quality is the key: Critical issues in teaching, learning and assessment in vocational education and training*, Mitchell J, et al, NCVER, 2006
- *Shaping the VET Practitioner for the Future* Western Australian Department of Training, 2002
- *Careers for Life – creating a dynamic and responsive apprenticeship and traineeship system. Report of the Skills Formation Taskforce to the Minister for Education and Training*, State Training Board, 2006
- *Report on the impact of the changing roles, skills and knowledge requirements of practitioners in the TAFEWA 2006-2010*, Department of Education and Training, 2006

This environmental scan has used these documents, amongst others¹, as a starting point for consultation with the sector to determine the currency of issues raised in the research and to

¹ Please refer to the bibliography for the documents reviewed as part of the environmental scan.

identify other opportunities or challenges faced in Western Australia. The consultation also sought to determine what professional development strategies have been most effective in helping the sector develop the knowledge and skills needed to meet its objectives. The outcomes of the environmental scan and resultant Workforce Development Framework are presented in the remainder of this report.

THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ENVIRONMENT

Western Australian VET practitioners, like their Eastern States colleagues face an operating environment that is increasingly demand driven, client focused and responsive to industry. The consultation identified a range of external and internal drivers however the primary driver identified was the critical skills shortage faced by Western Australia. The practitioners felt that this was driving change in teaching, learning and assessment practice, the way the VET sector engages with Industry and the community and in the organisational practice of VET providers, in essence driving the development of a Learning Culture within the VET sector. Research conducted by the National Council for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)² has identified that the development of such a culture is important to success, and whilst the terminology was not used by the majority of the practitioners, the elements that underlie such a culture were clearly identifiable in the responses they provided.

DRIVERS OF CHANGE IN THE WA VET SECTOR

The practitioners and stakeholders who contributed to this environmental scan identified a range of drivers of change for the VET sector. (It is acknowledged that this list does not include the industry specific drivers that were identified by practitioners). Each of these drivers represented opportunity and challenge. For example the focus on the provision of trade training in schools was seen very positively however, equipping and staffing the schools with vocationally competent (potentially trade qualified) teachers was identified as a significant challenge for the State. The drivers identified by the consultation have been grouped into broad categories and are listed below. It should also be stressed that some of these drivers have been the focus of very successful change programs within the VET sector for some time, for example, the skills shortages being tackled by the TAFEWA Transforming Trade Training project, however the majority of practitioners felt that the driver was still important for the sector. The external drivers included:

² Department of Education and Training, *Towards a Learning Culture: the impact of the TLASG Program on the VET Sector*, Department of Education and Training, Perth, 2007.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

- Council of Australian Governments (COAG) priorities
- The raising of the school leaving age in Western Australia
- The impact of changed industrial relations legislation
- The focus on the provision of trade training/higher level VET training in secondary schools
- Trade reforms
- A national focus on increasing the participation of indigenous Australians, those in receipt of welfare benefits and able to work, and disadvantaged groups in work and work related training
- Legislation and regulatory frameworks driving VET practice

GENERATIONAL CHANGE

- The ageing of the population and specifically an aging VET workforce
- The influence of Generation Y in the workplace
- People seeking a work/life balance, and therefore changing the structures of work

ECONOMIC DRIVERS

- An increasing range of skills shortages in critical industry areas
- Very low unemployment in Western Australia
- The growth of the knowledge economy and rapidly changing technologies
- Globalisation and increasing competitiveness of the training market
- The need for higher level skills to drive economic growth
- The changing face of industry (emerging industry and employment patterns) and therefore changes to industry's requirements from the training system

COMMUNITY EXPECTATION

- A more diverse society reflecting a greater mix of cultural values, beliefs and expectations
- Increasing customer sophistication
- A migratory population requiring transportability of qualifications nationally and internationally

Within the VET sector in Western Australia the practitioners identified a range of internal drivers. Internal drivers that duplicated the external drivers have been omitted from the list.

INTERNAL DRIVERS OF THE WA VET SECTOR

- The increasing complexity of the provider and practitioner role
- The need to comply with formal accountability measures
- Reforms driven by the Skills Formation Taskforce
- The on-going implementation of Training Packages
- A deficit in the literacy and numeracy skills of VET participants
- The shift in the role of the VET practitioner from industry expert to learning facilitator
- The increased demand for workplace learning and assessment and recognition processes
- The Lecturers Certified Agreements (TAFEWA specific)

- An increased focus on Duty of Care
- The embedding of employability skills
- Pressure for greater accountability including increasing qualification completion
- Pressure for greater flexibility in funding models
- Increasing demand for customisation and personalization of learning and assessment services
- The requirement for all students, including international, to possess adequate English language and cultural awareness skills to participate effectively in the Australian workforce
- Currency of practitioners' vocational skills
- The characteristics of the current VET workforce (degree of casualisation)

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR NEXT FIVE YEARS

Having identified the drivers of change in the VET sector stakeholders were then asked to consider what challenges and opportunities the drivers posed for the VET sector over the coming three to five years. The collated responses are listed below.

- Improving and embedding quality practices in teaching, learning and assessment, and client services
- Developing a responsive and flexible culture in VET organisations that will allow the adoption of new and emerging policies, strategies, roles and skills to meet an expanding set of expectations from stakeholders
- Designing and implementing new strategies to help address industry skill shortages including:
 - transitioning learning and assessment from classrooms to workplaces where appropriate
 - establishing and maintaining collaborations and partnerships with industry, employers and community clients
 - marketing the VET sector to industry
 - utilising a range of recognition processes, focusing on recognition of prior learning (RPL)
- Bridging the gap between the VET sector and schools including arrangements for schools to provide higher level VET qualifications (Certificate III and above)
- Addressing the skill development needs of VET practitioners (permanent and casual) whose emerging role requires them to demonstrate sound educational practice and leadership, vocational competence and contemporary business strategies to be effective
- Increasing the focus on transferable generic skills, including literacy, numeracy, and employability skills and ensuring that these are a clearly articulated part of a student's program
- Increasing the focus on higher level qualifications (Certificate IV and above) to meet changing industry skill needs
- Increasing organisations' and individuals' capacity to take advantage of new digital technologies as they become available for e-learning and the use of e-technology in teaching, learning and assessment

- Ensuring that professional development is linked strategically to building organisational capability
- Providing the skills, time and support to nurture innovation
- Minimising the impact of the retirement of a significant proportion of the permanent VET workforce
- The ongoing attraction and retention of skilled, capable VET practitioners

The challenges and opportunities identified in the previous research and used as a basis for this environmental scan have provided beneficial direction for Western Australia's professional development over the past three to five years. The results of this scan suggest that the themes identified during previous research still exist and that these have become more targeted as the Western Australian environment has evolved and the sector's understanding of emerging trends in teaching learning and assessment has matured. The remaining question then is how does the VET sector develop the workforce capable of meeting these challenges and opportunities and achieve a responsive, flexible and innovative training system which provides relevant skills for people to realise their potential in the workforce and community.

Western Australia has also established goals to guide the progress of the training system. These need to be considered by providers so that professional development planning contributes towards developing appropriate staff capability to meet the goals. The goals include:

- Expand innovative training delivery so people anywhere can access training that suits their individual needs, and increase the proportion of non-classroom based delivery
- Recognition of prior learning outcomes is increased
- Apprentice and trainee employer satisfaction is increased
- Breadth and depth of funded qualifications in regional Western Australia is increased at Certificate III level and above-

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

WHAT WE DO NOW

In response to previous research exploring the challenges facing the Western Australian VET sector a number of initiatives have been undertaken. These include projects to address specific drivers (for example: Transforming Trade Training, Lecturer's Technical Skills Project, and Master-class development) as well as the implementation of a raft of professional development activities funded on both a State and Federal level. The professional development opportunities in Western Australia are extensive and include:

- the VET Teaching and Learning Professional Development Calendar (a comprehensive series of ½ and full day workshops)
- practitioner networks (Trainers and Assessors Network (TAN), TAFEWA Professional Development Strategy Network, Curriculum Advisory Group meetings)

- a range of targeted networking opportunities (Hot Topic Breakfasts)
- annual Training Forum
- Reframing the Future funding for a range of projects
- provision of e-learning training and expertise to the sector and management of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework in Western Australia by WestOne
- provision of practice guides and research findings in reports
- Professional Development Support Program funding

In addition VET provider organisations undertake a range of professional development activities with their staff. These include:

- provider run professional development workshops/days/weeks
- communities of practice
- action learning projects
- work based projects
- industry networks
- induction programs
- conferences and meetings
- professional conversations
- job rotations
- industry placements
- the formation of consortium for special projects
- coaching and mentoring
- change management agencies and strategies
- performance management

As identified in the *Towards a Learning Culture* report, there were significant differences in practitioners' beliefs about the value of professional development and what types of activities constitute professional development. The majority of practitioners involved in this scan saw professional development as an avenue for achieving success and had engaged in a range of the activities identified above. Engagement was far more prevalent in organisations that had a dedicated organisational/professional development team to coordinate these activities, or a targeted professional development plan as one component of the organisation's strategic plan. Two of the organisations involved in the scan had comprehensive workforce development plans to inform organisational development activities.

EFFECTIVENESS OF THE PD STRATEGIES

Discussions with the practitioners have indicated that each of the activities is valued and that the perceived effectiveness very much depends upon the needs of individual providers and their practitioners. For example there was a discussion of the professional development (PD) workshops offered by VET Teaching and Learning. A number of providers said that these workshops no longer met their needs as they had a sound understanding of the information that was provided in the workshops and were more interested in engaging in activities that would assist them to embed the practice in their workplaces, such as action learning projects or the targeted use of a subject matter expert in their workplaces. Other providers however felt that the workshops were an invaluable source of information and provided an opportunity to network with other VET practitioners. The range of feedback suggested that a variety of opportunities was required and practitioners felt that these opportunities should model emerging practices.

When discussing the professional development activities that had been successful for their organisations a wide range of projects were identified. These varied from the induction process at Swan TAFE, change management projects at Challenger TAFE and various other Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), embedding industry partners in private provider organisations and industry forums to challenge practice, amongst others. The practitioners identified a number of characteristics of the projects that made them successful rather than a particular methodology or activity that determined success. The characteristics mirrored themes that had been identified in the research '*Working and Learning in Vocational Education and Training in the Knowledge Era: Final Report of the Professional Development for the Future Project (2004)*'.³

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT THEMES⁴

Practitioners were seeking professional development activities that enabled them to:

Learn: Practitioners have a motivation to learn and develop and this drives them to respond to challenging opportunities, to seek out new ideas and perspectives, and to be 'involved' in activities and events related to their area of expertise.

Be exposed to new ideas: Practitioners actively sought opportunities that brought them into contact with new ideas. Exposure to new ideas occurred through multiple methods including reading, interacting with academics and industry, as well as interactions with peers and fellow practitioners from within and outside their own organisations and areas of expertise.

Learn by doing: Action learning models are not new. However, there was acknowledgement by practitioners that this is critical to their effectiveness, and is embedded in the idea of 'lifelong learning'. Formal education may provide a set of mental models and perspectives, but does not replace first-hand experience with the particular discipline or knowledge area.

Network: Relationships with others are critical to successful professional development. The ability to develop relationships has been identified as a critical capability by practitioners as it is through these relationships that ongoing learning and development is facilitated. Professional development was seen as including the ability to interact with colleagues and others as well as using networks inside and outside the organisation to speed up access to and dissemination of knowledge.

Be challenged: Challenge as a theme referred to the importance of seeking out and embracing opportunities that challenge their own practice as well as challenging the conventional wisdom of the sector.

Consolidate their learning: Practitioners identified the importance of having opportunities to consolidate their learning. Three methods used to consolidate learning were identified in the 2004 research and also by the practitioners involved in this scan. Firstly, time to absorb the

³Australian Flexible Training Framework, *Working and Learning in Vocational Education and Training in the Knowledge Era: Final Report of the Professional Development for the Future Project* report prepared by J Henry, Australian National Training Authority, 2004

<http://flexiblelearning.net.au/projects/resources/PDFutureReport.pdf>.

⁴ Text adapted from research paper in response to practitioners feedback.

information and integrate it into existing mental models during a period of 'immersion' was seen as important. Secondly, the importance of having time for regular reflection, both in terms of what is happening at work but also time to reflect on one's personal development. The third approach was using formal education to introduce new ideas and perspectives relevant to the practitioners' professional practice in ways that allow for enrichment and expansion of existing mental models and perspectives and consolidation of knowledge and skill.

These themes reflect a desire for high impact high leverage strategies and support core disciplines of the Learning Culture model⁵. Professional development strategies should therefore provide greater opportunity for action learning, mentoring, professional networking and reflective practice. Where information has to be disseminated to the sector, consideration should be given to the use of new technologies.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES

The VET Practitioner Workforce Development Framework on the following page describes the professional development needs identified by providers and practitioners during the environmental scan. The priorities are aligned with the disciplines of the Learning Culture. Each of the three disciplines in the model meets an area of strategic intent. These are:

SYSTEMS: To build a flexible, responsive VET system.

LEARNING CULTURE: To create a culture that fosters excellence, innovation and continuous learning.

INDIVIDUAL AND SECTORAL LEARNING: To develop expertise in contemporary teaching, learning and assessment practice and business development skills.

⁵P Senge, *The Fifth Discipline: The Art and Practice of the Learning Organisation*, Doubleday Business, 1994

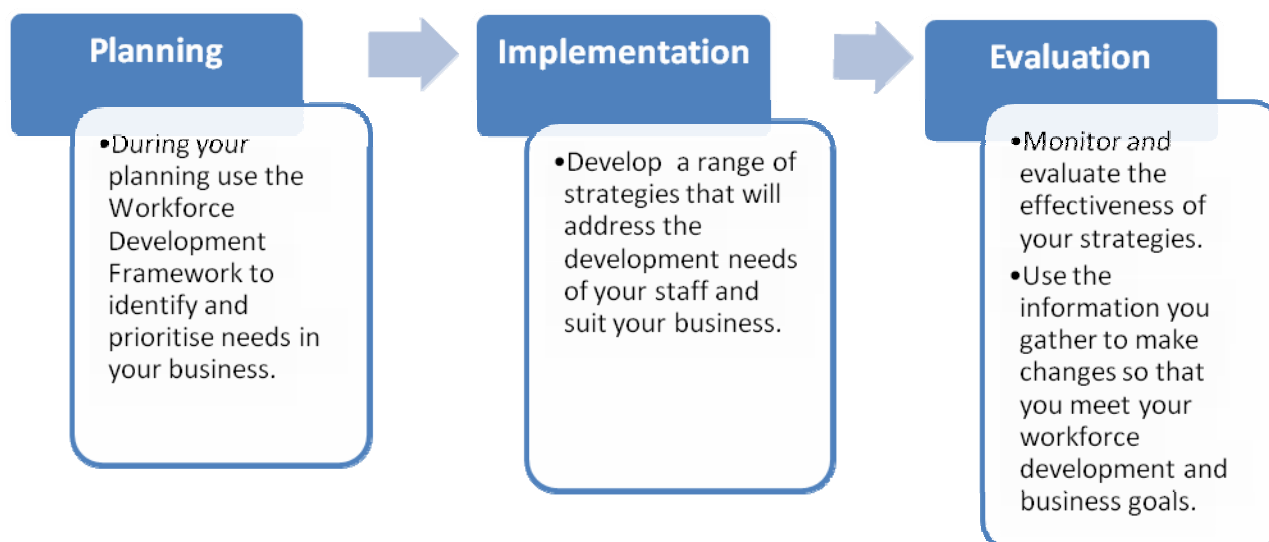
USING THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK AT A SECTOR LEVEL

The Workforce Development Framework will be used by the Department of Education and Training to inform:

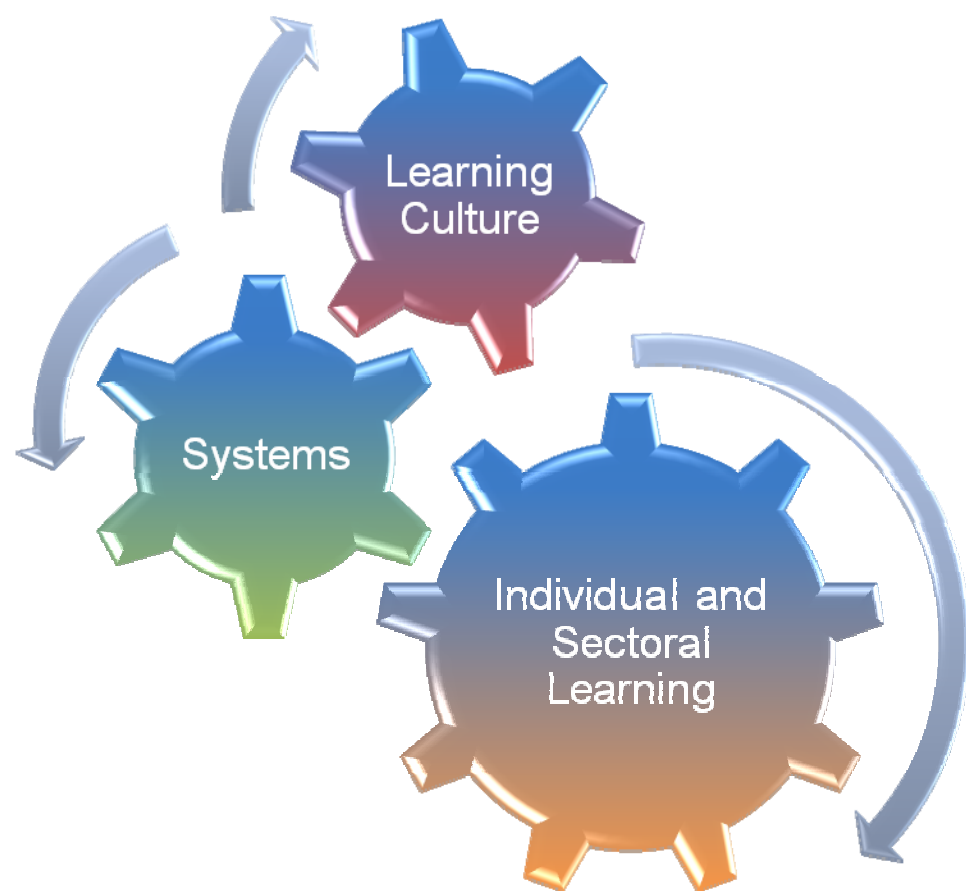
- the review of policy and guidelines relating to professional development programs;
- the development and implementation of a range of professional development and learning strategies to address areas of need within the sector; and
- the evaluation of the effectiveness of professional development programs.

USING THE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK IN YOUR WORKPLACE

The Workforce Development Framework encourages providers to focus on the needs of their organisation. VET providers should consider the information from the framework in the context of their environment, needs in specific industries and the capabilities of their staff. This approach acknowledges that the responsibility for workforce development is shared at all levels of the VET sector. VET providers may find the following model useful when using the framework.



VET Practitioner Workforce Development Framework



To achieve a responsive, flexible and innovative training system which provides relevant skills for people to realise their potential in the workforce and community, the workforce development priorities for 2008 – 2013 are:

LEARNING CULTURE PRIORITIES

Understanding the emerging VET Sector; Educating Industry about the VET sector; Developing partnerships and collaborations with colleagues, industry and the community; Developing beneficial networks; Enabling cultural change; Nurturing innovation; Encouraging reflective practice; Leadership.

INDIVIDUAL AND SECTORAL LEARNING PRIORITIES

Pedagogy (for new and advanced practitioners); Workplace delivery and assessment; Teaching learning and assessment using technology; Recognition services including RPL; Vocational competence and currency; Delivering and assessing high level qualifications; Literacy, numeracy and employability skills; Learning facilitation skills; Customer service; Contemporary business practices; Consultancy skills; Industrial relations; Leadership; Business management (including succession planning, change management and project management), marketing and brokerage.

SYSTEMS PRIORITIES

Embedding quality practice and continuous improvement; Leadership; Business development and continuity; Business management (including succession planning, change management and project management), marketing and brokerage; Developing flexible and responsive systems to meet the needs of a diverse client group; Enabling cultural change; Nurturing innovation; Encouraging reflective practice.

The Focus for Developing a VET Learning Culture

THE LEARNING CULTURE: TO CREATE A CULTURE THAT FOSTERS EXCELLENCE, INNOVATION AND CONTINUOUS LEARNING.

This represents the development of a culture in the VET sector that supports continuous learning and learning that is integrated with the experience of work. This includes the creation of a shared vision and mental models.

SYSTEMS: TO BUILD A FLEXIBLE, RESPONSIVE VET SYSTEM.

This represents the provider and sectoral systems that act as the foundation for a learning culture. This includes the creation of a shared vision, and wider understanding of the VET sector and the promotion of systems thinking within the sector.

INDIVIDUAL AND SECTORAL LEARNING: TO DEVELOP EXPERTISE IN CONTEMPORARY TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICE AND BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT SKILLS.

This represents individual, provider and sectoral development of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours that are required to achieve the vision. This includes personal mastery and team learning.

This model has been adapted from a People Development Framework from TAFEWA Challenger, 2008.

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