

## A CENTRE FOR TAFE

An issues paper from the Ministerial Advisory Committee on the TAFE  
Development Centre

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## The purpose of this paper

In the *Statement on Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy* (2002) the Minister for Education and Training announced that a Centre would be established to promote the professional standing of the whole Victorian TAFE Institute workforce.

The Centre initiative is one of a number of actions in response to clear and well documented research indicating that of all the challenges that face TAFE Institutes, the need to invest in intellectual capital – the knowledge and skills of their people – is among the most pressing.

A Committee has now been established to provide advice to the Minister on what kind of organisation such a Centre should be, what its functions and services should be, how it should relate to Institutes and stakeholders, and where it should be located.

The Minister has emphasised the importance of involving those who work in TAFE Institutes and their representative organisations in the design and development process for the Centre. This paper is part of that process. It is not a statement of a policy or position, but an invitation to consider issues related to the establishment of a Centre and to make your views known to the Committee.

At the end of the paper you will find information on how to make a response or provide a submission.

## The concept of a Centre

In the *Statement on Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy*, the challenges facing Victorian education and training are outlined – the major structural, economic and social changes driven by the globalisation of economic activity and advances in technology. The statement identifies the features of successful modern economies based on the creative and commercial application of knowledge, and recognises the role of knowledge as a key source of competitive advantage.

In developing a knowledge-rich wider community and workforce, the role of teaching and learning is of higher importance than ever, and the value of knowledge products and services has increased. The complexity of demand on the TAFE system has also increased. Like other providers of products and services, Institutes need to respond to greater demands for flexibility, diversity, customisation and differentiation, but at the same time they continue to have a role in community building, and in developing in all students a positive engagement with learning throughout life. The TAFE Institute workforce has an important role in meeting these challenges.

To consider the workforce implications in detail, the Office of Training and Tertiary Education established a TAFE Institute Workforce Working Party comprising representatives of key stakeholder groups. The Working Party has considered the strengths of the current workforce and some key development issues facing the Institutes.

It identified four broad areas where the system may require support and has developed a strategic framework for action, with a focus on these areas:

- skills development for teachers and support staff in new and emerging industry areas and in generic skills
- improvement in status and morale
- investment in leadership
- the development of strategic human resource management practice.

The TAFE Development Centre is intended to support the implementation of this framework and to provide an organising focus for workforce development across the system.

The commitment to establish a Centre is a significant step, signalling the Government's interest in the development of the people who work in TAFE and its recognition of their importance to Victoria's economic and community life. There are few models of such organisations or services in the vocational education sector, in Australia or internationally. Centres for the professional development of teachers exist within universities for the support of staff within those institutions, and these may provide useful information for the design and development stage. A large number of professional associations and networks are active in providing development activities.

A number of bodies exist to support the growth of high quality teaching practice, including Victoria's Institute of Teaching.

A Centre to support the development of a whole TAFE Institute workforce across the State is an innovation, however. It involves a willingness by Government and the Institutes to work together to share the development effort, some of which needs to be undertaken by each Institute as an independent employer, and some of which is beyond the resources of individual Institutes.

### Approaches to development

Much funded development effort has traditionally been in the form of what might be called staff development for Institute performance management – that is, assistance to Institutes to provide staff development that will improve organisational performance. This kind of enterprise based investment is allocated by management, focused on business outcomes and aligned to corporate goals. Alongside this practice there have been strategic initiatives to support performance improvement. This has been mainly in the form of Commonwealth or State resources allocated to influence the form and substance of staff development, and to target areas of performance to meet future challenges. A more current approach to development, the knowledge-based model, involves recognising the importance of personal and individual development, and placing high value on the capacity of individuals to specialise and innovate. This model involves forms of development that are more self-managed, collaborative and collegial, and is based on an acceptance that the responsibility for growth and learning is shared between organisations and professional individuals. According to this model, much can be achieved through partnership, sponsorship, and incentives for development.

The concept of a Centre involves identifying the best ways of building organisational and individual capability in the longer term and considering how a Centre might become an effective advocate of good development practice.

### A collaborative venture

The Centre should seek to complement, rather than replace, activity that is currently being managed well by existing stakeholders, and should undertake development activities which will support the organisational goals of the Institutes. In identifying its major functions and role, the Centre will need to work closely with the Institutes and the networks, communities of professional practice and organisations that make a contribution to workforce development.

### Limitations

As the Ministerial Statement has made clear, major change is needed for TAFE Institutes to become a high performance, high skill system, and this change will require more than development initiatives. There are therefore limits to what can be achieved through operations or services provided by the proposed Centre.

The success of development initiatives are affected by factors to do with the environment in which people work, management practices and working conditions, and the limited resources available. These factors need to be taken into account in the design and implementation of initiatives.

## The TAFE Institute workforce

The current Victorian TAFE Institute workforce is a customised workforce that has evolved under competing pressures and adapted to changing enterprise cultures. It has delivered major system change in the last decade, and has been instrumental in the entrepreneurial success and operational efficiency of the Institutes.

The workforce since 1993 has had the characteristic 'shamrock' structure of other flexible workforces, a pattern common internationally both in business and education (Handy, 1998). This structure contains a tenured or ongoing group, a short-term contracted group and a casual or seasonal group. Higher education workforces also typically have this 'core-contingent' pattern.

Very significant variations exist between individual Institutes in the detail of their staffing structures and trends. The particular staffing profile of an individual TAFE Institute results from a complex set of local factors, and this needs to be taken into account in considering issues affecting the development of the groups and individuals within the workforce.

Data on the Victorian TAFE Institute workforce has been used to map changes in the composition of the workforce since 1993, when employment in Victorian Institutes was deregulated and Institutes became the direct employers of all their staff. During this period, there have been significant changes in the nature of delivery and in the range of products and services Institutes provide to learners. The following figures represent a brief profile of the people who work in TAFE – their age, gender, type of employment and time fraction.

### Size and composition

In 2001:

- About 13,450 people were employed in the TAFE system.
- About 60% of these were teachers.
- Among teachers, 44% were in ongoing positions, 25% were on contracts, and 31% were employed casually.
- Just over half of the TAFE workforce was employed full time.
- Of the non-teacher groups 61% were employed full time, but the proportion of teachers employed full time was 49%.
- More than half of the non-teacher group had permanent employment, but only 44% of teachers had such status.
- There were more females than males in the TAFE workforce (53% to 47%) although in the category of ongoing teaching men outnumbered women by 20%. Female casual teachers outnumbered males by a small margin.

## Trends

By comparison with the 1993 workforce:

- The workforce has grown by 13% or about 1,500 people, but only 168 of these are teachers.
- The proportion of non-teaching staff has grown by 6%.
- The number of casual teachers has grown by 24%, while the number of ongoing teachers has fallen (by 3%), as has the number of contract teachers (by 9%).
- There has been a 15% fall in full time employment for teachers and a corresponding increase in full time employment for non-teaching staff.
- There has been an 8% fall in overall permanent employment across the workforce.
- There has been a 6% fall in the overall proportion of males employed in TAFE, a 19% fall in the proportion of male teachers in ongoing positions and an 8% increase in the proportion of male contract teachers.

## Age

Research in 2002 by the Office of Public Employment (OPE, 2002) indicates that 66% of TAFE teachers are over 41 years of age and 30% are over 51 years of age. Earlier work indicated that about one third of the existing teacher workforce in ongoing and contract teacher positions can be expected to retire by 2008 (PETE, 2000). This may have implications for traditional trade teaching areas, as this is where long-term male teacher employment has been concentrated. The casual teaching workforce is slightly younger, but casual employees are still predominantly over the age of forty.

## Multi-sector locations

A significant development has been the creation of a large university TAFE Division sector during the last decade. By 2001 31% of the TAFE workforce was located in four university TAFE Divisions. The six metropolitan stand-alone Institutes employed 46%, and the remaining 23% were employed in the eight regional Institutes.

## Issues for the design of a Centre

This section briefly presents nine issues to be taken into account in designing and establishing a Centre for TAFE. In each case, a set of questions for discussion and feedback has been provided.

### 1. Professional status and morale

Staff satisfaction is a key health indicator for the system, particularly for the teaching workforce. Some Institute teachers have expressed concerns about loss of professional identity and low satisfaction (Kronemann, 2001). Possible causes may include low remuneration and status relative to other professional teaching workforces and the negative effects of different employment modes on professional unity, collaboration and satisfaction.

Esteem for individuals and groups is an important contributor to satisfaction. Many consider that the distinctive and evolving nature of TAFE teaching is not well understood in the community and that TAFE teaching is undervalued and lacks appropriate professional status.

Concerns about status and identity are not unique to TAFE and there have been significant investigations of the status of teaching as a profession both in Australia and internationally. An extensive international literature exists on this problem, and issues of the status of vocational teaching have been explored by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO).

In exploring descriptions of professionalism, many researchers and commentators point to the importance of recognising the unique features of professional work undertaken in a range of roles in TAFE, and have warned against the tendency to compare TAFE practice with that of other professional groups.

Some key features of groups identified as a profession are that they share a set of core values, they have common identity and language and a sense of pride and belonging. Their authority derives from their knowledge and practice, and they exhibit collegial relationships which are not externally regulated. Their professional knowledge is recognised and the judgments of their peers are important to them (Ingvarson, 2002). Other features include a degree of autonomy and time for reflection. If these features are a useful guide, the challenge is to ensure that they are characteristic of teaching and non-teaching professional groups within TAFE.

### Questions for discussion

1. *How is VET sector employment viewed in terms of professional status?*

**The VET sector does not have a high professional status within the industry. In many cases employers have met with resistance from TAFE in terms of delivering quality professional services and on this basis do not have a high opinion of the sector.**

**In many areas industry perceives little in the way of recognised continuing professional development or association with a professional body by the TAFE system.**

2. *What could a Centre do to promote the professional status of groups within TAFE?*

***The professional status of TAFE could be lifted through the creation of an auspicing body that had the authority to enforce certain standards and levels of professional ethics. This would include the removal or suspension of staff that did not meet these professional standards or requirements.***

## 2. Standards

Although there is agreement that we need appropriate standards of teacher performance, and that experience and qualifications make a positive contribution to the quality of performance, there is no agreed view on what kind of standards are needed or how these could support development and achievement. The role of qualifications in identifying appropriate standards for entry and for further development is also unclear, although many people consider that Institutes need to pursue standards of performance and qualifications well above the minimum competencies as specified in the Australian Quality Training Framework (ANTA, 2001).

In the early 1990s the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition was active in promoting the establishment of national entry standards for professions, and many professional groups took the opportunity to define their expectations clearly.

The teaching professional groups did not participate, although occupational standards for workplace training and assessment were later developed, and the Office of Training and Further Education commissioned the development of a set of Victorian TAFE teacher standards (OTFE, 1993). Such standards-setting exercises have not attracted the active support of teaching practitioners in Australia.

More recently, reforms of the education system in the USA and UK have involved developing standards and assessment for teachers in an attempt to improve the attractiveness of teaching as a career and to provide teachers with greater rewards for undertaking professional development. The framing

of such standards has drawn attention to the complexity and richness of the teaching role and the ongoing development required.

The National Board for Professional Teaching Standards in the US has established high and rigorous standards. Although developed for a school system, much can be learned from this approach. In contrast to a performance management approach, which may fail to engage teachers, this is a professional certification model which fosters the active involvement of practitioners and has the support of stakeholders (Ingvarson, 2001).

### *Questions for discussion*

1. *What kinds of standards are likely to make a positive contribution for TAFE employees?*

**The development of standards for TAFE employees would need to be articulated into existing TAFE Industrial Awards in order that performance review and the mapping of skills and knowledge development can take place around them. A major limitation of the TAFE system has been an inability to enforce standards that are not mandatory or linked to performance review. A major failing of current professional standards that have been developed for the TAFE sector is the lack of communication and knowledge amongst TAFE staff of their existence.**

**Standards for TAFE employees should be developed as an outcome of research into local and overseas standards as they apply to teachers and support staff in technical institutions.**

2. *How could the Centre engage groups of practitioners when developing, promoting and maintaining standards?*

**Practitioner groups needed for the purposes of developing should be drawn from representation from key stakeholder groups that interact with TAFE, engage in the provision of receiving training services or have strategic arrangement with the TAFE sector.**

**In particular the various individual industry groups that work closely with TAFE should be provided with an opportunity for representation. Included in this category should also be representation from the various state Industry Training Advisory Bodies and Industry Liaison personnel.**

**In terms of a process for interaction with key stakeholders expressions of interest should be sought for participation in round table discussions on the issue of standards for the TAFE sector.**

**The Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) should facilitate round table discussions in both Melbourne and regional Victoria for the purposes of enabling all stakeholder groups' access to the debate.**

3. *How might the TAFE workforce be supported in assessment and certification against standards?*

**Standards should not be used for the purposes of certification and professional recognition unless they have a direct impact on performance measures and employment for employees. To develop certification against standards that stand in isolation from employment arrangements, will lead to further tensions in terms of how many TAFE staff actually work towards them. A classic example that exists in the current structure is that there is no additional incentive provided to teachers who achieve additional levels of academic or industry competence over and above the minimum pre-requisites. Advanced skills teaching positions have normally been restricted, by ratio, to a small number of staff in TAFE institutes that in turn creates a disincentive for others to increase their skills and knowledge base.**

**Employees who perform well against measured criteria for each standard should be provided with appropriate reward and incentive.**

4. *How should achievement against standards be recognised and rewarded?*

**Achievement against standards should be verified through the process of annual review. The review process should be conducted through a panel review that includes a member of staff from the Institutes Human Resource Department, the Manager directly responsible for the staff member and an external consultancy contacted for the sole purposes of employee review.**

**Recognition performance against the standards should be provided on a financial incremental scale and conversely mechanisms for disciplinary action should be applied in areas where employees do not meet set performance levels.**

### 3. Entry level skills for teachers in TAFE Institutes

In recruiting new members of the TAFE teaching workforce, Institutes need people who can take up a multi-dimensional role and who have a mixture of specific industry-related skills and skills in assessment and delivery.

TAFE teaching is unique because of its relationship with workplaces and the standards of performance required by employers. Teaching is a separate and specialised vocation in its own right, requiring skills and knowledge in addition to the industry specific qualifications and experience TAFE recruits already have. The balance between the different skill sets required varies with the specific job description and local context. This calls for an unusual degree of flexibility, transferability of skills, and readiness to respond to the changing conditions of industry.

The range of skills required to be a fully operational TAFE teacher has expanded to include skills in flexible and on-line delivery, in meeting the needs

of diverse client groups, and in designing and delivering customised workplace based training and assessment services. There is broad agreement about the importance of high quality teaching and about the negative effects on learners where these skills are lacking.

TAFE teaching professionals therefore have much in common with their school and higher education counterparts. As the traditional boundaries between the education sectors are increasingly ignored in favour of intersectoral provision, teachers with distinctly different practices are required to operate on common ground.

The role of teacher training in developing and certifying skills in teaching and assessment needs to be considered, along with the role of such courses in defining expectations for professional practice at entry level. UNESCO and the ILO (2002) have reviewed entry level requirements for technical and vocational education and training internationally, and have recommended that

preparation should preferably be offered as a tertiary program, requiring completion of secondary education or its equivalent for entrance [and that technical and vocational teachers require]...strong preparation that will enable them to operate in and adapt to an ever-changing scientific, technological and social environment.

For Australian TAFE Institutes, a minimum requirement at entry is the demonstration of competence in assessment and delivery at Certificate IV level, as specified in the Australian Quality Training Framework.

#### *Questions for discussion*

1. *What entry level skills should recruits to TAFE teaching have?*

**Minimum entry level for TAFE employees seeking to deliver industry standards should include a current competency in the areas being taught an undergraduate (Diploma) in teaching. Teachers of industry competencies should be required to spend (in standards) a pre-determined amount of time in industry each year to become familiar with current technologies in specific fields.**

2. *Should Victoria seek to set and maintain higher entry level standards than the Certificate IV level competencies currently specified in the AQTF, and if so how?*

**Certificate IV competencies as outlined in the AQTF standards should only be used in situations where teachers are on short-term contracts. All full time teaching staff should otherwise possess a Diploma qualification.**

3. *In the design and development of new teacher training for entry level, what features of TAFE teaching practice should be addressed?*

**Industry liaison**

**Presentation skills**

**Educational psychology**

**Industry relations**

**Occupational health and safety**

**Student psychology**

**Education business management**

**Counselling**

**Project management**

**Facilities and resource management**

#### 4. Continuing development for experienced practitioners

The Institute Workforce Working Party concluded that a mechanism for system-wide attention to broad issues of recognition and career progression is needed and that this applies equally for teachers and non-teaching staff.

If we are to continue to have a workforce made up of highly educated people who can contribute to the broader educational outcomes of others, we must maintain and improve levels of educational attainment. We will need teachers and support staff who are willing to undertake ongoing renewal of their technical knowledge and skills, skills in pedagogy and assessment, and ability to use technology.

The role of professional development needs to be reconsidered, and we need to identify effective ways of developing and maintaining the currency of new skills. Old models of skills development will not meet the needs of staff in an innovation economy, but new models are still being developed. Communities of practice are emerging as an effective mechanism, and there is evidence that the best collaboration going on between Institutes may be through networks facilitated by electronic connection. These and other possible support strategies need further exploration.

Recognition of the learning taking place is also required. Significant numbers of TAFE practitioners are actively engaged in their own development, undertaking self-funded specialised education in their own time, without institutional or Government support.

This is an indication of the commitment to lifelong learning that TAFE seeks to engender in its students. A framework for recognising, encouraging and sponsoring such self-directed development activity may be needed, along with general advocacy for the value of such development to the personal and professional growth of teachers and non-teaching staff.

Career development and assessment services are not currently available to TAFE staff in a centrally managed or organised way. Information about development opportunities, specific courses, recognition arrangements and assessment services is held by a range of agencies, and is frequently fragmentary in nature. There is no single source of system-wide information that teachers or non-teaching staff could consult for information about ways of developing their careers or about opportunities to have their ongoing learning recognised.

A common concern is that practising teachers and non-teaching staff have little incentive or opportunity to document their practice and their learning, and little access to formal recognition of such learning. Yet many practitioners maintain that the learning they do in collaboration with others, on the job, is the most significant and informative for their practice, and is at least as valuable to them and their organisations as formal courses of study.

#### *Questions for discussion*

1. *What forms of continuing development are most valued by practitioners and most effective for them?*

**From an industry perspective professional development should be focused on increasing teacher knowledge of new and emerging industry technologies. Teachers should be required to spend periods of time in the workplace that allow for significant learning to occur. Mandatory release to industry should include at least two periods of three months in industry within a five-year period. Release to industry needs to be fully costed by OTTE in order that institute departmental resources are not significantly diminished due to the movement of staff in to industry.**

**Recognition for teachers who have completed periods of time in industry for the purposes of up-skilling should be provided through alignment the TAFE employee standards and financial recognition achieved through a newly developed annual performance review process.**

2. *How might a Centre improve the quality of development activity available?*

**The quality of any professional development activity in this area would be contingent on the nature of the workplace that provided the work placement opportunity and the degree to which the work performed at the workplace met with industry competency standard requirements.**

It is suggested that A Centre for TAFE equip itself with appropriately qualified staff who could map and match teacher requirements with various industry professional development sites.

It would be a major concern to the industry if TAFE teachers were able to 'pass off', as professional development activities outside of work that have a minimal relationship to industry competency standards.

An example would be where a teacher may be involved in the restoration of vintage vehicles and may claim that this activity had a bearing on the manufacture of motor vehicles and the relevance to industry competency standards.

Quite clearly, in this example, the differences between these two extremes would provide little relevance to current industry standards as they relate to current vehicle manufacturing processes.

In order to assist in the location of relevant industry professional development locations there should be the creation, by the Centre for TAFE, of a register of businesses/organisations that are willing to accept TAFE teachers into their workplace for the purposes of industry professional development.

It is reiterated at this point that professional development activities should not be short term in nature. Where possible release to industry for TAFE teachers to undertake professional development should be provided in periods of three month durations.

3. *How could self-directed and self-managed professional development be supported and recognised?*

Professional development should be recognised on the basis that it is an integral part of the teaching award and that teachers have an on-going responsibility to develop their skills in line with changing industry practices and technologies. Support from the centre for TAFE should be provided in assisting with the mapping of individual teacher competencies, including a gap analysis, and the identification of work sites that are available for professional development

Teaching staff should be case managed in respect to their professional development needs. Individual training plans, structured return to work arrangements and demonstrated learning outcomes should all form key elements of A Centre for TAFE activities.

4. *What could a Centre do to promote the value of structured development opportunities for experienced practitioners?*

Teachers without relevant industry competencies, skills and knowledge should be offered on-going professional development as outlined previously or removed from the system.

A position has been created in the system whereby individuals are blaming TAFE institutes, and the state training system, for a slippage in their own skills base. There appears to be little, if not any, responsibility for professional development being taken by individuals. This 'blame' mentality has left the system in a stalemate situation where TAFE Institutes do not have sufficient staff and resources to backfill where teachers return to the workplace for long-term professional development and teachers, in the main, are not up-skilling of their own accord in a meaningful and structured way.

Professional development should be promoted on the basis that without it teachers could not competently deliver industry competency standards which, in turn, means that they will fail to meet the requirements of the AQTF in that they are not able to deliver against current standards.

5. *What assessment or career development services would be most valuable?*

Employees in TAFE could benefit through the managed professional development program that was assessed by A Centre for TAFE .

Teachers should also be encouraged to carry out professional development activities in the knowledge that once they return to their respective TAFE departments they will not find that they be penalised as a result of their absence from the area.

It is possible that TAFE staff are reluctant to take leave from their department on a long-term basis, for professional development, due to concerns that once they return they will be given less desirable tasks/roles, (almost as if they are a new start in the department), this perception is real and requires considerable analysis for professional development amongst TAFE teachers in order for this initiative to find high levels of acceptance amongst teachers.

6. *What kinds of career-related information would be most valued by practitioners and how could it be made available?*

Staff in the TAFE system may need assistance with the planning of career paths and the identification of courses available to assist in their development. In addition TAFE staff need to know where their learning will lead them.

Some learning may be on the basis of skills maintenance, those other learning activities may be designed to move a person forward, possibly out of one particular area into a new one.

TAFE staff need to know 'up front' what the benefits of having a structured professional development plan are. Employees should also be aware of the limitations of any position, and on-going employment where skills attrition occurs in the absence of new skill development.

## 5. Development of strategic HR management

Since 1993 Victoria's TAFE Institutes and Divisions have been managerially independent. The success of this devolved management system relies on the continual modernisation of local and regional workforce management practices.

High performance and high skill TAFE institutions face continuing challenges to align their workforce capability to their mission, goals and intended outcomes for students and industry clients. This means that their human resource management practices need to be understood as an essential investment for growth and success, and planning for the development of people needs to be built into strategic thinking.

However, despite some research confirming the emergence of strategic human resource practice (OTTE, 2001) and notable examples of individual recognition for investment in people, the level of innovation in human resources practice within Institutes is still modest.

There has tended to be a focus on operational issues at the expense of strategic planning for workforce change, and Institutes have had limited capacity to apply sophisticated HR management models.

There is a variety of modern HR management and development techniques, tools and systems that managers can be encouraged to use where appropriate. Institutes can also develop their practice through voluntary benchmarking, information networking and HR management education.

### *Questions for discussion*

1. *What support could a Centre offer to the achievement of high standards in HR management practice?*

**The Centre for TAFE could provide a centralised professional development facility for TAFE HR practitioners. Reference to overseas organisations (UK. CIPD) should be made to examine models of on-going professional development strategies and certification for TAFE HR practitioners.**

2. *What role should a Centre have in promoting strategic HR practices?*

**The Centre should be viewed as the primary source of TAFE HR policy development. The Centre should model exemplary HR professional development practices and should measure the overall effectiveness of each Institute HR department.**

3. *What could a Centre do to address the particular needs and conditions that apply to recruitment, development and management in regional Institutes?*

**The Centre could assist individual TAFE Institutes in providing models and resources for recruitment and staff development uses. A Centre for TAFE should house a significant library resource for TAFE HR departments to access. In addition the Centre should also provide on-line resources for use by HR practitioners that may include templates for professional development plans, standardised position description templates and standard procedures for the employment of staff.**

## 6. Development of management and leadership practice

Sixty per cent of executive staff are likely to retire from the management workforce in the next few years (PETE, 2000).

Initiatives for development of people to replace managers, leaders and experienced teachers approaching retirement age are needed, along with ways of broadening the leadership skill profile.

There is an opportunity to identify the new and existing management and leadership qualities required for the VET sector, and a need for sponsorship of management and leadership development. There has been significant investment in existing training programs, with a focus on training for corporate roles. A number of current national projects have this focus.

New models of interaction, relationship and business practice are emerging, and this calls for people who can lead and manage in the multi-mission context of modern Institutes, influence and shape creative and innovative work, and operate well in a networked and collaborative system.

New development models need to be identified to address the scope and variety of leadership and management skills now needed in TAFE. More also needs to be done to encourage women to take up leadership roles. In 1986 3% of leaders at Director level were female. The proportion of women in such roles in 2002 is still as low as 12.5%.

### *Questions for discussion*

1. *What could a Centre do to encourage women and people from other under-represented groups to take up leadership and management roles?*

**It is possible that a key role for a Centre for TAFE would be in the identification of specific groups in the community to fill leadership and management roles in TAFE. Whilst the Centre may not itself approach individuals on this basis it may link with organisations that have direct access to individuals in under-represented groups.**

2. *What formal programs, if any, could be most effective in developing future and current TAFE leaders?*

**TAFE leaders should be selected on their capacity to develop their own skills in an ever-changing environment and to foster the ethos of professional development amongst their peers and managers. Not unlike TAFE teachers TAFE directors should be obliged to spend time in Industry and in the community in structured professional development activities. TAFE directors should also consider models mentoring from senior Government bureaucrats, industry leaders and other TAFE directors.**

**One of the most limiting aspects of management in the TAFE system is the occurrence of directors whom have spent decade after decade in the TAFE system with no or little exposure to external factors.**

**In these situations directors run the risk of losing touch with the machinations of industry and the world of commerce and may fail to meet the needs of these and other groups in the provision of training and related services.**

3. *What role should a Centre have in identifying and promoting leadership and management models that are effective in knowledge-based and innovative organisations?*

**The Centre should examine leadership models that are effective in other organisations with a view to adoption and adaptation into the TAFE system. In many sectors of industry and the broader community there exists successful leadership and management models that have applicability to the TAFE sector and in particular its management personnel.**

4. *How could a Centre best recognise and support outstanding leaders and managers and encourage them to stay in the TAFE system?*

**When measured against rewards found in Industry TAFE Directors are still poorly rewarded given the complexity of their roles and uncertainty of on-going employment. Short-term contracts, an ever-changing TAFE structure, amalgamations and mergers have left TAFE as a highly unattractive and unviable career option for professional executive personnel.**

**In order to encourage TAFE directors to remain in the system and to attract new directors (external to the system) reference needs to be made to directors remuneration and conditions in external industry based organisations.**

**The TAFE systems needs to offer directors a close collegiate of global education and training organisations through which networking, professional development and peer learning can occur.**

**A Centre for TAFE will need to consider issues of remuneration, professional standing and career development in attracting new leaders for TAFE.**

## 7. Recognising innovation

An innovation economy is based not on existing industry transactions, products and services but on knowledge and the capacity to innovate. Despite widespread perception that innovation is the result of individual genius, there is evidence that innovativeness can become part of the normal practice and conscious activity of ordinary people at work.

Understood as the everyday task of making connections, creativity does not need to be seen as complex or impossible to learn. In fact, the best innovations are often seen as obvious and simple, because they prove to be so compatible with daily practice (Drucker, 2002).

Innovation is about transforming ideas into new and better products and services, and the most valuable asset is knowing how to do this. Innovation works best in an environment in which people are encouraged to communicate ideas and collaborate with each other and to take the time to focus on a task or solve a problem. Innovation also involves taking risks, learning from failure and deciding which steps to take next. The most effective management environment for innovation is one that is receptive to new ideas, with more emphasis on encouragement than on critical evaluation (Farson, 2002).

The TAFE workforce of the last decade has arguably been more innovative, creative and adaptive than most workforces, and more responsive to the changing nature of work. This is a system strength on which we can build.

### *Questions for discussion*

1. *How might a Centre encourage collaborative approaches within and between Institutes and other agencies?*

**Over the past decade, TAFE Institutes have been encouraged to compete against each other at the expense of any collaborative initiative. Coming from an era where TAFE Institutes have tendered against each other there has been a tendency to play the benefits of the broader TAFE system for the benefit of one institute and as consequence retain their innovations in a silo type system.**

**In order to encourage collaboration amongst TAFE institutes, and collective innovation, a Centre for TAFE will have to explore ways in which collaborative TAFE effort can be rewarded in the same way as it would at an Institute wide basis.**

**Rebuilding a notion of a State-wide TAFE system as it occurred in the late 70s and early 80s needs to be revisited.**

2. *How could a Centre promote the achievements of innovation by teams, networks and individuals?*

A Centre for TAFE could promote the achievement of others through teams and through inter-TAFE secondments designed to facilitate the cross pollination of ideas and innovations throughout the TAFE sector. In particular TAFE teams could be development do work on joint, system wide, strategies; for example in the development of learning materials, infrastructure developments and professional development initiatives. Mentoring of managers and executive staff in TAFE could be promoted on the basis that mentoring, on an inter-TAFE basis, would be supported by the Centre.

In this model TAFE staff would be supported to spend time with mentors in other TAFE Institutes at OTTE, or in industry. It should be added that the potential of these initiatives can only be assured if adequate staff replacement is provided for the period that the staff member is absent from their base institute. Professional development, peer group mentoring, and shared innovation cannot be achieved if whenever the individual is active in such developments their workload is substantially increased as a result.

Where adequate backfilling for staff to undertake these initiatives is not provided, these activities become burdensome and act as a deterrent to innovation on the basis that the penalty for being involved is a heightened workload, increased stresses and little recognition that the task is important enough for adequate support to be provided.

3. *What role should a Centre have in facilitating the sharing of innovative practice across the system?*

The Centre for TAFE should be the dissemination point through which information and articles on innovative practice should occur. The Centre, through a monthly newsletter to institutes, should highlight recent innovations in the TAFE sector, and the positive effect of those initiatives in the TAFE sector. A centre for TAFE should also propose innovative projects, solutions to system wide problems and team based resolutions to issues. A Centre for TAFE should widely publicise and communicate the outcomes of these activities to all staff in the system and should create an award celebration for those initiatives that have maximum benefit for individual institutes, the state training system and the broader community.

## 8. Research

There are important aspects of teaching, learning and development practice that need to be soundly based in research. Improvement in teaching and learning, the core business of Institutes, needs to be informed by knowledge about the link between practice and outcomes.

Management and leadership practice in TAFE also needs to be based on the best available knowledge within Australia and internationally. There is value in gathering soundly based system-wide information about professional development practice and its outcomes in terms of demonstrable performance improvement for individuals and organisations. The Institute workforce is highly differentiated, and the learning needs and interests of different groups within it have not been the subject of significant research.

As new skill areas emerge, new development requirements apply for both teaching and non-teaching staff. These realities will continue to be dealt with by Institutes on a local and case by case basis, but they should be informed by the best available information about industry needs and changes to the profile of the workforce.

The capacity both to conduct and use research effectively is an area of growing importance within Institutes. A Centre may have a role in supporting research undertaken by practitioners and in promoting skills development in this area.

#### *Questions for discussion*

1. *What workforce-related data gathering and analysis could be usefully carried out by a Centre?*

**A Centre for TAFE should be used as a central point at which data on teaching practice/methodologies and underpinning research should be located. The Centre should be involved, through global linkages and affiliations with research organisations who's focus is Vocational Education and Training. Data gathered by the centre should be disseminated to TAFE Institute HR departments and should form part of on-going professional development activities undertaken by teachers through institute information forums.**

2. *How might a Centre encourage research activity that is closely connected to practice and which has significant practical applications?*

**A Centre for TAFE should be provided with sufficient funding through which targeted research can be undertaken. Areas for research should be generated through A Centre for TAFE research group that is established through participation by each TAFE Institute. This activity in itself may fall under the banner of professional development for teaching staff depending on the nature and substance of the research group activities.**

**This centre should provide supporting funds for teachers undertaking postgraduate education research programs. It is a great loss to TAFE that in the past both undergraduate and post graduate work undertaken by teachers often failed to have any impact at a local or a system wide level due largely to the lack of opportunities for materials dissemination and communications.**

**A Centre for TAFE could provide, in its monthly bulletin, an overview of research currently being undertaken and contact details of teachers who are carrying out the research.**

3. *What areas of research could appropriately be carried out by a Centre?*

**Typically areas for research that A Centre for TAFE could be involved in may include:**

**Teaching practice and innovation**

**Linking teaching to industry requirements**

**Teacher skills attrition and its effects in the classroom**

**Youth and classroom culture**

**Motivating youth through teaching**

**The positive effects of teacher development in TAFE**

**Research projects undertaken by A Centre for TAFE should be based on demonstrated system wide needs. Any research undertaken should be linked to existing and on-going research and wherever possible joint research between TAFE Institutes and overseas organisations should be encouraged.**

4. *Should the Centre become a provider of research capability for Institutes?*

**A Centre for TAFE should have the capacity to carry out independent research and fund external research carried out either in individual Institutes or through collaborative arrangements with external organisations. Collaborative arrangements may typically include TAFE to TAFE arrangements TAFE to higher education or TAFE to industry.**

5. *What role could a Centre take in supporting research initiatives undertaken within Institutes?*

**A Centre for TAFE could provide a focal point through which existing research, could be gathered and a point through which supervisor support for research undertaken at a local TAFE level could be provided. Supervision could be provided directly through academics associated with the Centre or through brokerage arrangements established *with a leading research body specifically for the purposes of guiding, informing and supporting TAFE research projects.***

## 9. Organisational structure and location

In designing and setting up a Centre, options for its organisational structure and type, its governance, and its existence as a legal entity will need to be considered. In its organisation and practice it will need to reflect the distinctive needs, interests and missions of its stakeholders, including the Institutes, practitioners and their professional representative agencies.

The interests of the clients of the TAFE system, students, employers and the community, also need to be taken into account.

The Centre will need to establish productive relationships with its stakeholder groups, with institutions that have a development role for other education sectors, and with providers of education and development services. It will also need to liaise with research institutions and agencies concerned with development within industry. It should seek to establish extensive networks to support its promotional and advocacy role and should work towards making direct professional links with highly regarded development bodies and professional entities, within Australia and internationally.

The organisational structure of the Centre should be a model of modern practice, incorporating a mixture of real and virtual settings, emphasising high levels of networking and collegiality, offering its services flexibly and responsively, and fostering good practice in a non-regulatory and client-focused way. In its structure it should be more like a knowledge-based community of practice than an institution.

Issues of access and service availability should determine the Centre's location, and its services may need to be available in a range of locations. Parts of its operations could be co-located or hosted by Institutes or other organisations.

#### *Questions for discussion*

- 1 *What organisational form should a Centre take and how should it be governed?*

**A Centre for TAFE should be located within the OTTE The Centre should contain staff and resources required to meet strategic objectives as establishes by a management group. The management Group of the Centre should contain representation from key stakeholder groups including, but not exclusively:**

**Industry groups**

**Students**

**TAFE support and teaching staff**

**OTTE**

**University research network proponent**

**The Centre should be supported through an General Manager position.**

**The General Manager should not hold the chair of the Management Group, this position should be held on a bi-annual basis alternating between the Industry position and the office of OTTE representative.**

1 *Should a Centre be located partly in virtuality, partly within and partly outside existing institutions?*

**A Centre for TAFE should be closely aligned with OTTE. The Centre General Manager should be employed by this office with due reference to the Management Group or an executive body of that Group formed for the purposes of employing a General Manager.**

5. *How could a Centre best provide services to regional Institutes?*

**A Centre for TAFE should provide services to regional communities with a commitment to equitable service provision. Centre Management would need to hold regular forums and scheduled meeting on a rotational basis throughout the state. Internet linkages, electronic research post boards and dedicated service support to the regions would underpin the operational objectives of the Centre.**

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## How to provide feedback

The Advisory Committee welcomes your views on issues related to the design and establishment of a Development Centre for TAFE and is seeking the input of Institutes, professional organisations, employers and industry bodies, and individuals.

Feedback may be provided in the following ways:

- Written comments or submissions may be forwarded by mail, fax or email to the Ministerial Advisory Committee Secretariat using the contact details below.
- Comments may be forwarded online via the website of the Office of Training and Tertiary Education, at [www.otte.vic.gov.au/tafe/centre/](http://www.otte.vic.gov.au/tafe/centre/)
- Other opportunities to comment may be arranged by contacting the Secretariat directly by telephone.
- Meetings will be arranged at TAFE Institutes during November 2002 to allow for the direct input of TAFE staff. Details will be provided to Institutes as soon as possible.
- The Committee will directly seek the views of Institute Councils and Directors.

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### Date for feedback

Comments and submissions should be received by Friday 29 November, 2002. Respondents should indicate whether or not their comments should be treated as confidential.