Theory into practice

TAFE NSW VET Teaching and Learning Project

Part C

Case studies of innovative and excellent practices and ideas

The greatly increased diversity of teaching and learning methods utilised within VET programs has developed in response to immediate pressures but has not been accompanied by any theoretical or conceptual underpinning. There is a need for a clearly developed rationale for, and explication of, a contemporary pedagogy of VET (Chappell & Hawke 2003).

Acknowledgements

Foreword

Over the last ten years, the vocational education and training (VET) sector has experienced major and ongoing structural and institutional reforms, leading to a national system for training, led by industry, and framed within agreed standards for qualifications and delivery.

Many of us have taken part in the rich and vigorous debates that have been driving this process of reform. These debates and ideas have helped create the competency standards, training packages, and requirements for becoming registered as a provider of accredited training that we now work within.

In 2003, in a speech to the TAFE Directors Australia Conference, Robin Shreeve, Deputy Director-General TAFE NSW, argued for the need to turn our thinking to the practice of teaching and learning in VET. The time had come to uncover what is unique in how vocational skills and knowledge are imparted by one person to another, and to develop the theories that can expand our understanding of VET practice and are essential to quality in its delivery.

The Australian National Training Authority had also acknowledged the importance of teaching and learning through its funding of the Blue Skies Project. This project was designed to refresh VET sector thinking about learners and learning, and teaching and training. The 'think pieces' produced through this project were taken up by TAFE NSW in a series of seminars for teachers and educational managers, where these ideas and the implications of them for practice were discussed and shared.

Recognition of the need for a VET pedagogy led TAFE NSW to initiate a major project in this area, the VET Pedagogy Project. This three-part project, commissioned by the TAFE NSW Educational Strategy Committee and conducted throughout 2003, produced a review of current literature on vocational training, an annotated bibliography of major writings in this area, and a series of cases studies of innovative and excellent practice.

A follow up project, the TAFE NSW VET Teaching and Learning Project, has been established in 2004 to build on the momentum of interest generated by the earlier work. This publication marks the first step in this new project.

The focus of the TAFE NSW VET Teaching and Learning Project will be on expanding the bibliography of VET research and debate contained here, to develop a comprehensive, up to date and accessible repository of theories and ideas. It will also provide professional development opportunities, which draw on this bibliography, for VET practitioners from areas such as teaching, curriculum development and educational policy, to broaden their understanding of the teaching and learning theories that can enhance their practice.

I would like to acknowledge the work of staff in TAFE and Community Education Policy and Support and from TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute, the case studies practitioners from across Australia, and Kaye Schofield and Associates. Their generous input and efforts on behalf of these projects have produced a resource with which we can expand our thinking about teaching and learning in VET. I look forward to the diversity of views and ideas that we will share through this process and the contribution this will make to our work, as we continue to turn theory into practice.

John Allsopp
R/Deputy Director-General TAFE and Community Education
August 2004

Contents

Acronyms

ANTA	Australian National Training Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AERC	Adult Education Research Conference
AVETRA	Australian VET Research Association
BVET	Board of Vocational Education and Training
CEET	Centre for Economics of Education and Training, Monash University
DeSeCo	Definition and Selection of Competencies
EdNA	Education Network Australia
ERIC	Educational Resources Information Centre
ERICACVE	ERIC Clearinghouse on Adult, Career and Vocational Education
HERDSA	Higher Education Research and Development Society of Australasia
NCSALL	National Center for the Study of Adult Learning and Literacy, Harvard University
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UTS	University of Technology, Sydney
VOCED	the UNESCO/NCVER research database for technical and vocational education and training

Introduction

Over the last decade, vocational education and training (VET) has experienced major and continuing reform both in Australia and overseas. In Australia, this reform has been characterised by the creation of a national system of VET and a policy shift to industry leadership of that system. The focus of the reform has been on developing a qualifications framework, competency standards and training packages, the registration of training organisations and a contestable market.

As these reforms stabilise, the focus has begun to shift from these structural matters to the teaching and learning occurring both in institutions and in workplaces. For teachers, this decade of change has meant developing a new range of skills to meet the needs of a more diverse student population, increased accountability requirements, a greater focus on learning outcomes, demands for greater efficiencies in teaching practice, and the ability to harness the new technologies for greater flexibility.

Throughout this period of great change, the professional development of VET teachers focused firstly on understanding the new requirements of competency based training and training packages and more recently on change management and online learning. What has been missing is a comprehensive appraisal of what makes for best practice in VET teaching.

In this context, the TAFE NSW Educational Strategy Group conducted a research project, the TAFE NSW VET Pedagogy Project, during 2003 in order to contribute to the development of a theory (or theories) of teaching and learning in VET.

This research project comprised three parts:

- a comprehensive literature review providing an analysis and synthesis of literature relevant to the development of VET teaching and learning theory, an annotated list of key literature and ideas for sourcing relevant emerging literature in the future

- case study field work and analysis of practices, projects, exploration, ideas and investigations in TAFE NSW Institutes and other sites that will provide a current picture of developments in teaching and learning and capture the views of practitioners who are leading the field in innovative teaching and learning

- the development of a pedagogy or pedagogies for VET, or a pedagogical framework, which can be further developed on an ongoing basis as theory and practice emerge.

In 2004, a follow up project, the TAFE NSW VET Teaching and Learning Project, has been established to build on the work of the earlier project.

The TAFE NSW VET Teaching and Learning Project will help practitioners in NSW and nationally to inform their practice with a greater understanding of the theories of teaching and learning that are directly relevant to their work. Greater understanding of these theories will enable practitioners to more effectively select and use innovative teaching and learning strategies.

The TAFE NSW VET Teaching and Learning Project will make resources available on line and provide moderated on-line discussions, links to other resources and FAQs, to develop a professional learning community of VET practitioners.

The VET Teaching and Learning Project will establish and support an editorial group that will expand the current collection of annotated writings on VET teaching and learning, as these become available. This group of NSW VET practitioners will evaluate case studies,

research papers, books and articles and policy frameworks from Australia and overseas, and prepare annotations of recommended texts for inclusion in the bibliography.

Publication of the outcomes of the first two parts of the earlier project is the first step in the VET Teaching and Learning Project. These outcomes have been edited and collated into a single document, suitable for both print and web publication.

This publication is in three parts:

- Part A contains the review of VET teaching and learning literature produced from 2000 to 2003 and the analysis of the most recent trends in ideas and debates in this field. The 80 books, articles and conference papers referenced in this analysis are listed in the bibliography at the end of this section. Part A also contains an overview of useful websites and links for sourcing further information and reading.

- Part B sets out an annotated bibliography surveying the most recent Australian and international publications (mainly from 2000 to 2003). The publications annotated here are the basis for the analysis of writing on VET teaching and learning contained in Part A.

- Part C presents case studies of innovative and excellent practices and ideas in VET. Twenty-four case studies from a wide range of industry areas were selected from across Australia for inclusion.

The debates, ideas and findings contained in this publication, and the new knowledge about VET practice that will emerge through further work in the TAFE NSW VET Teaching and Learning project, hopefully will contribute to the ongoing development of excellence in vocational education and training.

PART C
CASE STUDIES OF INNOVATIVE AND EXCELLENT PRACTICES AND IDEAS

Overview and methodology

TAFE NSW Educational Strategy Group commissioned the Institute Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (ITALIC) at TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute to undertake a process of examining innovative teaching practice in the VET sector. The aims of this project were to:

- provide teachers with examples of innovative teaching practice in the VET sector through the use of case studies

- examine the teaching and learning aspects of these case studies for further work in the theoretical development of a VET pedagogy.

This work was done by case study fieldwork between April and June in 2003 and provided the basis for a preliminary analysis of practices and projects in TAFE NSW Institutes and other sites. It provided a current picture of developments in teaching and learning in the VET sector. It also captured the views of practitioners who are leading the field in innovative teaching and learning. The case studies provide teachers with ideas for enhancing the innovation of their teaching and learning practices.

The case study project used a two-stage process of recruiting participants and selecting case studies.

Recruitment process

A dedicated web site <www.hunter.tafensw.edu.au/showcase/casestudies> was promoted to 3,500 leaders and teachers in the VET sector nationally and internationally. The URL for this web site was sent via email to key groups across Australia. The groups included past and present Flexible Learning Leaders, flexible learning managers and coordinators and research centres. The project was also promoted at four national conferences and directly with TAFE NSW Institute Directors. (Figure 1 is a flow chart describing the process of selection.)

The web site described the project in detail. Interest in the project was generated through the web site's on-line forums and by promoting a community of practice among respondents. People accessing the web site could nominate either themselves or a colleague to participate in the case study project if they met the following criteria:

- the person taught a VET program, or had direct contact with learners
- the program used an innovative approach to the facilitation of learning
- the teaching practice includes an evaluation process or there are plans to do so
- a positive difference to learning can be demonstrated
- the innovative teaching practice can be described so that other teachers can use the practice.

A database of 89 possible case study participants resulted from these recruitment processes.

Selection process

Every person on the database of 89 possible case studies was telephoned and invited to participate in the interview process. The interviewer checked if they met the inclusion criteria and a brief description of the innovative teaching practice was described on a standardised scoring form. These scoring forms were then submitted to a panel of three independent reviewers who were members of the Strategic Committee for Innovative Learning at Hunter Institute. The reviewers were blinded to any identifying details of the participant. The maximum score possible was 19.

The average score of the three reviewers for each participant was calculated and further interviews were conducted on all participants with a score above 11. Where there were more than two case studies for an organisation represented in the selection process, the highest scoring two case studies were included. The project team sent out the interview questions to each person who was selected during the review process and either used the self-completed questions or a telephone interview to describe the case study. All completed case studies were written-up by the project team into the format presented in this publication. The case study was sent back to the participant for comment and approval before being published in this report. There were 28 case studies selected and 24 case studies included in this report.

Both the initial scoring form and the full interview questionnaire tool were tested prior to implementation with a representative group of local and interstate teachers.

VET leaders and teachers
3,500 contacted

↓

nomination

↓

Possible case studies
89 nominated

↓

selection

↓

Case studies
28 selected
24 published
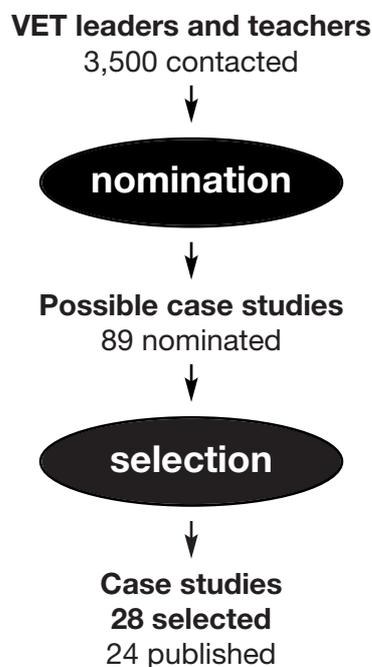
Figure 1 Flow chart of the selection process

Case studies

The following chapters contain 24 case studies from diverse industry areas. These industry areas are:

- access and general education
- arts and media
- automotive

- business administration
- children's services
- community services
- engineering and construction
- English as a second language
- film and television
- food processing
- hospitality
- information technology
- manufacturing
- maritime (seamanship, navigation and survival at sea)
- paramedical
- professional development
- real estate
- school services
- student and staff services.

The case studies describe innovative teaching and learning practices where teachers are able to balance industry workplace needs and educational system requirements to ensure that the learner's needs have the best possible chance of being met.

Some of the practices described in the case studies illustrate what many teachers would consider traditional teaching methods. However, the practices are applied creatively to enhance the learning process.

Other case studies describe the up-take of learning technologies that enhance every opportunity to meet the learners' needs. Of particular interest is the teachers' focus on maintaining strong relationships between the learning program, industry and their course.

The studies depict a range of learning approaches and environments. They are drawn from a variety of VET organisations across Australia and internationally.

All case studies contain an evaluation component of the teaching strategy.

Participants were also asked to identify ways in which the approach made a Positive difference to learning.

Within all the case studies there are themes reflecting the VET focus on:

- real or authentic workplace problems
- the provision of opportunities for learners to question and reflect on the skills they are acquiring for application within this context.

Other themes that emerge include:

- an emphasis on the learner having more responsibility for their own learning (self directed)
- a recognition of various pathways for learners
- a focus on collaborative learning partnerships with teacher, student and workplace
- increased workplace practice opportunities either through placement or simulated environments.

These case studies could not have been developed without the generous input of the various practitioners who have shared with us their passion for learning and focus on enabling the best opportunities for their students to learn and achieve successful outcomes.

<u>CASE STUDY 1</u>

Brian Martin, Teacher-in-charge Arts and Media, TAFE NSW – Western Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Delivery of Fine Arts, Ceramics and Aboriginal Arts and Cultural Practices courses to students in several remote locations in far-western NSW.

Metadata

Aboriginal, art, ceramics, commercial art, community, create, culture, cultural practices, ethical approach, exhibit, exhibition, fine arts, gallery, interactive, remote, totem

Teaching approach

The Teaching approach at the Broken Hill campus aims to work specifically with existing elements and resources in this remote region while trying to avoid the dominant commercial focus of many local artists. This approach to art fills the gap created by commercial artists providing a professional and ethical approach to creating art.

The program is always seen in the context of the culture(s) of the region, including the Indigenous and 'bush artist' traditions:

• The self-taught artists in the community see teachers as industry experts.

• Older students are encouraged to work very interactively with the young to foster peer learning and encourage a more organic transfer of knowledge.

• Students are 'pushed' to exhibit.

• The excellent relationship with the regional art gallery is maintained through an ongoing program of staff and student exhibitions.

… we address the underlying issues of society by producing artwork that functions as a resource for cultural development … we foster learning and the expansion of the individual's and community's collective mind.

Brian Martin speaking about the role of his staff in the community

In the Aboriginal program, there is an emphasis on the ethical responsibilities of the traditional work and translation of traditional ancient art and culture into contemporary work. There is also a focus on group projects such as the production of 12 fifteen feet high totem poles using mixed media and a twenty-two feet long carved canoe.

Evaluation methods

At the macro level evaluation is largely done informally through talking to people coming to exhibitions of student work.

Evaluation in terms of student feedback and experience is through a formalised process of using an evaluation sheet at the end of the course. Results of this feedback inform further development of the program.

Positive difference to learning

Confidence in the Aboriginal community with regard to art and cultural practice has been fostered through the promotion of TAFE-based art teaching, together with a professional approach to teaching and learning.

The presence of art class in one remote town provided a social emphasis and point of reference that improved community integration.

AUTOMOTIVE

Training Package: Automotive Industry Manufacturing (AUM00)
Automotive Industry Retail, Service and Repair (AUR99)

CASE STUDY 2

Russell Browne, Innovation Project Manager, Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE, Victoria

Learning environment

'In-factory' workplace training for car manufacturing sector facilitated through teacher-driven 'innovation teams'.

Metadata

ANTA, automotive, feedback tools, in-factory, innovation teams, KBT, new curricula, old practices, OTTE, project oriented delivery, reflection, whole-of-department

Teaching approach

Russell Browne is facilitating a whole-of-department approach involving over 100 automotive teachers who are all members of smaller 'innovation teams'. The core goal of the group is to reinvigorate teaching practice. All levels of management are represented in these teams, from the CEO to course coordinators and teachers.

The larger team (of all 100 teachers) is working with both a purpose-built new campus site and 'in-factory' workplace training to develop curricula, assessment and resources that are up-to-date and replace the 20 year-old practices formerly in use.

Evaluation methods

The larger project has been formally evaluated as part of an ANTA study[1] and through a process of continual evaluation and reflection the innovation methodology developed by Russell and his team continues to undergo ongoing and constant development.

> Feedback tools are being developed to map and measure the difference made to learners through a partnership with the Australian Manufacturing Centre of Excellence, South Australia.
>
> *Russell Browne*

Positive difference to learning

Excellent results have been produced for Kangan Batman TAFE's (KBT) automotive students through:

- project orientated delivery
- building teams of students.

This has, in turn, reinforced with KBT's teachers that new ways of training delivery can work.

New teaching methods also require new learning materials and KBT are committing substantial funds in this area this year (2003). Russell highlights the strong support within the Victorian State Government via its Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) for this work. Their approach has been pivotal to its success.

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[1] KBT was used as the case study model by ANTA in its 2002 publication 'Six degrees of innovation: a practical guide for building an innovative organisation'. Part of this study involved forming innovation teams to focus on reviewing current training methodologies and content. As a result, they have changed both (content and methodology) in some areas, and developed new qualifications.

CASE STUDY 3

Jennifer Harding, Head Teacher Business Studies, TAFE NSW – Southern Sydney Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Blended workplace, online and face-to-face teaching and assessment of International Economics within the Music Business Diploma and other business courses.

Metadata

> chat, economics, face-to-face, games, group dynamics, international, learning path, music business, online, poem, self-direction, web quest

Teaching approach

Jennifer says that for most of her teaching she has been guided by the learners – group dynamics, learning needs and preparedness for self-direction.

She feels that assessment events are often more innovative than teaching, with adaptation to learner needs sometimes possible around the core assessment criteria. She cites an example of this with International Economics for Music Diploma students in 2002. The assessment event related to financial, economic, political and social policies and conditions in Asian countries. Learners were asked to decide whether they wanted to work alone, or with one or more other learners; the country and its facets they wished to research, and to present this in any way they wanted so that other learners gained from their learning as well.

> Most of the time I like it when learners discover their own learning path, although I have to say honestly that when you have an external exam at the end of a module this is not always possible. An example of the latter is with Manage Remuneration and Benefits [module] this semester, where

> Questioning is one of my favourite things, but is often coupled with games, simulations, small group discussions, case studies. I also favour using creative learning approaches – a Web Quest for a face to face class, a discovery tour (audit of the College) for occupational health and safety, activities using movement around a room, having online learners try out summarising a forum, running a chat.
>
> *Jennifer Harding*

> there were lots of learner activities, but the group dynamics, my own unfamiliarity with a new syllabus, and the external exam, meant that learners felt pressured when they needed to construct their own knowledge.

Jennifer also offers the example of the Develop Work Priorities module about management functions and process, and says that the nature of the assessment event set at the beginning of the course changed to accommodate different factors. Ultimately, one learner recited a poem about the process of change during the module and other groups presented in different ways about the difficulties they'd had with the more open-ended approach to this module, compared with others. They also discussed their learning from a project that many didn't have time to finish. One group put up a web page with their assignment. Another had a series of posters. In all these cases, they documented their learning.

> The other most innovative part of my teaching relates to trying whatever is available at the time, and changing something that's not working very well. An example of this is with online learners, where often a phone call rather than emails, announcements, messages and forum postings will enable them to get back into the course. A few people have said later that it was like magic, the human interaction is all important for e-learning!

Evaluation methods

Reflective teaching practice[2] coupled with ongoing personal research.

We have a lot of part-time teachers in our section, who we all speak with regularly. Learning activities are usually based around workplace experiences and a lot of examples of different human resources management and training practices are gathered this way.

Positive difference to learning

Jennifer suggests that the keys to being more positive towards learning are:

• 'learning how to learn, particularly in relation to self direction'

• applying theory to practice

• asking 'how does this work in your workplace?'

Jennifer also says:

> One of the greatest things I see each year is school-leavers who grow personally and educationally. This is a difficult thing to explain, you can see that they take responsibility for themselves, their learning and work.

Courses in areas such as International Economics often bring with them an 'expectation that it would be deadly dull'. However, through application of creative approaches to teaching and learning, students now comment that they 'never knew that it could be interesting'.

> It is about being learner centred. Respect and trust for people.
>
> *Jennifer Harding*

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[2] Reflective teaching practice: thinking about and critically analysing one's own teaching in order to improve teaching practice.

CASE STUDY 4

Beth Hobbs, TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Administration Services courses in a wide variety of innovative teaching practices. Students are enrolled in various courses, which may include one or more of 37 different modules packaged together. Enrolments are taken every six weeks and students enter the courses at varying levels including Statement of Attainment through to Certificate IV. The students are able to progress through the courses at a faster rate than previously.

Metadata

blended, buzz groups, collaborative learning, faster, individualised, mentoring, online, orientation, peer teaching, print-based, small group projects, trainees, varying levels, workshops

Teaching approach

The teaching approach encompasses blended delivery strategies, which include tutorials, peer teaching, workshops, buzz groups, small group projects, mentoring, online resources, print-based self-paced materials, collaborative learning, trainees and individualised learning programs. Students have access to tutorial sessions of which there are 13 different ones each week; there is also a teacher assigned to them as a mentor they can contact outside of the tutorial sessions. Some modules are offered online and if they choose this option they are put into a small group with a teacher guiding them through the learning materials. Orientation sessions are conducted for all courses, with additional orientation sessions included for those students who choose the online option. The teaching approach includes options to move through each course a bit faster by

> The challenge for us as teachers is matching and meeting the needs of the learner.
>
> *Beth Hobbs*

using Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) processes and the development of individualised learning programs.

Evaluation methods

Evaluation of the teaching approach and course outcomes is through student feedback gathered every six months. This feedback is integrated into course improvement processes.

Beth also participates in a discussion group for teachers to reflect on their practice and evaluate future strategies.

Positive difference to learning

Beth feels that a major positive difference to learning offered by this approach is that the students have options where and when they study and that barriers of access to these learning options have been removed by providing more opportunities for various learning approaches.

The approach also allows learners to stop for a while and then pick up where they left off. In some ways, this has been a challenge in that it stretches the TAFE recording systems to cope with the flexibility; however, the outcome has been more opportunity for individual feedback to students.

Teachers have also been challenged and consequently have sought professional development programs like Introduction to Teaching Online (ItTO), an introductory online facilitation course for practitioners run by TAFE NSW and Facilitating and Managing eLearning (FAMe) an extension of facilitation skills at Graduate Certificate level.[3] Beth and her staff have also been

able to secure a variety of project funding
to further develop resources and have
enhanced their networking opportunities
with other colleges and institutes.

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[3] The FAME (Facilitating And Managing eLearning) course
has been outlined as another case study in this report – see
Val Evans PDN, TAFE NSW.

CASE STUDY 5

Marie Hunt, Head Teacher Administration Services, TAFE NSW – Riverina Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Online delivery of Certificate IV and Diploma in Business Administration for students with industry and supervisory experience.

Metadata

administration, ADRI, Albury, business, certificate, co-facilitation, collaboration, conference, diploma, eLearning, hands-on, holistic, industry, Janison, online, peer, project-based, reflection, retention, supervisory, toolbox, VET, virtual conference, vocational, Wagga

Teaching approach

Marie and her co-facilitator (Vicki Marchant at Wagga Wagga) are using a holistic and project-based approach to teaching online, centred on participants planning and conducting a virtual conference (organising everything including concept, catering, branding, marketing, logos, registration, accommodation, menus, speakers, conference and social programs).

They conduct their course fully online using the virtual conference as a vehicle for student learning, team building and peer collaboration.

A 'hands-on' methodology is implemented through teaming-up students and asking them to develop core components of the conference. As the program is fully online, it enables the two teachers to work collaboratively at a distance (between Albury and Wagga Wagga), with the student cohort being spread across the state (NSW).

> Most of us want to attend the conference!
>
> *Marie Hunt, talking about the virtual conference her students create as a holistic learning tool*

Several levels of student assessment are collected from learners, including learning journals and the assessment tasks within each module.

Evaluation methods

Students are asked for general course feedback during telephone interviews.

Staff also use a variety of evaluation strategies to inform major approach and program changes for the next semester of course delivery. These include:

- reflection and critical review of the program
- ongoing discussion
- a basic ADRI (Approach, Deployment, Results, Improvement) quality improvement cycle.

As this is an online course conducted from within a learning platform (Janison Toolbox), additional tools are available for determining such statistically relevant evaluation data as the time each learner spends online and progress rates through the course material.

Positive difference to learning

Enthusiasm and fun within the program are reported as being infectious and leading not only to increased retention rates among participants, but also to an increased sense of community and engagement with peer and team learning strategies among the learner group.

Two interesting spin-off effects of the program have been:

- increased recognition of (and valuing of) the skill-sets of the largely female learner cohort, together with

- an appreciation of the potential for transferability of the program model among the several program participants who are teachers from the VET sector.

CASE STUDY 6

Bev Luke, Northern Territory University, Northern Territory

Learning environment

Teaching of Certificate I, II, III, IV and Diploma in Business Studies at a multi sector campus (TAFE and university) through a simulated practice firm (virtual company), plus an operating practice firm developed with local business.

Metadata

benchmarking, practice firm, simulated workplace, virtual workplace

Teaching approach

A virtual operating company in near-real work business environment employs students. Strategies include virtual employment and salaries, employment contracts, job descriptions, promotional opportunities, trading (on-line, email, fax), on-line banking. All aspects of operational business are experienced by the students except sending and receiving real products and money. The NTU practice firm is connected to other national and international networks of practice firms to allow 'inside' trading. Other strategies include organising mini trade fairs. This process involves students from other disciplines, including some degree students from marketing, IT and finance, who help develop a customer complaints section, procedures manuals and accounts. This strategy provides a point of integration for VET and higher education students.

Assessment is completed on-the-job in the practice firm. Student orientation activities, such as initial skills testing, are provided upfront to ensure support is provided for NESB and Indigenous students for literacy and numeracy help.

> The practice firm has quality graduands with theoretical and practical experience. They have skills in communication and problem solving as well as work ethics developed through realistic learning opportunities.
>
> *Bev Luke*

Bev and her colleagues have established other NTU companies and agencies in Alice Springs, Darwin and Katherine which also to link with the Australian Network of Practice Firms. All companies interact with each other, including students attending practice firm conferences in Australia, Germany and elsewhere.

Evaluation methods

A range of evaluation methods are used that focus on the learner identifying their own performance within a working environment. These include benchmarking activities for students with other practice firms nationally and internationally, weekly staff meetings to resolve issues and provide feedback (in this case the students are the staff and run the meeting according to required assessment requirements). A 'director's' (teacher) report is provided at each meeting and a weekly evaluation form is completed by all members to ensure satisfaction with and effectiveness of the program.

Positive difference to learning

Only three years ago, Bev had 12 students at Certificate II level, but by changing the delivery mode there are now 70 students involved in the course. All other enrolments have increased substantially. Another positive outcome is that the faculty acts as an employment broker for students. Employers now ring TAFE first before advertising for employment positions.

Implementation of this teaching approach has expanded and the faculty is setting up more practice firms across the NT and are now exploring a 'whole of government' practice firm in an Indigenous community. Local businesses are partnering with the faculty to allow 'staff' (students) to complete work experience in real workplaces and also undertake additional tasks on their behalf.

CASE STUDY 7

Alison Jones, Head Teacher Personal, Community and Health Services, TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Simulated community-based child-care centre used as a location for assessment events for 250 certificate and diploma level community services and children's service students.

Metadata

assessment event, authentic assessment, children's services, community, community services, debriefing, parents, play, simulated

Teaching approach

In response to a specific need, Alison Jones and her team have established an authentic assessment event that has spin-off advantages in strengthening community liaison and involvement.

The team establishes a large play session for use as the assessment tool that runs over five morning sessions for a total of three hours per day. Children attend for two hours, while students attend for three, including half hour set-up and half hour debrief at the end of the session. Each session attracts more than 25 children and their parents and carers per day. The program starts from day one in the students' course, which means that they are dealing with parents straight away.

Previously it wasn't possible to adequately or authentically assess the community-based assessment component of what is largely a practical course. This approach has been developed in response to this situation and its aim is to reflect the set-up as nearly as possible of that in a community-based centre, including all

> Making links with parent groups and family day care schemes – extending on established links with community groups, provide a parent information / education.
>
> *Alison Jones*

administrative functions (enrolments forms and policies).

Students have a play-session log book for assessment in which competencies are signed off by the staff running the play-sessions.

Evaluation methods

Post-session debriefings are held at which participants are encouraged to be positively critical and proactive.

Student evaluation forms are used at the end of each semester to more formally gauge effectiveness of the program.

An informal measure of the success of the approach is that although the program has never been advertised, the play session attracts at least 25 children and their parents and carers per day, all through word-of-mouth.

Positive difference to learning

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the local childcare industry consider Alison's approach best practice. By making the assessment program more realistic and hands-on, the theoretical component of the course has evolved into one that gives opportunities for seeing theory put into practice.

The fact that this is best practice is evident from:

- feedback from community-based centre placement

- increased awareness of occupational health and safety

- improved ease of students in speaking with parents.

CASE STUDY 8

Debby Barnes, Head Teacher Children's Services, TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Children's services certificate and diploma level courses offered through flexible delivery using a combination of paper-based resources, workplace visits and monthly face-to-face workshops.

Metadata

children, children's services, feedback, flexible delivery, holistic, learning community, mature age women, paper-based, Saturday workshops, telephone contact, workplace visits, workshops

Teaching approach

Debby Barnes and her team have developed a range of programs in children's services capable of being customised to meet individual learner requirements. These programs are very flexible and include options for Saturday workshops, written modules, workplace visits and telephone contact, and are able to be adapted to suit each learner's preferred pace.

Most modules include a workplace component and in these situations the module facilitator provides support to the learner and workplace through the provision of written documentation on the learning outcomes and other course expectations. This is followed up via a workplace assessor visiting the workplace on a monthly basis.

Debby feels that they have developed a 'recipe' that is effective in getting trained workers into the industry. This includes personal support and telephone contact, making students feel that they are in a community of learning, together with oral

> People enjoy being able to earn an income while they train.
>
> *Debby Barnes*

assessment and assessing tasks holistically to remove duplication within learning outcomes and course modules.

Evaluation methods

The success of the teaching approach is attested by:

- high completion rates of mature-age women who haven't studied for a very long time
- significant numbers of requests from employers seeking graduates.

Feedback is sought regularly from students at the end of each monthly workshop and this is integrated into continuous program improvement.

Positive difference to learning

The high level of personal contact with a largely mature-age student cohort is seen as making a positive difference, as Debby says:

> …it's the relationship with the teacher that gets them through the hard times as seen in the high completion rates.

Further, the quality of staff and regular industry workshops help to ensure that the programs continue to reflect the high standard of delivery respected, and now expected, by the industry.

CASE STUDY 9

Lola Krogh and Richard Krogh, Department of Community Development, Canberra Institute of Technology, ACT

Training can be the catalyst for fundamental and lasting change in all aspects of an organisation. The changes that training brings to the workplace affect people and how they work.

Lola Krogh

Learning environment

The learning environment focuses on organisational change and the development of a learning culture for staff employed in a Juvenile Justice Centre. Learning pathways include in-house training mapped to Certificate III and IV in Community Services, delivery of Certificate IV in the workplace and articulation to Diploma, Graduate Diploma and other associated degree courses.

Metadata

collaborative learning, cooperative enquiry, critical self reflection, learning community, learning culture, transformational learning, workplace change

Teaching approach

The use of training was engaged as a major strategy for workplace change. There was a need for a more effective approach to management in the centre, an approach that would enhance the centre's capacity for innovation and creativity, provide more effective strategies and policies and develop a structure that allowed the assimilation of the various disciplines involved in providing services. The goal of developing a learning culture was integrated into decisions and planning as part of the change management process at the centre. The concept was to engage all staff at all levels in the training culture and tailor training to meet individual needs throughout their employment with the Service

Workplace learning strategies incorporate:

- induction processes

- individual learning plans
- workshops that include collaborative and team learning activities.

These workshops also provide a venue for staff at the centre to constructively and critically self-reflect upon workplace incidents through discussions with teachers and co-workers.

Students' experiences and goals are an essential part of the educational process. These experiences are used to integrate work-focussed projects and challenges from ongoing professional work into the students' course work. The teaching approach also places a focus on the psychology and sociology of change, critical and creative thinking, understanding cultural perspectives and systems thinking. Other strategies include workplace mentors; student workplace study groups; flexible course timetables to accommodate shift work; work based projects; access to online materials; print based texts; individualised RPL processes and professional development plans. Each module within the courses emphasises the relationship between theory and practice to allow staff the opportunity to immediately integrate the classroom learning into practical outcomes.

Evaluation methods

Evaluation has included external audits and regular student and workplace feedback. The centre has undertaken an independent audit against the Australasian Standards for Juvenile Justice Facilities and is the only centre in Australia that has

participated in the audit. Two external auditors from NSW and SA undertook the audit. Some of their findings that relate to achievements of the business, or its employees, which can be attributed to training are as follows:

• development of a new case management system

• the lowest incident rates in youth justice facilities in Australia

• a considerable reduction in self-harm rates.

The audit findings also included outcomes related to the training such as a reduction of injury and claims, lower staff turnover, improved staff morale and teamwork. The centre was awarded the 2001 Employer of the Year at the ACT Training Excellence Awards.

Positive difference to learning

There has been a significant increase in the level of staff with qualifications. During the past three years staff training profiles have gone from only 0.07% with qualifications relevant to their position to current rates of 100% of full-time and contract youth workers with tertiary qualifications relevant to their positions. There has been a notable improvement in staff morale and a substantial reduction in staff attrition rates compared with previous years. Staff are experiencing greater opportunities for career progression both within the centre and the wider organisation. An improved team approach and a greater sense of staff worth and belonging have also evolved through the changed philosophy and culture of the centre.

Other positive differences from this teaching approach include improved casework practices. These practices have been developed as a consequence of the training and have provided the following outcomes:

1 substantial reduction in critical incidents
2 less need for restraint practices
3 more positive outcomes for the young people in the centre.

The centre has experienced real changes in culture, philosophy and the outcomes of its core business, that is, the rehabilitation and reintegration of young offenders into the community.

CASE STUDY 10

Annie Dares, Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE, Queensland

> Students, industry and staff openly discuss the success, challenges and what could have been done differently.
>
> *Annie Dares*

Learning environment

Working directly with the community services industry to enhance students' learning and to make an active and positive contribution to the industry.

Metadata

community services, community work, disability, diversional therapy, project-based, project management, youth work

Teaching approach

The teaching practice uses a project-based learning model to teach a wide range of theoretical frameworks, which then are used to develop the skills required of a community worker.

The teachers work and teach in the areas of disability, youth work, community work and diversional therapy. The teaching team share a strong philosophy of actively contributing and being responsive to the community services industry. This is done by active representation on committees, reference groups and working parties and delivering customised training to the industry. All team members undertake an action-based learning methodology which is supported by the community services unit at Cooloola Sunshine Institute of TAFE.

The students range in age from 17 to 55 years and come to the course with a wide range of life, work and academic experience. This style of teaching gives students the opportunity to showcase the knowledge and skills that they have and to develop related and new skills. They apply their knowledge base and skills to real,

practical, community-driven projects that are demanding but also meaningful.

The community based projects that have been undertaken include developing and launching:

- a suicide prevention resource guide
- a community services expo
- an intergenerational project with Sixties and Better and Crime Prevention Queensland
- Crime Prevention Week
- developing a parent education support resource in collaboration with Public Health, councils and Centrecare
- opening of BLOOMHILL Cancer Help Centre.

There are many community service agencies wanting to collaborate on projects as it enables the agency to achieve their particular project outcomes by using the large range of human and in-kind resources provided by CSIT. The quality of the outcomes achieved by students in the past is now widely known in the community. The process starts with an initial meeting with the teacher or team leader and an idea of what they want to achieve. This is then formalised into a project brief with a time line of 10 to 15 weeks, fitting well within a semester. The next meeting discusses the project brief, which includes the identification of expectations and guidelines. Students then develop themes, roles and tasks to complete the project.

Evaluation methods

A formal debriefing is conducted with the students, the agency and Annie, and is usually facilitated by the students. Students, industry and staff openly discuss the success, challenges and what could have been done differently. Feedback is also canvassed by the community services sector that has participated in the project. Other sponsor and general public feedback is also sought and analysed.

A process of moderation is used with other members of staff with the project(s) being discussed at staff meetings and informally. The project brief, learning and assessment guides are presented and critiqued. Staff discuss their delivery and assessment strategies, which can be incorporated into the project. Colleagues also provide debriefing about issues as they arise, ideas and general moral support.

Positive difference to learning

There are a range of positive outcomes for students' learning, such as:

- increased levels of student motivation. The students' level of motivation improves with their excitement about having an active role in the learning process.

- increased confidence through students gaining a wide variety of personal and professional knowledge and skills. The students increase their capacity to integrate theory into practice, enabling them to enter their field placement with a greater understanding of the industry, and with a set of skills that are transferable. A number of students gain employment from their first placement.

- an increase in the students' knowledge and skill retention because they have actively been involved in the learning process in a real and purposeful manner.

Students can apply knowledge and skills to new situations.

- a reduction in the power relationship between the teacher and learner that can enable students to relax and enjoy their learning

- reflective practice[4] has become integrated into the learning process, and into the students' practice, that is solution focused.

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[4] Reflective practice: the act of analysing one's own learning and associated thinking and assumptions.

CASE STUDY 11

Kylie Lee, Learning Technology Consultant, Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE, Queensland

Learning environment

Client-centred workplace delivery to apprentices in the engineering and construction industries in regional and remote southern Queensland.

Metadata

apprenticeship, audio-conference, bulletin board, client-centred, contract, email, flexible learning options, individual, integrated audit, on-site, user choice, video-conference, workplace training

Teaching approach

Southern Queensland Institute of TAFE (SQIT) is using a client-centred approach for the management of training apprentices. This approach gives individuals a variety of flexible learning options and is underpinned by an administrative structure that enables its success.

Individual training plans with apprentices and employers are negotiated during an initial face-to-face on-site visit. These plans incorporate delivery strategies that may mean a student seeing a teacher as often as weekly or as little as twice a year. A range of flexible learning options are used to support this process including:

- various face-to-face modes
- print-based distance resources
- audio and video-conferencing
- email
- bulletin boards
- workplace training and mentoring
- CD-ROMs
- online delivery.

> For teachers this approach has shown the need to adapt to each learning plan and maintain a constant degree of flexibility.
>
> *Kylie Lee*

The main drivers for this approach have been cost effectiveness, efficient use of resources, minimised travel, high value for students and the introduction of additional administrative and reporting requirements under the 'user choice' contract for apprentices and trainees.

Evaluation methods

On an individual level, each training plan developed is reviewed every 12 months, while an 'integrated audit' system (an internal process for TAFE Queensland) enables evaluation at a macro level.

Positive difference to learning

Individualisation of the learning and tailoring of each program to each student and their employer's needs has:

- improved flexibility and access to learning
- increased corporate awareness of client training needs.

CASE STUDY 12

Ken Fraser, Manager Food Processing, TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Workplace delivery for food processing employees in the manufacturing sector incorporating 'up-front' assessment of student needs and tailored learning programs.

Metadata

evidence, self-assessment, targeted training, work-based projects

Teaching approach

Ken's teaching approach has changed significantly since he has been involved in workplace delivery. He has changed to consider much more strongly the skills that students bring to a course or subject, and uses an up-front assessment approach, followed by targeted training to cover the gaps. For students undertaking higher-level competencies, he and his team have developed work-based projects for students to identify their own learning needs, target what is required, and then produce evidence against a range of competencies.

Evaluation methods

Evaluation occurs in a number of ways, including:

- individual student feedback

- negotiation with company managers and supervisors to endorse the relevance of the work-based project

- collaborating with teachers located in various companies to compare notes and ideas and to share assessment strategies.

> Given that we are assessing about 'competent performance in the workplace' according to the Training Packages, we need to make more use of evidence from workplaces of actual performance.
>
> *Ken Fraser*

To overcome the isolation that many teachers feel from working in different workplaces, they rely on information and communications technologies (ICT) strategies such as email to maintain effective communication with each other.

Positive difference to learning

Ken notes that through his workplace delivery experience he is much more likely to accept workplace evidence of skills and knowledge than before and believes that many of these principles can and should be adopted with mainstream classes.

He and his team negotiate initially with company supervisors and managers as well as students to ensure the relevance of the chosen work-based projects. They (the supervisors and managers) particularly like this approach as they see benefits to the company as the students gain and apply new skills, including problem-solving strategies, into the workplace.

CASE STUDY 13

Noelene Milliken, Foundation Studies Teacher, TAFE NSW – Riverina Institute, NSW

> My students build and steer their own boats. I provide the rudder that keeps them going in the right direction while at the same time avoiding the submerged obstacles that could tip them over. Think learning, not teaching.
>
> *Noelene Milliken*

Learning environment

Noelene worked with a community group of Aboriginal Elders to acquire external funding that enabled the students to 'employ' their own teacher (Noelene being one of these teachers). By forming a partnership with TAFE, the group applied for and received a Centenary of Federation grant. The partnership also resulted in a very learner-focused learning environment.

Noelene believes that a partnership approach to community capacity building is one that can lead to long-term economic and social benefits to groups and communities as a whole.

Metadata

Aboriginal, community, confidence in self, eclectic, Elders, external funding, individual, interview, learning styles, Paulo Friere, questioning learners, reflective teaching, rudder, social justice, steer, video

Teaching approach

Noelene says that her teaching approach has been described as 'messy eclectic' – she uses whatever theory works and does whatever is needed to assist her students to learn.

> I probably lean to Paulo Friere[5] as I believe emphatically in social justice issues and that people in our community have the power within themselves to bring about the changes that will make their lives worthwhile. They will need help and guidance along the way and that is the role that I see for me as a public educationalist.

For the most part, Noelene works with 'individuals' within her courses. Her delivery is based on the premise that participants have their own personal needs and learning style that must be met in a way that enables them to learn efficiently and effectively.

Noelene believes it is important to:

* 'think learning, not teaching'
* focus on the individual rather than just the course or module outcomes
* that 'we must teach the what, how and why of learning'
* that students have a right to understand why they are being expected to do something.

Evaluation methods

Noelene uses formal and informal evaluations of learning. Students are encouraged at the end of each session to add comments in their records about how they felt the lesson went. Written evaluations for literacy activities are used to seek feedback as to what the students thought of the activity and whether it was of benefit to them. Another feedback mechanism is formal interview of students by staff midway through a semester and at the end of a semester.

> I am very much into reflective teaching and have always written reports for my various significant others – coordinators, section managers, team teachers, workplace sponsors – at the end of a training activity. This aspect of my teaching helps me to see where I went well and where I could improve.

24

Theory into practice: TAFE NSW VET Teaching and Learning Project
PART C – CASE STUDIES OF INNOVATIVE AND EXCELLENT PRACTICES AND IDEAS

Positive difference to learning

Noelene commented that:

> Yesterday a colleague told me that I had caused him to run out of hot water because he spent too long under the shower thinking about the question I had set in regards to literacy. I would like to think that that was a new experience for him and that he has now joined the questioning learners.

Noelene says that it is absolutely imperative that knowledge is readily available to everyone and that we do not use language to exclude. She goes on to say that she doesn't think that she inspires people, but would like to think that there is an ongoing confidence in self that enables students she has taught to go and follow their dreams. She believes that the Elders are a group that has done that. They did not know each other very well at all when they started their oral history program. Within two years together they had written a book in their language, produced a video, become an incorporated body and have begun to pull their community together.

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[5] Paulo Friere (1921 to 1997), Brazilian adult educator and influential late twentieth century thinker on education, best known for his emphasis on dialogue and his concern for the oppressed.

CASE STUDY 14

Steve Matheson, Ambulance Service, NSW

Learning environment

A training program for ambulance officers to learn first aid and emergency medicine. The program has a strong focus on the development of clinical decision-making processes. Students are employed in the Ambulance Service and learn skills through a range of 'blended' teaching approaches to enhance their decision-making skills.

Metadata

Ambulance, blended teaching, case-based, clinical decision-making, emergency management, health, paramedical, scenario, simulation

Teaching approach

A range of teaching approaches are used, including face-to-face training, simulations and, more recently, new-technology-based training and assessment. This technology involves the use of simulations and scenarios with activities presented online and participants contributing to a moderated discussion board. Teaching strategies also include placement of advanced level trainees in hospitals to practice skills under the guidance of anaesthetists in controlled surroundings. These students are then assigned to training officers who oversee on-the-job training. Problem (case) based, scenarios, simulations and face-to-face lectures are also used to develop skills and underpinning knowledge.

Strategies to teach competencies include extensive use of a range of simulation mannequins for practicing skills. The depth of training varies according to the level of skill required (for example, general duties

> Through this approach ambulance officers are better equipped to perform their role due to enhanced decision making skills.
>
> *Steve Matheson*

versus paramedic). Future plans include a greater emphasis on flexible learning and enhanced access to training.

Evaluation methods

The Service carefully monitors trends in emergency medical practice, which dictate the training needs of the organisation. There is a Medical Advisory Committee consisting of a number of emergency medicine physicians who review current medical practice and recommend changes to services. The Clinical Governance Committee, which reviews case sheet data and other sources of intelligence to detect changing trends and their relationship with work practices, also contributes to training evaluation.

Steve and his team are currently attempting to measure the effectiveness of the simulation and scenario-based training aspects of the program. Through a trial process, he and his colleagues are providing a number of learners with access to a computer-based simulation program, while the remainder of the students in the class are not being given access. On completion of the course all students undertake a scenario-based assessment. The differences between the two groups are being assessed to determine if there are differences in a range of cognitive skills (for example, time taken to reach a decision and correctness of the decision).

Positive difference to learning

The evolving Certificate to Practice training program has been developed in response to the desire of Ambulance staff to have greater flexibility in training options.

Provision of training through flexible learning strategies will enable equity in access to training for our geographically dispersed staff.

Through this approach, Steve believes that ambulance officers are better equipped to perform their role with enhanced decision-making skills. The approach has also had a positive impact on trainers by providing them with a better understanding of flexibility, enhanced teaching principles and a strong desire to meet the needs of the learner.

CASE STUDY 15

Mark McManus, TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Teaching Certificate III in Hospitality (Commercial Cookery) and Certificate II in Hospitality (Kitchen Strand) throughout the Hunter Valley integrating a high level of industry expertise, teaching and blended learning approaches. A variety of learning options are offered students.

Metadata

blended learning, commercial cookery, continuous cycle feedback, learning options, online

Teaching approach

The commercial cookery section of the Hunter Institute describe their learning approach as being adaptable and willing to trial new concepts in delivery. Their experience has shown that students learn better if given a variety of different ways of learning the material. Developing and piloting the blended delivery between TAFE and the workplace has seen a significant change in planning, developing and maintaining the courses. The blended components include a CD with multimedia interaction, and workbooks with feedback sheets for practical aspects of the course. The online module can be accessed from home or in the classroom. The workbook is used to supplement delivery and to recognise different learning styles, particularly when managing some of the larger blocks of information. The online component has been web-based using Janison (online learning management system). The section implemented different strategies of assessment using Qmark Perception (online test and survey application),

> The introduction of blended learning has seen … more direct workplace tuition and interaction for the student.
>
> *Mark McManus*

Janison with 'time frame' on (when tests can be attempted) and auto marking.

The faculty has close links with industry, such as a Culinary Delights week with guest chefs. The faculty is in the process of signing a memorandum of understanding with the Hospitality Training Network and is also negotiating with other organisations to do the same.

Evaluation methods

The continuous cycle of feedback from all stakeholders, employers, students and peers is undertaken regularly by communicating verbally and through correspondence. A survey of students is also undertaken periodically to confirm learning styles are being catered for and delivery is satisfactory.

Positive difference to learning

The ability to communicate on a more personal level with the employers and students one-on-one through the blended delivery and workplace visits has been an invaluable learning experience. This level of communication has enabled the rolling-out of the new course materials using the blended learning approach. This has been less daunting and less threatening for the teacher to experience and embrace. The introduction of blended learning has seen a reduction in the attendance days in the classroom and more direct workplace tuition and interaction for the student. The students and employers have a greater opportunity for one-on-one discussion.

CASE STUDY 16

Janet Stephens, TAFE NSW – South West Sydney Institute, NSW

Learning environment

The Diploma in Systems Administration is run in a blended mode of delivery that includes optional attendance at workshops, lectures and tutorials with the balance being run online. The online learning program provides opportunities for chats, discussions and peer-to-peer interaction. This approach is innovative as it allows students to be able to undertake relevant part-time jobs, study other options and have the flexibility to look after their family, while gaining the necessary qualifications to be employed as a systems administrator.

Metadata

blended mode, information technology, peer to peer interaction, systems administrator

Teaching approach

Janet uses underlying principles of practice, relation, relevance and application to various contexts.

> This is where the underpinning skills such as research, analysis, critical thinking and 'thinking outside the box' are important to ensure students are learning life long skills. Quite often it is the steps they take to get to a goal that are the skills that will carry them through no matter what career or position they find themselves in.

Other teaching approaches include using:

- peer-to-peer mentoring
- group work
- case studies
- workplace scenarios
- question based strategies
- problem solving.

> I enjoy my job and have a total commitment to TAFE and in particular to my students in ensuring they have quality teaching in a fun, non-threatening environment.
>
> *Janet Stephens*

Janet also evaluates the group dynamics, learning styles and individual preferences in the first couple of contacts to determine the strategies for delivering the content and modifying the delivery of the course to better meet the needs of the unique group.

As blended learning is new to most students an orientation session ensures students have the prerequisites for the course. However, this alone is not adequate in ensuring the students learning style will suit this type of environment, therefore they are given a sheet with FAQs which may help them assess whether this is for them.

Using RPL learning strategies is seen as very important in the field of information technology because of the rapid learning application within this area. Janet notes that RPL must be acknowledged at some level and may primarily be the foundation of what needs to be taught or covered.

Evaluation methods

The course has not been run exactly the same way twice as each semester changes are made to incorporate improvements which may come from student evaluations, facilitator reflection, current research into teaching and new technology. There are various evaluation methods used including chats, forums and informal interviews. Reflection and self-evaluation are important parts of the evaluation process.

Positive difference to learning

'Success' to Janet as a facilitator is measured by the results of assessment tasks, forum contributions reflecting critical

thinking and analysis. Further success, which is not tangible, is the confidence the student reflects, their depth of questioning and the hunger for more information. The transition the student makes to a deeper level of understanding is often reflected in contributions they make to the discussions supported by detailed research. Janet believes that giving the students the opportunity to firstly learn in an environment that best suits them, either totally online or blended has empowered the students to determine the when and where they learn, while giving them foundation skills to be lifelong learners. This environment encapsulates the critical thinking, analysis and research skills that form a strong foundation for the technical skills required to survive in the information technology arena. This is a fast and ever changing environment and to survive one needs to be confident to apply what is known to the unknown.

CASE STUDY 17

Wayne Shirley and Dale Jackson, TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Information technology students from a range of backgrounds have a Learning environment that encompasses online and workplace simulations.

The focus is on real life examples, giving the learning meaning and making it 'fun'.

Metadata

fun, information technology, work-based communication, workplace simulation, workplace systems

Teaching approach

Students have been able to more easily adapt to the requirements of industry and move from a 'classroom' focus to the workplace. The major learning approaches utilised include:

- student facilitation
- project work
- simulations
- teamwork
- lab group work
- demonstrations.

Wayne and Dale's teaching uses an integrated approach that combines online, blended and face-to-face delivery options. This has been made possible through a more team focused approach, and the move to a facilitation style of delivery, combined with greater interactivity. The workplace setup (computer lab) is the key to the innovative approach, 'the students have a feeling of ownership, real life simulation and keen sense of worth'. They have confidence in the resources and the fact that they are interacting with the latest technology.

> Our motivation in striving for excellence in our students. Helping them reach their workforce goals is our key driving force.
>
> *Shirley and Jackson*

Wayne and Dale feel that the future looks to be one of 'flexibility'.

> Our teaching strategies are encompassing that vision and focusing on core future skills such as IT competency, being adaptable and flexible to change, being capable communicators and able to work in teams.

The teaching practice includes practical projects, demonstrations and observations. There is a great deal of remedial support and feedback for each of these components. There has been an attempt to minimise the formal theory component.

The teachers note that these strategies seem to be effective and have identified that the students prefer a visual representation and a process that they can repeat until they can gain competency.

Evaluation methods

Evaluation is integrated through student feedback and the teaching team's ongoing dialogue.

Positive difference to learning

Students have completed the program with a greater understanding of the 'real' working environment and with examples of their work. The evidence collected which is especially valuable for students to use for employer interviews includes portfolios, project examples and logbooks. They also have a better understanding not only of the technical requirements of the IT industry but also of teamwork, project work and work-based communication requirements.

CASE STUDY 18

Graham Turner, owner and sole instructor, Maritime Training, Otago, New Zealand

Learning environment

Seafarers (candidates for skipper and officer qualifications) working at sea are taught by distance learning methods. Although not all candidates have had previous formal education opportunities, they are preparing for responsible positions at sea.

Metadata

> apprentice, cell phone, distance learning, e-mail, maritime, New Zealand, NZ, Otago, paper-based distance learning, traditional methods

Teaching approach

Maritime Training Otago teaches in the areas of seamanship, navigation and sea survival.

Within this context, Graham Turner advocates returning to the traditional methods that worked well for him as an apprentice, blended with appropriate modern communication tools:

- paper-based distance learning supported by a personal instructor who will listen and help at any time of day or night

- using Unit Standards on the NZ Qualifications Framework as the structural foundation

- making sure that every word the students receive from the trainer is as precise, simple and effective as possible

- using e-mail and cell phones to keep in touch with students at sea or in isolated ports

- insisting on the highest standards of professional seamanship for students at all levels

> New influences encourage reflection and comparison with older practices.
>
> *Graham Turner*

- being consistent in terminology and method.

Preliminary evaluation of student suitability is conducted individually by telephone interview.

Course outcomes are evaluated by regular assignments and by contact with students. Student progress is assessed in the same way, and by examination results.

Evaluation methods

Effectiveness of the course itself is measured by talking to examiners. Maritime examinations include intensive interviews and examiners are able to report quite precisely to instructors and trainers on which learning activities are effective.

Less formal evaluation takes place through reflecting on what works and the teaching approach, and by listening to students' comments and trying to modify materials and processes slowly and carefully.

Positive difference to learning

Graham says that the current industry and workplace culture impacts significantly on the learner:

> I have to raise the students' expectations above the existing standard. Otherwise the industry will never progress.

CASE STUDY 19

Joe Mitchell, Film and Television, TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute, NSW

Learning environment

Film and Television Certificate III studies using community projects, professional work experience and other strategies to develop industry readiness.

Metadata

communication skills, community projects, DVD, film, industry contacts, television, workplace experience

Teaching approach

The film and television industry has an expansive range of job descriptions. Industry contacts, communication skills and industry experience play a major part in value adding to potential employment. With knowledge of this, Joe has found it necessary to undertake a teaching strategy, which encourages the students to get out of the classroom and into practical situations, which are relevant to their field of interest within the film and television industry. Joe organises industry projects for students that not only immerse them in the film world but also involve them in projects that contribute to the community. Examples include Wig Week for Cancer Awareness where students produced documentaries, constructed interviews, designed animations and authored DVD copies of the project. Other local film and video productions provide an opportunity to participate in a range of roles including set design and construction, camera assisting, production coordinating, sound recording, lighting assisting and even acting. Involvement in a professional film shoot offers practical experience on a film set encompassing various roles that are a

> The various personalities and personal ambitions of the different students means that it is important for them to get out into the film making community and actively engage in a role with potential for gaining employment in post TAFE study.
>
> *Joe Mitchell*

practical first step in gaining employment within the film and TV industries.

Generally, most assessments are focused on effective communication within a group of people.

> Due to the strong sense of contact and communication within the film industry, it is imperative that the students develop their communication skills with other people (fellow class mates) and it is practically relevant for them to be assessed in this area as this will be the most important skill they will need when they begin to apply for employment.

Students are also encouraged to engage in a range of other activities to help develop their communication skills and industry knowledge, such as regularly attending the cinema in groups to view and critique films. Students are also encouraged to enter in a range of small film festival competitions (extraneous to class requirements).

Evaluation methods

A range of evaluation methods are applied to the subjects Joe teaches. These include ongoing feedback from student self-evaluation and feedback from industry. By considering the various needs of film and television, he applies industry requirements within the teaching and assessment structure of the course.

Positive difference to learning

Joe has identified that his students are driven and motivated by these practical and industry-relevant teaching modes.

They develop important skills, but Joe feels that the best outcome of this teaching strategy is that it helps the students to gain an understanding of themselves. He believes that in order to work with a range of people, to be placed in the industry environment and to interrogate cinema, it is imperative that an individual comes to a sense of who they are, what they represent and where they want to go in order to achieve their personal goals. The structure of his classes allows students to take the first step in discovering what they want out of an interest in film and television, why they want it and, most importantly, how to go about achieving their desires in a practical and realistic fashion.

CASE STUDY 20

Phil Fague, TAFE NSW – OTEN, NSW

Learning environment
Email messaging to 97 real estate students.

Metadata
email, motivational messages, pilot study, real estate, survey

Teaching approach
In 2001, a pilot project was conducted to investigate the impact of a program of faculty-initiated motivational messages using email. The aim was to reduce the students' sense of isolation and improve their motivation to complete their studies. The faculty involved was Property Services (Real Estate) where there are a high percentage of students with access to email.

Students were contacted by telephone to find out whether they wished to participate. This call was also used as an opportunity to welcome them to the course. A series of eight emails were sent over a 16 week period. These messages were written in accordance with identified motivational models. At the end of the pilot project, students were asked to complete a survey.

Evaluation methods
In total, 97 students were involved in the email support program. A control group (110 students) that did not receive the emails was also included in this pilot.

The pilot project found that those students who agreed to receive the motivational emails were more likely to complete and submit assessment events than those in the control group. The differences between the two groups were quite significant, with

> Thank you for your support. The e-mails seem to come at the right time for me, which is extremely helpful! They have definitely made studying this course easier.
>
> *Real Estate student*

more students in the motivational email group commencing work.

The survey of the students showed that all of them appreciated the email messages with 61% indicating that the email message had motivated or prompted them to submit assignments. Ninety-three percent of students were in favour of the email support program being continued with new students.

Positive difference to learning
The training organisation is now investigating this innovative student support strategy, and the associated scalability issues, for a larger range of courses.

CASE STUDY 21

Lyn Goodear, Project Manager and Sandra Fitzgerald, Project Coordinator, South West TAFE, Victoria

Learning environment

The School Services Officer Accredited Training Program is a professional development program designed to meet the workplace training needs of over 12,000 School Services Officers (SSOs)[6] employed in government-funded schools across Victoria. This training program offers students multiple entry and exit points across three course levels, eight Training Packages and 54 units of competency. A network of 14 RTOs delivers the program across Victoria via the Victorian TAFE Virtual Campus. A team from South West TAFE and the Department of Education and Training have worked for over two years on planning, preparing and now delivering this program in the workplace.

Metadata

collaboration, case management, enabling strategies, pathway in, pathway out, portability, shared validation, third party support, whole of role training, Victoria

Teaching approach

The client-driven need for workplace specific training saw the modification of the range of variables for individual competencies for all 54 units. The overall delivery strategy includes an upfront case management approach that recognises the separate roles of educational administration and teaching and assessment. One of the key features of the delivery strategy focuses on managing individual learning pathways.

> Because this course is the same throughout the state I know that I have the same access to training and assessment opportunities as every other person who does the SSO course in Victoria.
>
> *Student*

Support for individuals includes:

- a Pathways In matrix, which allows students to review their existing qualifications and training in the context of the program competencies

- the Training Plan Application phase, which is an online working document that allows the teacher to work with the student in mapping their individual learning plan

- a Pathways Out matrix, which has been developed to help create learning pathways and career opportunities upon completion of the program.

Evaluation methods

Assessment and evaluation has in-built procedures to ensure currency and responsiveness through mechanisms that include ongoing review and input by all stakeholders (students, workplace and teachers). Student and workplace feedback has been directly linked through the course to ensure the accuracy, currency and relevance of instructional content for each unit studied. This feedback is included in the content revision of the course, which happens regularly. A Teacher's Online Hub has also been created to ensure continuous development of resources and teaching approaches, with membership from all 14 RTOs.

Positive difference to learning

Some of the positive differences in this study include resolution of some complex and problematic issues such as physical access, bandwidth limitations, time and

workplace constraints, relevant assessment strategies, consistency in delivery and the need for efficient delivery procedures within the RTO. These problems have been resolved through ongoing negotiation and feedback from students, workplaces and other training providers, resulting in a consistent approach to delivery and assessment strategies. There has been interest in this model from a number of other public service providers dealing with similar issues.

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[6] School Services Officers are all those employees within the school environment who are not in teaching roles.

CASE STUDY 22

Val Evans, TAFE NSW Professional Development Network, NSW

Learning environment

A blended approach using content-free online tools and face-to-face, leading teaching professionals to the qualification, Graduate Certificate in Facilitating and Managing e-Learning (FAMe).

Metadata

activity driven learning experience, constructivist, content-free, facilitator, FAMe, fun, Thiagi

Teaching approach

The learning approach encompasses the notion of human interaction and construction of knowledge as a powerful learning paradigm. FAMe is a course without content. Teachers who are currently teaching online are the target group for the course. These course participants create the content by participating in a variety of 'seriously-fun' activities, both individual and group. The underpinning design philosophy of FAMe is to engage participants (online facilitators of learning) in an activity-driven learning experience, rather than technology and content-driven. The activities themselves allow participants to experience a series of online teaching strategies as a learner, thus being better informed to choose strategies to suit different learning styles and contexts for their learners.

Course facilitators allow the content to be dynamic and built with the richness of a student body researching and experiencing a new and exciting learning environment. The course is designed to move from the experiential and discovery approach to

> FAMe was different because it had a totally different way of delivering. It really opened my eyes to alternative methods and incorporating fun and games in the delivery. Since then, the courses I'm teaching have become more dynamic and interesting.
>
> *FAMe student*

learning to a much more in-depth research and applied methodology of learning.

Evaluation methods

One of the modules within FAMe is Evaluating Online Learning. This module was integrated throughout the other modules to demonstrate different online evaluation strategies that teachers can use with their students. This approach provided both a learning experience and valuable feedback mechanism from the participants throughout the course. After the first evaluation, Val and the development team felt that there were too many modules (up to three), with group activities and completion deadlines, that were being delivered simultaneously. They had underestimated the time needed for participants to organise their online collaboration, remembering that the participants were all teachers with lots of other competing demands on their time. Consequently, FAMe is now offered over 36 weeks with each module being delivered consecutively.

Positive difference to learning

Val and her team are convinced that activity-driven learning experiences, supported by facilitators, are powerful learning devices. In the module and course evaluations, participants said they learnt new approaches and were keen to adapt and try the activities in both their online and face-to-face classes. The power of collaborative learning in an online environment has also helped develop a

sense of 'community' among teachers embarking on new methods of delivery.

The constructivist philosophy underpinning the course, and the teaching and learning strategies, were very much influenced by the work of Dr Sivisailam Thiagarajan ('Thiagi') a world expert in online facilitation, games and instructional design. Thiagi mentored the FAMe development team and was a guest facilitator for a component of the initial delivery of the course. A positive difference demonstrated through the learning is that the participants have managed knowledge and developed their skills in critical questioning to support their students in doing the same. FAMe has gained international recognition and this year is being offered commercially by Riverina Institute with participants from New Zealand and across Australia taking part.

CASE STUDY 23

Chris Horton, Manager Planning and Educational Services and Sally Thompson, LIRNspace Manager, Wodonga Institute of TAFE, Victoria

Learning environment

LIRNspace (Learning Innovation and Resource Nexus) is a purpose-built flexible learning space encompassing open-access, small group, multimedia labs, project development and exhibition spaces.

Metadata

collaboration, LIRNspace, multimedia, multitasking, notebook PC, open-access, peer, problem solving, project, silo, small group, swipe-card.

Teaching approach

LIRNspace is providing a new way of doing things for both teachers and learners at Wodonga Institute. Centre manager, Sally Thompson, says that often the old model was for teachers to feed students information via written text and then to discuss the set topic. The new model that is emerging is one of learners seeking their own information, then discussing it either in a class or peer situation.

The emerging project or research-based approach is seeing the development of multitasking as learners discuss their findings, often while continuing to search for information. Collaboration among groups is often informal and spontaneous and is further enhanced by the very flexible nature of LIRNspace. A wide range of discipline areas use the space, including students studying motor-sports, humanities, multimedia and IT.

Some tensions have been noted between groups around the multiple use of the

> (LIRNspace) raises the question … what are we doing with all the other spaces?
>
> *Chris Horton*

space. However, Chris and Sally feel that this is to be expected, given the previous 'silos' among the various disciplines. The benefits of this interaction, including a growing awareness among students of different approaches to learning and some cross-fertilisation of ideas, has already been noted between the various groups.

Flexibility of space design and ongoing reconfiguration in response to the needs of differing student groups have allowed users of LIRNspace to claim a degree of ownership which might otherwise not be expected. For instance, the team is changing the layout of one lab area in response to a group's need to use notebook PCs (as these may be closed during discussion periods, creating a distraction-free work space).

Future plans include modification to the gallery and exhibition space to incorporate a back projection unit[7] within the present theatrette layout. It is anticipated that this will allow learners to engage further with multimedia throughout the centre.

Evaluation methods

Chris and Sally are employing multiple forms of evaluation and review, ranging from anecdotal evidence to computer and smart-technologies for tracking resource usage. Evaluation of teaching impact has largely been anecdotal.

Statistics on usage (PC and room access) are facilitated by a swipe-card system. Data from this system (such as unsuccessful entry attempts, measuring who tries to access the centre and when) has already resulted in extended hours for the facility.

Anecdotal evidence suggests a largely positive response from students and staff. Discussion with teachers has highlighted some early weaknesses and potential changes, many of which have been easy to implement. People asking 'why don't you … ?' has led to changes and ongoing improvement.

Positive difference to learning

Increased demand for research and problem solving-based forms of learning has begun to emerge as the centre develops.

The previously unmet demand for access to learning facilities outside class time has been turned around.

Chris, Sally and the LIRNspace team see ample opportunities for change and are endeavouring to allocate time to continue to explore differing approaches.

[7] Back projection unit: will allow projected media to be viewed in normal lighting conditions and from within the larger LIRNspace environment (not just the theatrette area).

CASE STUDY 24

Brian Allen, School of Building Technology, UNITEC Applied Technology Institute, Auckland, New Zealand

Learning environment

The Certificate in Applied Technology has been developed in response to the changing needs of industry, students and other stakeholders. The Certificate sits within a pathway developed by UNITEC to provide trades people with a learning plan that helps to 'professionalise' technology trades people. The aim of this approach is to influence the ways that wider communities regard technologists and tradespeople. It focuses on the construction, transport and electro technology industries. The certificate is organised and delivered as a course-based program developed around a graduate profile (trades qualifications). The learning pathway leads to a Bachelor of Applied Technology.

Metadata

authentic problems, creating solutions, technical and social knowledge

Teaching approach

Course aims and objectives emphasise the big picture, including higher order thinking skills. The course outcomes focus on combinations of knowledge and skills and are, therefore, broader than unit standard specifications. Teaching strategies focus on communication, self-employment and working collaboratively as well as problem management, critical thinking, reflection on practice and independent learning skills.

In this environment, the students participate in generative activities to construct their own knowledge. The ways students currently think and do things in

> The development of capability supports lifelong learning because students acquire the tools to integrate new knowledge and apply this in changing environments.
>
> *Brian Allan*

their workplaces are challenged. They are coached to engage with tasks as experts and develop their confidence to learn and implement that learning. Self directed decision-making and thinking are enhanced by encouraging students to become independent self-monitors of their own learning.

A repertoire of learning strategies appropriate for different situations is promoted. The lecturer models skills and procedures, and then progressively fades in order to encourage student independence and confidence. The lecturer also provides regular and timely feedback in the form of constructive critique. Other principles that guide the teaching approach include:

- learning is anchored in meaningful problem-solving environments

- the emphasis is on students taking responsibility for their own learning

- students learn to ask questions to guide their knowledge building

- self-reflection is emphasised by thinking about consequences and implications of actions

- students are involved deeply and constantly with creating solutions to authentic problems through the development and completion of projects.

Lecturers become facilitators and students become investigators, seekers and problem solvers.

Evaluation methods

Evaluation is ongoing throughout the course through self-reflection, feedback and the impact on the various workplaces in which the students are employed.

Positive difference to learning

The Certificate in Applied Technology has been developed as an alternative to a unit standards competency-based program. This is based on UNITEC's belief that:

• specifications of knowledge and skills need to be broad in order to integrate tasks into a meaningful whole

• learning needs to include the thinking capabilities that support problem solving

• context for application should be the wider occupation rather than specific tasks.

Outcomes so far have been positive and have resulted in further development and funding for course development.

Discussion

Diversity of the case studies

Twenty-four case studies were selected for this project. The courses described in these case studies are being delivered through 17 TAFE NSW Institutes and 9 other registered training organisations. They represent 14 industry areas. The industry groups are:

- business (3 case studies)
- children's services (3 case studies)
- community services (2 case studies)
- information technology (2 case studies)
- student and staff services (2 case studies)
- transport (2 case studies)
- access and general education (1 case study)
- arts (1 case study)
- engineering (1 case study)
- food processing (1 case study)
- health (1 case study)
- hospitality (1 case study)
- maritime (1 case study)
- media (1 case study)
- property services (1 case study)
- school services (1 case study)

Training Packages represented by the case studies include:

- Automotive Industry Manufacturing (AUM00)
- Automotive Industry Retail, Service and Repair (AUR99)
- Business Services (BSB01)
- Community Services (CHC02)
- Film, TV, Radio and Multimedia (CUF01)
- Food Processing Industry (FDF03)
- General Construction (BCG98)
- Health (HLT02)
- Hospitality (THH02)
- Information Technology (ICA99)
- Metal and Engineering Industry (MEM98)
- Music (CUS01)
- National Public Services (PSP99)
- Property Development and Management (PRD01)

Increasing student options for learning

These case studies describe diverse and innovative approaches to teaching and learning. The courses are often designed to enable the learner to have improved access to educational experiences that are usually difficult to organise and logistically almost impossible. This was evident in the following courses:

- the design of the maritime course enabling students to maintain contact with the teacher while at sea

- the child care course that has developed a community child care centre to give students greater access to observing children and interacting with parents

- the NSW Ambulance Service, who have developed on-line simulation to enhance clinical decision-making during medical emergencies.

Strong partnerships

The importance of partnerships with industry and community was central to the structure of course design and maintenance in a number of case studies. Examples include:

- the Hunter Institute hospitality course where they have strong links with chefs who work with the teachers to ensure continuous and consistent learning for the students. The teachers go to the workplace and chefs come into the classroom.

- the Arts and Media Faculty at Western Institute based at Broken Hill run arts courses for Aboriginal communities. They work with Aboriginal people promoting peer-to-peer learning, particularly encouraging elders to work with younger artists. Their work is exhibited regularly at the Regional Art Gallery and some sculptures are permanent fixtures in community parks promoting local Aboriginal culture.

- the up-skilling of School Service Officers (SSOs) at the South West Institute of TAFE in Victoria provides a system of tailoring individual learning pathways and the recognition of prior learning to increase SSO qualifications and career opportunities. The program is delivered in the workplace and is driven by an industry need.

Innovation in teaching

Innovation in teaching and learning was a central characteristic of all of the case studies. The innovation, in most cases, was evident in the design of the course. The innovation was developed to improve responsiveness to students needs, strengthen the quality of the learning experience to reflect industry needs and increase learning abilities. Some of these were:

- the use of motivational emails to improve course completion for students undertaking the Property Services qualification

- the role of real projects to learn about project management, such as the business students who developed a virtual conference and the community service students who developed and managed community-based projects in collaboration with community groups.

Many of the participants commented on the importance of reflective practice among teachers and it is through this reflection that innovation and the drive to create improved teaching and facilitation in courses are developed. There is a general move toward more holistic approaches to educational delivery and assessment.

Student choice and variety of learning modes

All of the case studies integrate a number of learning modes and give students choices. Case study participants described these as important aspects of their teaching. Most of the teachers said they needed a range of options to accommodate individual learning styles. Many of the courses often had a combination of learning modes, such as:

- buzz groups or tutorial groups
- group projects
- work based projects
- on-line learning and activities
- paper based workbooks with email
- fax and phone contact
- individual learning programs
- simulated work environments
- workplace experience.

Peer learning played a central role for both students and teachers. Teachers believed that it is the combination of learning modes and the capacity to give students choices that lead to high

course completion rates and greater levels of student satisfaction. There is a clear shift towards the individualisation of learning outcomes and pathways.

Teacher/learner relationships

Most of the case studies referred to developing personal relationships between learners and teachers. These relationships were fostered in many ways, including:

* motivational email messages
* phone calls within the context of totally online delivery
* discussion between employers, students and teachers
* students being invited to act as project or program 'staff'.

In all cases, there seems to be evidence of a real empathy between teachers and learners.

Project and question-based learning

Project and question-based learning figure prominently in many case studies, including:

* Kangan Batman Institute's training in automotive factories
* Illawarra Institute's work with Indigenous elders
* Western Sydney Institute's flexible delivery of Administration Services.

Up-front assessment and RPL

Many case studies used some form of 'up-front' assessment or RPL to evaluate students' situations and, in some cases, to individualise learning paths or plans accordingly; for instance:

* Western Sydney Institute's workplace delivery of food processing uses an up-front assessment approach followed by targeted training to cover the identified gaps
* Southern Queensland Institute's approach to apprenticeships in engineering and construction includes negotiating individual training plans with apprentices and employers.

Other significant approaches

* 'Learning to learn' was cited as an important generic skill requirement.
* Teachers Online Hub and Pathway-In and Pathway-Out matrix (South West Institute, Victoria).
* Community projects were used in several cases to give the students' learning broader relevance and acceptance.
* Many case studies used technologies such as elearning as a 'learning option', rather than the underpinning component of course delivery.

Evaluation of courses

Most of the evaluation of the courses described in the case studies was through student feedback and standard student outcome data. The majority of the participants believed that their evaluation approach needed improving. There was not always the time and systems available to formally undertake regular evaluations of the courses. All of the student feedback was integrated into the quality improvement cycle and all of the participants used the results of course evaluation to make changes in the course delivery and content.

Positive difference to learning

Generally, differences were seen in consistent approaches to delivery and assessment, enthusiasm for learning, increased learner confidence and self-esteem, increased number of

employment opportunities for students, improvements in workplace safety and an increased connection with the community and with peers.

Project limitations

These cases studies represent a relatively small number of VET teachers' work and, although the request for nominations to participate was broadly promoted nationally, this was done primarily through a web site and email and relied on existing lists of leaders and innovators in the VET sector. Therefore, there is an under representation of case studies from more remote parts of the country where groups may not have access to the internet and from states with smaller populations such as Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

Some participants who were selected from the first stage of the culling process could not participate in the second stage of documenting the case studies because of their competing work demands and the tight timeframe for completing this project.

The case study selection process used external members of the project steering group who were not privy to any information about the case study other than that on the scoring sheet. However, the initial invitation to participate in the process was often through self-nomination. As there are no benchmarks to clearly define leaders of excellent practice, it is therefore impossible to determine the scope of innovation and excellent practice nationally.

Caution needs to be used in making generalisations about national trends.

Interpretation of this information is limited by only those reporting their practice.

At a glance: the bigger picture

In terms of delivering innovative and excellent learning, several 'big picture' trends have become apparent from the case studies, which impact on the learner, teacher and resources (in the widest sense) with a need for these to interact effectively.

The case studies show some significant points of reference, described below, for those wishing to pursue innovative and excellent teaching and learning practices.

The learner

• Increased individualisation of learning options (including learning tracks, pathways, contracts and plans)

• The need for self-directedness, that is, an aptitude for and emphasis on the underpinning training to achieve this

• Peer learning that has encouragement as a strategy among student groups and cooperation, such as teaming young and old students

• The development of generic and transportable skill-sets.

The teacher

• Peer learning (learning from colleagues) that promotes encouragement as a strategy among teachers, the development of communities of practice and the co-facilitation of courses (particularly in elearning)

• Partnerships and formalised understandings (for example, memoranda of understanding) negotiated by teachers on behalf of their organisations and for the benefit of employers and learners

• Holistic approaches that are often based around workplace or simulated 'real life' situations

- Development of skill sets appropriate to twenty-first century (C21) communications technologies and practices, including increased usage of ICT within face-to-face contexts
- Reinvestigation and reinvigoration of 'traditional' teaching skills facilitated through increased professional development opportunities associated with building C21-appropriate skill sets
- The need to be able to 'let go' of teacher-centric paradigms and place the learner at the centre of the learning equation
- The development of a pastoral care element (for students) that is common among teachers identified as being innovative and excellent practitioners.

The resources

- Ease in developing and formalising partnerships and 'understanding' arrangements is crucial to success, particularly in workplace learning areas
- Developing toolsets that can help more teachers become involved in innovative and excellent practices, such as assessment, feedback, evaluation, benchmarking, validation and innovation
- Supportive infrastructure is required, particularly in administrative and technological terms
- A common element among the case studies is a student (or case) management approach that may be facilitated by supportive infrastructure.

The future?

Some potential future developments have been hinted at through interviews and discussion with practitioners during the course of this research. These are yet to be substantiated by use, evaluation and evidence to any great extent; however, it is anticipated that at least some of them will have a significant impact on future innovative and excellent practices in VET.

These developments include:

- RLOs – reusable learning objects
- RLI – reusable learning information (information at atomic level)
- learner management systems, integrated with a client-centred approach
- content management systems
- recontextualisation of competence to fit larger holistic paradigms
- increased importance of community (both physical and virtual) in all learning contexts
- the need to explore new learning modes more in tune with X and Y generation learners (particularly those termed 'digital natives'). This could possibly be based on intuitive problem-solving and multitasking, as evidenced by digital game interaction.
- potential for a shift toward sustainability-driven, rather than productivity-driven, models of learning.

Case studies project management

Management team: Institute Teaching and Learning Innovation Centre (ITALIC), TAFE NSW – Hunter Institute

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