‘Designing Professional Development for the Future’ Research Project

Project Plan Summary -
Aims, Outputs and Management
Background

In 2003/4 a major research project entitled *Working and Learning in Vocational Education and Training (VET) in the Knowledge Era* was conducted. (LINK http://flexiblelearning.net.au/projects/resources/pdfuturesummary.pdf) The outcomes of the research were important for professional development in VET in terms of new thinking around how, when, and where people work and learn. It highlighted a need for new ways of thinking about professional development and reaffirmed the need for sound pedagogical practices.

A key output from the research project were eight enablers that would support new knowledge being generated within an organisational context, that is, for knowledge to be shared, debated and discussed within organizations. The enablers are:

1. Socio-technical systems
2. Networks and relationships
3. Organisational identity
4. Work outcomes and career paths
5. Emergent professional development
6. Worker as designer
7. Working and learning as an iterative process
8. Organisational environment

The research highlighted the need for creative thinking and a more fluid design for professional development that integrated the enablers. The need was to create the kind of environment that nurtures and encourages the development of capability for the knowledge era.

A new research project *Designing Professional Development for the Knowledge Era* was established during 2005 to build on the previous work of *Working and Learning in VET in the Knowledge Era* project. This project is referred to as Action 3 in the national Training Package Workplan, as part of outcome 10:

*Outcome 10: Strategies have been developed to strengthen teaching, learning and assessment
Action 3: Development of new models of professional development to support practitioners in the Knowledge Era – in partnership with NSW.*

As well as building on “Working and Learning in VET”, the project also builds on the findings of the national project *Enhancing the Capability of VET Professionals* and complements a number of significant resources and research in VET, including:

- the Training and Assessment Training (TAA) Package, Unit of Competency TAAENV501A Maintain and Enhance Professional Practice

Project Aim

The aim of the research project *Designing Professional Development for the Knowledge Era* is to develop a business framework for professional development in the knowledge era. The framework will assist and guide workforce planning and development practices within VET organisations in the knowledge era. It will be strongly linked to outcomes from recent studies and projects that recognise the changing environment within which the VET professional will work and learn. Key concepts will focus on the knowledge era, learning ecologies and the need to integrate work, learning and professional development in VET.
Project Output

The project will result in identification of generic capabilities, guidelines, new models and strategies for professional development practice in complex and uncertain environments. Case studies will also be included.

The project will be presented as a final document available on the DEST and TAFE NSW International Centre for VET Teaching and Learning (ICVET) websites.

Target audience

The outputs of the project will be designed for use by management, to enable them to support new directions in professional learning and development within their organisations and businesses, both public and private.

The outputs of the project will also be directly relevant to individuals in the VET sector. It will provide them with new strategies for their own learning within the context of the knowledge era. It can also be customized by others for their own contexts.

Project management and reference group

The project is managed by the TAFE NSW International Centre for VET - Teaching and Learning (ICVET). The TAFE NSW ICVET Project Team is Maret Staron, Robby Weatherley and Marie Jasinski.

The Project Team undertakes the main body of the research. Findings are presented to and discussed with a Working Group, comprising national and international learning professionals with a strong theoretical and practical understanding of contemporary learning and management models. The Working Group informs and supports the Project Team.

All research progress and development is referred to the National Reference Group for reflection, discussion and endorsement. The Reference Group includes national specialists and representatives of professional development, knowledge management, enterprise, private training providers, remote communities and public providers of VET.

Project phases

There are two phases to the project. Phase one focuses on the development of the theoretical and conceptual basis for professional development in the knowledge era. This will include emerging concepts, models and strategies. Phase 2 involves the implementation of an Activation Strategy to disseminate the research findings of phase one, to seek feedback from people in the VET sector and to discuss practical application of the models and strategies. Four action planning forums will be held across Australia and the learning from the forums will be incorporated into the research document.

It is expected that the final research document will be released in February 2006. In the interim, papers will be made available through the TAFE NSW ICVET website www.icvet.edu.au