
5. RESEARCH OUTCOMES AND DISCUSSION

5.1 INTRODUCTION

At the point of writing, two annual returns of data have been provided through the national AVETMISS reporting and information framework to both the State and national authorities²³. This thesis comments on the role these data can play in assisting senior managers "manage" their organisations and, more broadly, as tools to manage the vocational education and training sector at the state and national level i.e., in measuring or observing the effective and efficient accomplishments of an institution in the context of agreed objectives.

Under the ANTA Act (1992), responsibility for vocational education and training delivery in each State is assigned to a State Training Agency. In Western Australia, the Western Australian Department of Training is the nominated authority and, as a result of the standardised data framework, has introduced to all TAFE-level activity in Western Australia,

- (a) a common set of key performance indicators, and
- (b) a formula-driven resource funding model based on parameters such as
 - average class size;
 - teaching hours delivered per full-time group;
 - % of teaching hours taught by establishment staff;
 - ratios of teaching to non-teaching staff; and

²³ A complete data model for the AVETMISS Business Module is shown at Appendix B.

- course-based consumable/contingency allowances (Western Australian Department of Training, 1995c).

The new resourcing model is to be based on a three-year planning horizon for each course delivered. Annual resource and performance agreements are applied to each institution based on a contracted course-by-course delivery agreement.

The [Western Australian] Department [of Training] is taking on a new role as the strategic manager and purchaser of quality vocational education and training and employment services. (Western Australian Department of Training, 1996: p8)

It will be evident throughout this chapter that this programme of resource, performance and accountability agreements between the training provider and the State Training Agency is basically an input and activity-level exercise which is not seen by the Academy to dramatically improve upon previous funding arrangements. In many respects, the Academy views the new funding arrangements as a retrograde step which emphasises process and input measures at the expense of outcome measures. The Academy maintains that a focus on input and process measures de-emphasises the unique features of the Academy which are fundamental to its success and upon which its reputation is based.

5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

There is a perception amongst staff of the Academy that the Commonwealth has acted as an increasingly intrusive decision-maker in its local affairs through the establishment of ANTA, the national vocational education and training system, and the introduction of the national AVETMISS reporting framework.

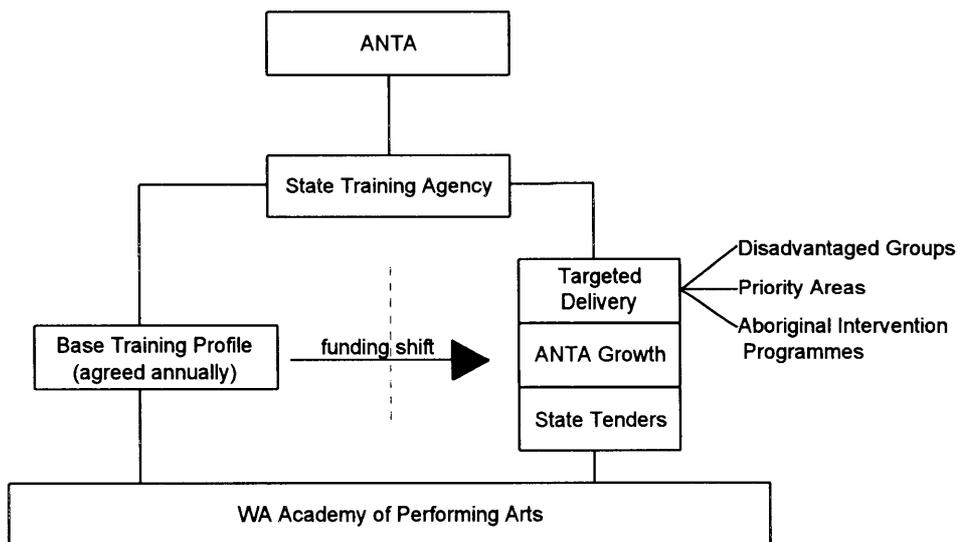
In very simple terms, the observable impact of ANTA on the Academy has been

- in the area of strategic planning - standardisation

- in the area of information reporting systems - proliferation of data but biased towards simplified numerical reporting without understanding
- in the area of benchmarking and feedback - efficiency gains at the expense of quality. (Response from the Academy to the 1995 ANTA Review)

Flexibility and Competition: As a recipient of funding for vocational education and training activity within the State, the Academy will now be subjected to the influences and demands of the State Training Agency, the priorities of the national training agenda and year-by-year shifts in the state training profile. Of most significance to the Academy is the changed funding arrangements depicted in Figure 5-1.

Figure 5-1
Diversification of the Training Market



In Western Australia, there will continue to be an increase in the application of competitive processes within the vocational education and training sector as part of a more general drive to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of vocational education and training delivery (in 1996, \$10.6M will be available through State tender to private and public training providers, compared with \$7.7M in 1995). In

theory, all vocational education and training provision could be funded through competitive market processes. In ANTA's view, greater consumer choice and increased flexibility and responsiveness of the training enterprise will be afforded as a result of a broader training market which includes both public and private training providers. The principal benefit for students and employers is, of course, the greater choice in the range of accredited training and registered training providers. Through its priority setting and reporting processes, ANTA is actively encouraging State Training Agencies to develop mechanisms and strategies to promote and enhance this competitive training environment (see Western Australian Department of Training, 1995a and 1995b).

Although evidence of the success of the competitive tendering process in "opening up the training market" is provided by the Western Australian Department of Training (1995a and 1995b) with a variety of "shift in load" analyses, there is no evidence of tests for comparable shifts in quality. Do private providers provide a "better" service? Can they set up the infrastructure necessary to sustain a quality service and contribute to the longer-term development of the arts training enterprise? This information does not form part of the AVETMISS data collection. It is disturbing therefore to note that there is so little emphasis placed on these fundamental issues. Instead, business principles and economic returns constitute the basis of the argument for a broader training market, substituted in place of a comprehensive and informed educational rationale.

The Lowest Common Denominator: ANTA has taken a firm lead in establishing the position and direction of the national training agenda. There have no doubt been some significant achievements in the areas of equity, broad access, new start and new initiative programmes. However, there has been little priority given to institutions who strive to achieve diversity or excellence in their programmes. The mission of the Academy is to provide training of the highest order to a very limited number of students in the arts. This requires a significant and continuing investment in order for

the Academy to maintain and develop its curriculum and its resources further (a vertical rather than a horizontal growth).

After two and a half years of ANTA's operation, the Academy sees more base-level training being delivered very cheaply across the State. This has been achieved at the expense of an expansion of the training market at the higher end of the training continuum. Table 5-1 shows that enrolments in certificate level courses are projected to increase by 336% over the period 1992 to 1998, as opposed to an increase of only 42% in the bachelor level programmes.

Table 5-1
EFTS²⁴ Enrolments by Award Type - 1992 to 1998
Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

Award Type	Actual Enrolments				Enrolment Projections			% Increase 1992-1998
	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	
Certificate	36.0	67.5	63.0	122.5	132.0	147.0	157.0	336%
Diploma	222.0	217.0	195.5	216.0	227.0	240.0	250.0	13%
Associate Degree	97.5	97.0	98.0	120.5	134.0	135.0	141.0	45%
Bachelor	347.5	359.5	404.0	441.0	473.0	485.0	492.0	42%
Post Graduate	17.5	25.0	36.5	44.0	43.0	43.0	44.0	151%
<i>Totals:</i>	720.5	766.0	797.0	944.0	1009.0	1050.0	1084.0	50%

Source: Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

As a percentage of total enrolments, certificate level courses will rise over the same period from 5% of total enrolments to 14% - the only award besides post-graduate study to improve its relative position over this period (see Table 5-2).

²⁴ *Equivalent Full-Time Students*

Table 5-2
Enrolment Activity by Award - 1992 to 1998
Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

Award Type	Actual Enrolments		Enrolment Projections	
	1992	% of Total	1998	% of Total
Certificate	36	5%	157	14%
Diploma	222	31%	250	23%
Associate Degree	97.5	14%	141	13%
Bachelor	347.5	48%	492	45%
Post Graduate	17.5	2%	44	4%

Source: Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Another observable trend towards the "lowest common denominator" in the Academy's operation can be found within its staffing profile. It can be seen from Table 5-3 that the only substantial growth in staffing at the Academy has been at the "below lecturer" level. Despite a 30% increase in enrolments over the period 1993-1995 and the introduction of at least four new courses, the Academy's enrolment and staffing profile reflects the reality of "cost efficiencies" being driven into the academic agenda. On an analysis of the data provided to the national authorities in the AVETMISS model, it would appear that the Academy can be congratulated for introducing efficiencies which reduce the cost per student enrolled hour but, on the other hand, has the industry benefited? Do the AVETMISS data reveal whether there has been any effect of these reductions on the quality of the Academy's outcomes? Analyses of the Academy's very healthy input (enrolment) data (Table 5-4), and its output data (Table 5-5) shed little light on these matters, nor will they reflect the Academy's concern for quality of outcome.

Table 5-3
Full-time Teaching Staff by Classification 1993-1995
Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts

	Full-time Staff				Sessional Staff		Totals
	Above Senior Lecturer	Senior Lecturer	Lecturer	Below Lecturer	Lecturer	Below Lecturer	
1993	4.6	14.0	46.7	5.9	4.0	23.4	98.6
1994	5.6	13.3	45.7	19.0	3.2	22.8	109.6
1995	5.0	13.0	46.7	11.1	3.7	33.0	112.5
%Increase							
1993-1995	9%	-7%	0%	88%	-8%	41%	14%

Source: Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Karmel (1996) observes that "quality" can be used in two conceptually different contexts:

- quality as excellence; and
- quality as effectiveness.

Quality as excellence is a measure against some absolute standard. Quality as effectiveness is an indicator of the degree to which actual outcomes match desired outcomes. But as Karmel points out, if objectives are set at modest levels, meeting them is no great achievement in an absolute sense, although the organisation may be seen to be very effective. Table 5-5 lists graduating students by course and year. As a measure of effectiveness, the data within the table are adequate. However, as a measure of quality as excellence, there is little which can be derived from this data.

Table 5-4
Academy Enrolments by Course and Year

	1986	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
MASTERS										
Visual Arts									9	12
Art Therapy							12	18	22	32
Music							1	5	4	3
PG DIPLOMA										
Art Therapy				14	11	14	9	8	11	12
Arts (Visual Arts)										2
HONOURS										
Visual Arts					2	5	4	1	1	1
BACHELORS										
Arts Management				26	37	44	49	53	53	55
Dance				23	38	31	29	34	41	43
Musical Theatre				25	36	33	39	40	44	51
Visual Arts	24	73	128	154	151	175	202	207	235	260
Education (Classical)					9	18	32	38	37	n.a.
Education (Jazz)				7	5	6	13	11	12	n.a.
Music (Classical)					52	55	58	54	53	45
Music (Jazz)	25	34	60	63	14	18	16	15	20	21
ASSOCIATE DEGREE										
Visual Art										18
ASSOCIATE DIPLOMA										
Arts	69	52	36	26	13	27	40	44	43	35
Arts Management	20	19	28	8	1					
Broadcasting	29	30	32	30	34	35	33	29	30	37
Dance	49	31	32	1	1					
Jazz & Contemp. Music	32	36	25	33	36	34	34	36	38	43
Music	21	14	8	1						
Musical Theatre	10	16	23	1						
ADVANCED CERTIFICATE										
Aborig. Musical Theatre										29
Commercial Music										14
CERTIFICATE										
Dance	15	27	45	24	14	7	10	35	18	26
Classical Music					23	21	16	24	29	26
Jazz Music	40	47	52	45	32	14	15	26	26	25
Music Teaching		5	2							
Musical Theatre										17
DIPLOMA										
Music Teaching	29	27	23	16	8	12	10	16	17	13
Dance	42	44	41	34	28	28	26	32	31	27
Music	13	28	30	40	31	28	24	32	38	31
Production & Design			133	88	75	82	99	15	15	1
Design								17	10	14
Lighting								16	20	19
Sets								14	13	15
Sound								25	27	23
Stage								18	14	14
Costume										23
Stage Management	11	15								
Theatre	52	52	59	59	57	52	52	53	51	54
TOTALS:	481	550	757	718	708	739	823	916	962	1041

Source: Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Table 5-5
Academy Graduating Students 1993-1994

Course Level	Course Name	1993	1994
Master's by Coursework	Art Therapy	6	5
Postgraduate Diploma	Arts (Art Therapy)		1
Bachelor's Honours	Arts (Visual Arts)	1	1
Bachelor's Pass	Arts (Arts Management)	13	13
	Arts (Dance)	9	7
	Arts (Musical Theatre)	13	12
	Arts (Visual Arts)	34	51
	Music (Classical)	7	9
	Music (Jazz)	1	3
	Total		77
Associate Diploma	Arts (Visual Arts and the Crafts)	4	8
	Performing Arts (Broadcasting)	10	10
	Performing Arts (Jazz)	9	10
	Total	23	28
Diploma	Music Teaching	2	4
	Performing Arts (Dance)	7	2
	Performing Arts (Music)	4	3
	Performing Arts (Production and Design)	24	27
	Performing Arts (Theatre)	17	15
Certificate	Dance (Preparatory Studies)	12	9
	Music (Classical)	13	15
	Music (Jazz)	15	15

Source: Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Graduation Rates: A course by course analysis of the Academy's AVETMISS returns will reveal attrition from Diploma courses, particularly in the area of Dance and Classical Music. Where are these students going? Are they getting jobs in dance companies and symphony orchestras? Are these students transferring to the Academy's Degree courses? Academy policy is to prepare students for programmes which best suit their talents and aspirations. In many cases, students enrol in the

Diploma programme as a testing ground, particularly where these students don't satisfy tertiary entrance requirements. Upon successfully completing parts of the Diploma, students may be encouraged to transfer to a Degree programme with credit. A simple analysis of attrition rates or course completions in State-funded programmes will not provide a complete picture. Uncontextualised data provided in AVETMISS formats will in fact distort the realities of the situation.

Employment: Over the past two years, the AVETMISS data will reveal that student graduation rates from the Academy's programmes have increased by 10% between the years 1993 and 1994 (see Table 5-5), and this upward trend is expected to continue. The Academy maintains that, in an industry which actively seeks Academy-trained personnel, it continues to place better than 70% of graduates in at least one production within the first year of graduation (1995 Accreditation Review, Volume 1). It is of some concern to the Academy that this outcome is not reflected in the national Graduate Destination Surveys which focus on notions of full-time employment which are meaningless in the arts, where "employment" is often a momentary occasion and dependent upon many external factors.

Cheaper Courses: In order to remain viable and participate in the competitive training environment, the Academy needs to respond quickly and effectively to priorities and initiatives of the State Training Agency, and in particular, the state tendering and "bids" system now fully in operation. It will be evident throughout this chapter that this occurs within Western Australia sometimes at the expense of the best interests of the wider arts community. Within the arts community, the Academy maintains that it has anecdotal evidence which supports the view that opening up the training market through competitive tendering, although aimed at producing flexibility and efficiency, has encouraged second-rate training through institutions which, although cheap, are unqualified to provide the level of training required by the industry. Private providers funded for once-only programmes are obliged to focus on short-term outcomes and high throughput. This view is of course encouraged by

superficial analyses of annual data returns which report an improvement in key performance measures such as “graduate outputs” and “\$ per cost of delivery hour”, unchecked by more significant measures in relation to programme quality and longitudinal views of enrolment trends and outcomes.

This chapter argues that there are no indicators in the AVETMISS framework which relate the cost of delivery to the quality of educational outcomes, or which measure the value which is added by the institution during the training programme. As a result, the State Training Agency has tended to focus on more easily derived indicators and mandates that institutions in Western Australia “do more with less”.

Increased Opportunities and Improved Outcomes: Increased opportunities and improved outcomes for students can be achieved through privatisation and increased competition provided that there is a long-term commitment to the industry. This unfortunately is rarely the case. The Academy maintains that short-term cost efficiencies are currently driving the training agenda. The expectation that quality of outcomes will continue to improve whilst funding for courses is decreased reverses the common sense understanding that quality is directly proportional to the resources committed.

Although not necessarily an argument for size as a measure of the quality of an institution, it is true that the larger and more mature organisations are able to offer a broad range of programmes at a variety of levels over an extended period of time²⁵. Training can be offered at a pace and a level which is conducive to quality outcomes. The established organisations can afford to invest in more sophisticated admission, assessment and diagnostic techniques to provide the most appropriate training programme for each student (including, of course, remediation and second-stage

²⁵ *There are of course other efficiencies to be gained as a result of the larger training enterprise which have been well articulated through the Dawkins Ministry and the institutional amalgamations which occurred during the late 1980s.*

programmes where necessary which would normally fall outside the scope of a specific contracted delivery agreement).

Of most importance to the Academy however, is the perception which is encouraged by superficial analyses of cost-benefit relationships that training programmes in the arts can be delivered more cheaply by smaller training institutions, irrespective of any effort to establish quality measures which may argue for a contrary position. It has been noted earlier that the Academy contends that the AVETMISS data, by focussing on the easily quantifiable aspects of the educational enterprise, de-emphasises those activities which lie at the core of the quality service it provides to both its students and the arts community.

In order to improve opportunity, flexibility and competition in the arts industry, it is necessary to understand the nature of the industry, the employment market, regional needs and the associated training opportunities. The larger training providers can afford to invest in establishing long-term dialogues with members of the Arts industry throughout Australia, ensuring that their educational programmes reflect emerging needs and that graduates from these programmes are eminently suited for employment. Smaller providers funded on a course-by-course basis have not the same motivation for ensuring the all-important links with the industry are established and maintained.

Students entering the Academy are carefully selected through a rigorous interview and selection procedure which ensures that the best applicant is admitted to the course fairly and justifiably. Elsewhere within the educational sector, students are selected largely on the basis of their previous schooling.

A rigorous, talent-based admission procedure requires that staff assess a variety of attributes which may include:

- (a) the current level of knowledge/ability
- (b) the ability to learn
- (c) the capacity to respond to direction
- (d) the ability to work both independently and as a member of a team
- (e) the potential to develop (i.e., latent ability)
- (f) the student's imaginative/creative/leadership skills
- (g) the potential for the student to work in the industry

None of (b) to (g) are normally assessed in standard admission programmes, yet these elements are of great significance to the learning process. In 1995, the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts processed 3,000 enquiries and interviewed and auditioned almost 1,300 students for approximately 230 student places in the School of Dramatic Arts alone. Through its admission process, it is possible to ensure that the unique opportunity offered by the training programme is made available to the students with most potential to benefit. A rigorous admission procedure is

- a gatekeeping process based on the mission statement of the organisation which ensures that highly skilled students are selected into courses suited to their talents and the outcomes of the institution;
- a quality check on the applicants to ensure that they are suited to the vocational outcomes of the course (such as being able to contribute to the industry, to sustain employment and to be able to contribute to the growth of the profession);
and

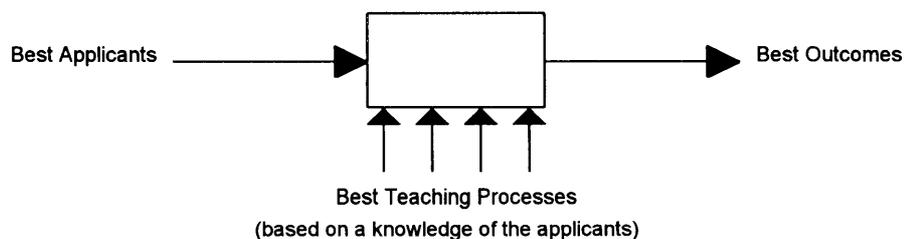
- a process which is used by the institution to improve the quality of course outcomes by matching students to the most suitable programmes. Through an understanding of the intake cohort, it is possible to ensure that programmes are adjusted where necessary to ensure the nature and needs of each individual group is addressed.

Although a rigorous admission procedure is a significant investment, understanding the nature of the students entering the training programme pays dividends (see Figure 5-2). Through a comprehensive and rigorous admissions procedure

- student aspirations can be matched to course objectives;
- student attrition rates can be reduced; and
- the overall output improved.

Figure 5-2

Quality Admission Procedures - a Cost Effective Resource Commitment



The outcome of a successful training programme is of course an organisation with an established reputation for excellence. What value is placed by staff evaluating tenders for contracted delivery programmes on corporate history and reputation? And how is this reported and assessed within the AVETMISS framework? Quality students are attracted to institutions which are adequately resourced and which have built a record

of achievement in the area. Can a national training authority adequately assess the real cost of "out-sourcing" its training without undertaking a thorough analysis of short-term cost efficiencies weighed against the longer-term outcomes for the industry? The Academy argues that barriers to sustainable improvements in the delivery of quality training programmes will not be corrected by increasing the number of operators in the State and the market forces which inevitably come into being. Rather, the Academy maintains that adequate financial resources invested appropriately in the institution for the purpose of research and development, product design and enterprise services will attract more students in the longer term, albeit there are few short-term advantages with this strategy. It is difficult to see how allocating delivery and infrastructure funds to organisations which have no long-term commitment to the sector will lead to any long-term, sustainable improvement.

National Conformity: There is a perception amongst Academy staff that simplified numerical reporting promotes conformity at the cheapest cost rather than encouraging and nurturing diversity in the training market. For example, in areas such as national and competency-based curriculum, the developments achieved nationally may be beneficial for some areas of the vocational education and training sector. In the area of the visual and performing arts, competency-based training is considered by the industry to be inappropriate²⁶. Yet, within the AVETMISS dataset, the Academy is required to identify whether a module is written in competency-based formats, and whether it conforms to a national curriculum module.

Competency Based Training: a flag to indicate whether or not the course or module has been adapted to accommodate a competency-based approach (stored in both the Module and Course tables).

Implementation of Competency-Based Training: The number and extent of programmes of training being implemented through Competency-Based

²⁶ *Competency-based training was the subject of the Academy's 1993 Theatre Training Conference, where it was rejected by the industry as not applicable. This matter has also been discussed with the Western Australian Arts, Sport and Recreation Industry Training Council and Arts Training Australia. Both these organisations support the Academy's position.*

practice". A failure in any one of these units will exclude a student from the course. As there is no indicator within the AVETMISS dataset where this can be recorded, the assumption from a simple analysis of the data is that all units carry equal weight in a course, which is incorrect. Activity indicators based around module completion rates will not prove to be a reliable indicator of success in a course.

Module completion rate: the proportion of module enrolments for which clients are awarded a completion grade or are assessed as achieving the specified skill levels = number of modules completed divided by the total number of modules enrolled. (From: AVETMISS, 1995 Volume 1)

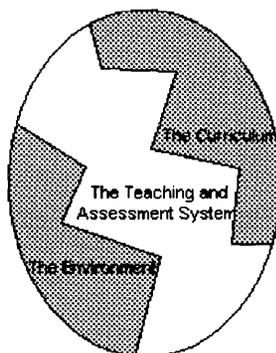
Furthermore, the training curriculum at the Academy is based around the institution's ethos, the staff and the group/individual needs of the students. Although a high level of technical skill is expected from the students, the skill in isolation from the creative and expressive talents of the individual is unusable. The curriculum needs to be flexible in order that it can be adapted to the teaching styles of the expert practitioners. In the Academy's case, competency-based curriculum in the visual and performing arts would significantly detract from these arrangements.

The Academy, like other elite training institutions, thrives in an ethos of public performance. Within this environment, a student's achievement is the result of individual rehearsal, interaction with peers, structured tutorials with academic staff and a high degree of professional practice. The integration achieved between theory and practice through performance is fundamental to the outcomes of these programmes and the quality of the graduates.

The Academy maintains that three elements must be considered to achieve a successfully integrated training programme (see Figure 5-3) - the environment (a community of artists), the curriculum, and the teaching and assessment system²⁷.

²⁷ Material for this section has been drawn largely from the outputs associated with the Academy's international benchmarking programme (introduced at Appendix C).

Figure 5-3
An Integrated Training Programme

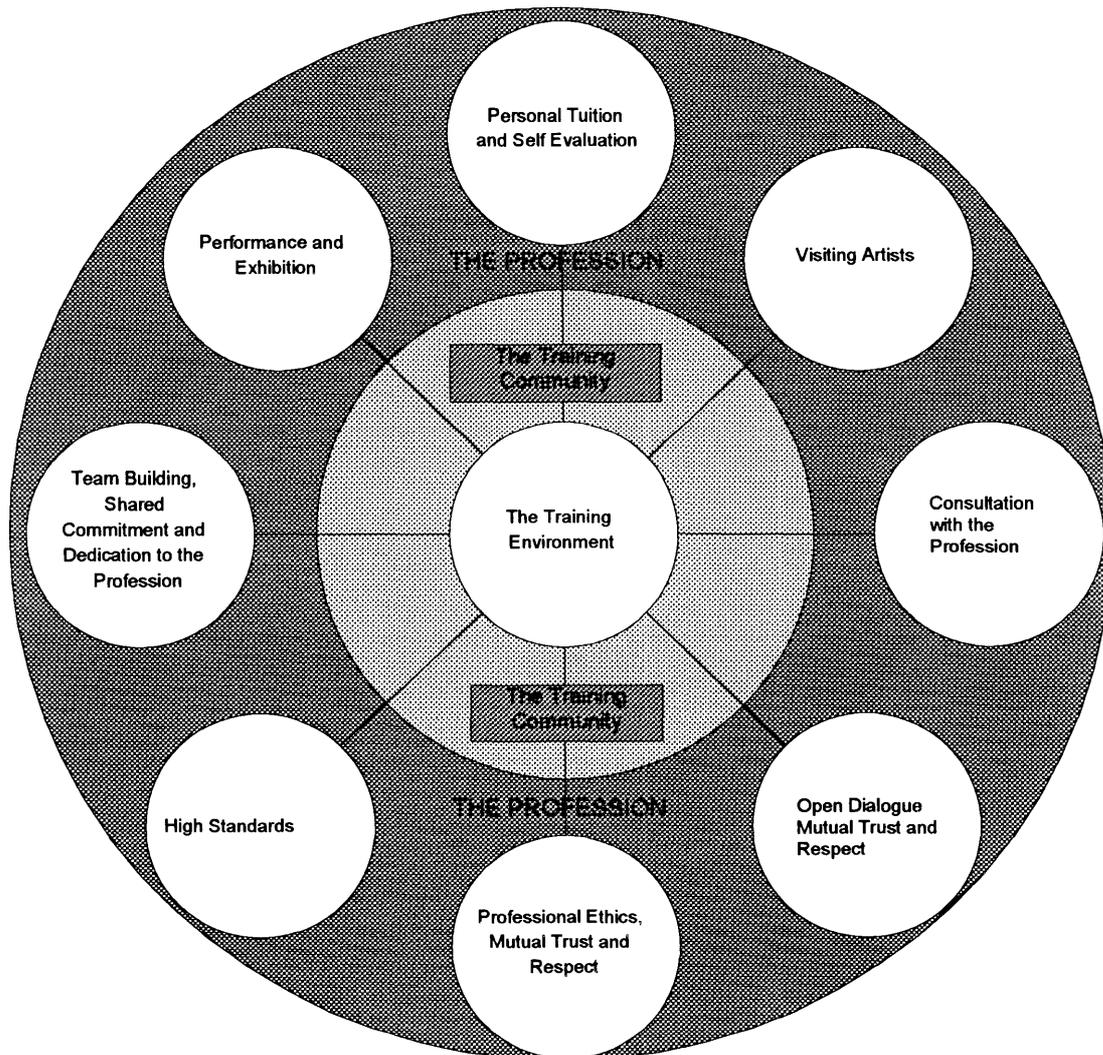


The training environment at the Academy is the home of a large and diverse collection of artists. This artistic community, integral to the training programme and an essential component in achieving quality outcomes, is more akin to the medieval concept of University scholarship and teaching, where the collective skill, wisdom, energy and knowledge of both the staff and the students contribute to the learning environment (see Figure 5-4). Through association, students mingle and have good access to their teachers, learning the skills and the knowledge to be imparted through what is essentially an apprenticeship system. Such learning is encouraged in elite performance-based training institutions, where the educational programme is focused as much on formal training as it is on knowledge from association with an active professional community of artists through:-

- (a) shared commitment;
- (b) enthusiasm and dedication to their art;
- (c) professional ethics, style and “culture”; and
- (d) awareness, sensitivity, empathy and skills in criticism.

These are elements which have no equivalent in the AVETMISS framework.

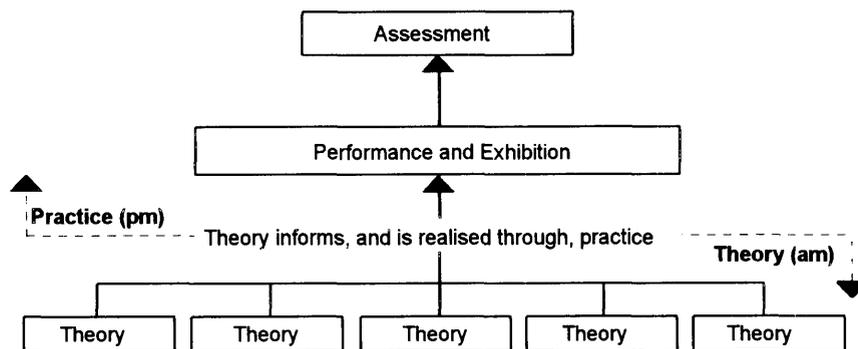
Figure 5-4
The Training Environment



Performance-based programmes have a strong connection between theory and practice. The method of integrating theory with technical skills in an environment which encourages creativity, growth and development has a long tradition at the Academy. Through the unique opportunity offered, the aim is satisfactory, individual progress, evidenced through performance. Theory informs, and is realised through,

practice. At the Academy, it is traditional in many programmes that theory units are taught in the morning, followed by a single performance unit for students to practically apply theoretical principles in the afternoon (Figure 5-5). It is very difficult for such programmes to be modularised. It is therefore very difficult for the Academy to deliver programmes which comply with many of the principles and objectives endorsed by ANTA, embodied within the National Framework for the Recognition of Training (such as flexible delivery, flexible entrance and exit, recognition of prior learning and competency-based assessment).

Figure 5-5
A Typical "Academy" Workday



Competency Framework: What is being taught and assessed? The advantage of competency-based training is seen to lie in the consistency it brings to programmes across institutional boundaries i.e., students will obtain credentials that are "portable". At the same time it encourages those in the workplace to develop their skills and to embark upon a career path in which progress can be reflected in the level of financial reward which is available to them under an award restructuring programme. In all, the traditional approach to competency-based curriculum facilitates a very "economic" and one-dimensional view of the training enterprise.

A competency framework has obvious implications for curriculum design:-

1. It favours a modular structure at the entry level, to match the list of skills required by the relevant industry. This allows for flexible delivery structures, portability, national curricula and credit transfer. However appropriate elsewhere in the education and training sector, this structure is not applicable to the performing and visual arts, and especially at the top end of the training continuum. It carries a danger of fragmentation and disregards the close association which exists in performance-based programmes between theory and practice. The teaching philosophy of the Academy runs counter to the principles embodied in the “flexible delivery” programmes now common in the education and training sector. Training programmes in the performing and visual arts are not simply an accumulation of units or modules which can be taken at a time, place and pace of the student’s choosing. Many of these programmes must be taken as a complete package - students are not able to enrol part-time or seek exemptions from units, but rather are required to enrol in the programme as a whole, and frequently to train as part of an ensemble/company.

2. It requires a clear statement of the objectives of the course/unit/module against which the student's achievement may be measured, both by staff and the individual, and prescriptive detail in the outline of course content. Although the Academy and other similar institutions ensure that courses and units have direct statements of their aims and intended outcomes, how explicit and regulated the content of the “module” should be remains an issue for ongoing debate. There are clearly pitfalls in too much detail. There must be room for response to the needs and interests of the students, to the individual talents and skills of the teacher and the visiting professional artists whose contribution serves to stimulate and inspire the students.

Traditionally, assessment is based either around a measurement model or a standards model. In a measurement model, the thrust is to rank students along a continuum. In a standards model, students are assessed in terms of whether they have acquired a

particular piece of knowledge. In performance-based programmes, neither model is particularly appropriate. The rich teaching environment of these training programmes produces learning which is productive and relevant, but not always predictable. The new approach to competency-based curriculum and assessment, embodied in the national training reform agenda and monitored through the AVETMISS framework, has little value in the education and training curriculum of the performing and visual arts. Proper assessment techniques should allow students to demonstrate not individual units of competency, but rather the skills they have learned and how they have assimilated them into a performance context.

Course Articulation: Academy courses are linked in a training continuum which is not immediately apparent to the uninformed observer (see Appendix A). Some courses have been designed to identify talented students at an early stage and to provide preparatory training. Later, should talent be realised through performance, training may be possible in the Academy's more sophisticated programmes, prior to entering the industry or another professionally orientated programme. This structured approach to the training programme is not apparent in the AVETMISS data returns, which do not record the course aims, the standards expected of the course, where students go upon completing a course, the appropriateness of the training to the industry, the esteem in which the course is held by the arts community and so on. The national policy/decision-maker is unable to decide, on the information provided, whether the institution should phase out some courses and introduce others. Are five visual arts courses needed in Western Australia? Are the five courses similar, or are they different in nature and outcome? Whose course is better? Whose graduates are achieving the highest distinction? What national comparisons can be made? Who can tell? In the absence of true outcomes-based reporting, these questions remain unanswered.

The Public Interest: The Academy has always been concerned with improving access to its programmes (by providing, for example, bridging programmes, improving

articulation between programmes of different levels and through devolving its resources to remote regions). The establishment of ANTA, with its emphasis on benchmark performance, has if anything added a disincentive for the Academy to serve the public interest where these programmes are delivered at a high cost per student hour. Aggregated into the Academy's overall delivery profile, these high costs further reduce the Academy's ranking against benchmark performance measures extracted from the AVETMISS data. For example, the Academy has a strong interest in exploring the potential contribution of Aborigines to the arts who have for a long time been denied a place in mainstream arts training through either their frustration with the orientation of these programmes, their own educational background or their remote location, and is building a significant record of achievement in this area.

- (a) In 1993 and 1994 DEET funded a pilot training programme developed jointly by the Academy and Black Swan Theatre Company. Based on the success of this project, the Arts Industry Training Council called for a full-year accredited training course. As a result, the Academy introduced a full-time Advanced Certificate in Aboriginal Musical Theatre to assist students who wish to enter musical theatre from an Aboriginal cultural perspective, and who have been hampered by a lack of tuition at an appropriate level in the areas of song, dance and acting.
- (b) The Academy has completed a DEET-funded research project *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Career Development Strategy for the Performing Arts*. It is evident that there is a significant need for vocational education and training programmes at the lower end of the training market to facilitate entry and articulation of Aboriginal students into more mainstream education. The report notes the lack of arts, media and tourism related courses on offer in the rural and remote regions, and the need for flexible delivery systems which blend with the Aboriginal's traditional, cultural responsibilities.

Training = The number of Competency-Based Training modules divided by the total number of modules delivered.

Implementation of National Curriculum: The number of programmes of training using national curriculum = The number of courses/modules using national curriculum divided by the total number of courses/modules delivered. (From: AVETMISS, 1995 Volume 1)

These indicators have been picked up as useful by the State Training Agency and transformed into State-wide performance measures (see Table 3-2). An Academy-driven benchmarking programme has reached consensus between the partner institutions that competency-based assessment is not relevant to the performing and visual arts. A number of organisations indicated that they were providing holistic education and training programmes. Rather than just assessing skills and competencies in subjects, skills demonstrated through performance were considered to be more important. Specific assessment criteria relating to individual competencies, subjects and skill levels were particularly difficult to articulate in situations where an organisation didn't want to produce a particular house-style. There was general agreement that there can be no absolute standard specified, but rather a standard which is based on individual merit. In holistic assessment, the whole is worth more than the sum of the parts. Several organisations using this form of assessment collate student grades in specific subjects, together with reports from mentors and other peripheral activities such as prizes, achievements and warnings. The student is then assessed holistically i.e., in terms of whether, in the opinion of the Faculty, the student has some prospect of making it in the profession. Although a student may have passed all their subjects/courses, it may be the opinion of the Faculty that the student may never have a career in the profession. These students may be excluded from the course.

Irrespective of any other benefits derived from the establishment of national curriculum, within the visual and performing arts the curriculum cannot be isolated from the training environment. Not all units within the teaching curriculum attract the same degree of interest by Academy staff. Some units are classified as "professional

- (c) In the area of broadcasting, the Academy has developed two courses which are designed to train students in remote communities with the skills required to operate and broadcast programmes through community radio stations and the Broadcasting in Remote Aboriginal Communities Scheme (BRACS). These courses aim specifically to equip students with an understanding and a sufficient level of skill to seek initial employment or deployment in community-based or ethnic radio stations.
- (d) The Academy is working to strengthen its ties with other organisations with an interest in arts-related training for Aboriginals, such as the Western Australian Department for the Arts and Aboriginal Services Bureau (Western Australian Department of Training).
- (e) The Academy has introduced a research project based on the design and delivery of performing arts related programmes to aboriginal people in remote and rural communities. Despite acknowledged small classes, high attrition, high startup cost and high delivery cost, this project is aimed at Aboriginal people, and particularly their youth, situated in remote and rural communities. These people, whilst defined as "low achievers" in the traditional educational sense, are remarkably skilled and have a latent talent for the performing arts industry. Aboriginal performers are in demand for film, television and theatrical performance. Whilst the majority of Aboriginal artists currently live in remote communities, very little training has been provided for these people in the area of the performing arts. There are no arts training courses in remote areas of Australia which take advantage of the new communication technologies which are rapidly becoming a standard feature of mainstream education. Many of the more traditional programmes do not allow sufficiently for Aboriginal performance perspectives, or build upon their traditional performance culture. The project is designed to utilise existing links between Aboriginal community organisations and the providers of education to remote communities to determine

the scope of the training needs, the most culturally appropriate method of delivery and the potential to engage established, traditional artists as teachers.

Much of the above business-related activity would ordinarily fall "outside" the scope of the AVETMISS data (that is, no load is recorded through the institutional data returns until students enrol in a course), yet the cost of researching, designing, writing and piloting these and other projects must be borne by the institution prior to receiving external funding for these programmes or an "economic" return from the investment (if such a return can ever be quantified). Institutions are therefore encouraged by this "dis-incentive" not to engage in research or high cost programmes, but to pick courses "off the shelf", regardless of their relevance to the interest being served, and deliver them to as many people as cheaply as possible.

Cross-sectoral Links: As one of the few truly multi-sector organisations in Australia, the Academy already has an exemplary cross-sectoral programme in place, with many students entering the Academy at a Certificate level, and articulating through the Academy's programme to exit with a Bachelor's degree. Links are established with the Faculty of Education for students who complete two years of a performance degree, but who are better suited to a teaching career. However, whilst cross-sectoral links are an objective of ANTA's national reform agenda, the established resource and funding models detract from this purpose through course-by-course performance and funding indicators. For example, if a student moves from a Diploma programme to a Bachelor programme (as they frequently do), the Academy faces the prospect of losing student contact hours in the TAFE sector. Similarly, if a student leaves a programme because he or she has secured employment by a market keen to employ Academy-trained personnel, there will be a negative effect in both student contact hours and student graduation rates. If the Academy devolves too many of its resources (as a community service) to the valuable training ground of the Western Australian Youth Orchestra and the Western Australian Youth Jazz Orchestra, these funds will not be available for mainstream programmes and the effect will, again, be to lower

the Academy's benchmark performance indicators. The incentive for the Academy is to ignore the student interest and maximise funding opportunities by setting in place mechanisms which ensure that its course-by-course performance indicators are optimised.

5.3 KEY DATA ISSUES TO BE ADDRESSED

Are the data collected by the Commonwealth adequate for national, state and institutional planning and accountability purposes, and will the state training profiles properly utilise their information resources in reporting progress towards objectives?

It has been noted earlier in this thesis that the AVETMISS data collection has been designed to assist the Commonwealth achieve its objectives by monitoring the implementation of national policy initiatives in matters which include focussing the national training effort towards the greatest need; improving the planning and promotion of vocational education and training at all levels and the ability of training providers to attract government and non-government funding; increasing the focus on outcomes rather than inputs; improving decisions about education and training by providing clear and accurate information to individuals, providers and policy makers; improving international competitiveness and the potential market, and so on.

In view of the preceding discussion, it is difficult to see how the AVETMISS reporting framework can monitor the extent to which these objectives can be achieved, particularly those objectives relating to improved outcomes. For the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, it is difficult to see how the AVETMISS framework *per se* can

- improve the planning and promotion of vocational education and training;
- increase the focus on outcomes rather than inputs;

- improve decisions about education and training; and
- provide accurate information about the industry's achievements.

What then is the AVETMISS information really measuring? Despite a proclaimed interest in outcomes-based reporting, the primary data derived by the Western Australian State Training Agency from the AVETMISS returns relate to input variables such as the information shown in the Academy's student enrolment report (see Table 5-4). These data remain the single-most important element in determining the level of resources made available to the institution. The Academy maintains that, through funding incentives, educational institutions have been encouraged to establish structures which, although economically effective, are counter-productive to producing graduates who are capable and "job-ready" at the point of leaving the institution. For training institutions to become more outcomes-focused, it is essential that new structures are developed which will improve the quality of the graduates and their preparedness to enter the workforce. For example, in traditional training institutions, the Academy maintains that the separation which exists between on-the-job and off-the-job training is an artificial divide which mitigates against the successful training of talented graduates for the market-place who are able and ready to contribute new product and ideas to the industry. Research is required into the design and approach of programmes such as those at the Academy which achieve high quality, industry-compatible training within the vocational education and training sector.

- What are the elements of successful training programmes which provide “job-ready”, performance-orientated, professional graduates who are absorbed into employment?

- What is it that these training institutions do which is different from mainstream education?
- Why do they do it differently?
- What elements of these programmes can be applied more generally to the education and training sector?
- What is a desirable structure for a performance-based educational institution?

In many areas of the vocational education and training sector, attempts to structure the training environment differently can be found in the establishment of hospitality training schools in restaurants and centres of excellence in the performing arts. In these schools, the philosophy and design of programmes changes from an approach which primarily provides courses, subjects, modules and units to one which provides industry-compatible training. The structure of these schools, and their programmes, is strongly experiential - Socratic, atelier-based instruction - allowing staff, students and the industry to focus on their own work in ways which are

- (a) not constrained by the more traditional approaches to unitised training; and
- (b) exploratory, innovative and multi art-form, so that new vocabularies, products and visions are created.

Training in these environments is project-driven and based around group/inter-dependent learning. Students in these environments can create opportunities for employment from within the training institution. The internal framework of the training enterprise is carefully structured to reflect the outside environment - cells of activity functioning within the model of a production house.

The Academy maintains that the current approach to education and training evident through the AVETMISS reporting framework and supported through the existing funding models does not recognise, and in fact discourages, alternative, outcomes-focused training strategies for specialist educational providers such as the Academy who have managed to establish themselves as industry-focused institutions providing quality opportunities and outcomes at the top-end of the training continuum.

Table 5-6 emphasises the sorts of measures which can be easily derived from quantitative data which have not been contextualised, leading to superficial and erroneous conclusions.

Table 5-6
Key Performance Indicators: Superficial Conclusions

	1994	1995
Number of Graduating Students	220	250
Total Expenditure	\$8.3M	\$9.3M
Total EFTSU ²⁸ Enrolments	797	991
<i>Cost per Enrolled Student:</i>	\$10,414	\$9,384
<i>Cost per Graduating Student:</i>	\$37,727	\$37,200

Source: Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

The AVETMISS data collection professes to increase the focus on outcomes and outputs rather than inputs. The 1994-95 AVETMISS data reveal an increase in the number of enrolled students and the number of graduates, both delivered at a lower unit cost. As the only outputs recorded in the collection relate to students who receive an award of the institution, it can only be assumed that this measure will form the basis of some sort of benchmark comparison of graduate cost by institution (this has

²⁸ *Equivalent Full-Time Student Units - this measure differs slightly in its derivation and purpose from the Equivalent Full-Time Student (EFTS) statistic used earlier. The EFTSU statistic is principally a measure of student load, whereas the EFTS statistic is principally a measure of the number of equivalent full-time students on campus (i.e., a full-time student is counted as "1" and a part-time student is counted as "0.5").*

already occurred in the higher education sector). But has the quality of output improved also? Can one make the simple assumption from the above data that graduate costs from Academy are decreasing? Is it correct to assume that graduates are the only outputs of the organisation (i.e., what other services and outputs have been curtailed to effect the reduction in unit cost)?

The Academy's 'cost per student' data is “contaminated” with many costs which cannot be assumed to be consistent, constant or comparable across institutions. Increases in cost per delivery unit can be associated with award restructuring, increases in administrative infrastructure, higher rents for leased premises and out-sourced services and so on. Due to a lack of capital facilities on the Academy's main campus, classes (and indeed some whole courses) are conducted off-campus in leased facilities. This increases the delivery and associated administrative cost considerably, but by what factor? This is a figure which can be isolated by the Academy administration, but it is not an element of the data collection which is taken into consideration by the national or State authorities when preparing benchmark comparisons. A considerable investment by the State in additional capital facilities would enable the Academy to run much more cheaply. How much of the Academy's operational cost is related to the political realities of its establishment into the university environment (i.e., an attempt at cost shifting between the educational sectors)?

Table 5-7 is an extract of the semester delivery profile provided by the Academy to the Western Australian Department of Training for semester one, 1996.

Table 5-7
Academy Semester Delivery Profile - 1996

Course Name	Student Contact Hours - Full-time	Student Contact Hours - Part-time	Teaching Hours	Com-mencing Full-time Students	Contin-uing Full-time Students	Part-time Students
Cert. of Dance (Prep. Studies)	0	3285	180	0	0	37
Cert. of Music (Classical)	6804	0	540	23	0	0
Cert. of Music (Jazz)	6678	0	360	22	0	0
Dip. of Music Teaching	4473	0	486	5	5	0
Dip. of Perf. Arts (Dance)	15669	0	2277	15	19	0
Dip. of Perf. Arts (Music)	12222	0	1998	15	25	0
Dip. of Perf. Arts (Prod. & Design)	71334	0	10872	50	61	0
Dip. of Perf. Arts (Theatre)	38664	0	2106	19	35	0
Cert. in Musical Theatre	0	3762	198	0	0	19
Adv. Cert. in Aborig. Musical Theatre	13914	0	621	23	0	0
Adv. Cert. in Music (Comm. Music)	10334	0	828	15	11	0
	180092	7047	20466	187	156	56
	Total Expenditure: \$2,400,000					

Source: Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

From this table, the Department derives statistics such as

- student-teacher ratios (the student contact hours divided by the teaching hours);
- and
- cost per student contact hour (\$2.4 M divided by 180,092 contact hours).

These data say very little more than the obvious i.e., the student contact hours divided by the teaching hours varies from approximately 6 to 18 on a course by course basis. It ignores the nature of the teaching programme, the availability and need for dance

repetiteurs, theatre technicians, piano tuners and so on. It says nothing about efforts to introduce resource-based teaching strategies in the theory-based subjects whilst maintaining individual instruction in the practical elements of the course. Is it appropriate to teach this amount, less or more? Although the delivery profiles assume that staff teaching loads can be reported annually, in the Academy's situation, it is not possible to separate out those staff engaged in AVETMISS-related activities and those involved in other activities (such as higher education, research staff, staff engaged in community-funded activities and so on). The Academy maintains that it is the only truly multi-sector organisation in Australia. There is no separation of activity by sector within the Academy - students are taught at their appropriate skill level, and staff teach both State and Commonwealth funded students in the same class. These students make use of other Academy facilities (such as the Library, theatres, equipment and classrooms) without separating into groups on a "funding source" basis. Maintaining a distinction between the two sectors is artificial and at best, pointless. Making national comparisons based on data from only part of the organisation is sure to be factually incorrect. Unless sufficient credibility is allocated to developmental and investigative research into teaching and learning strategies and outcomes which can drive policy initiatives in the visual and performing arts, and more generally in the vocational education and training sector, activity will continue to focus on efficiency gains relating only to load indicators at the expense of educational outcomes.

During 1995, the Academy introduced a benchmarking programme which aims to develop the Academy's existing reputation as a provider of highly trained, performance-orientated and professional graduates who are absorbed into employment by incorporating international "best practice" into those mechanisms and procedures which assure a given quality, or the continued improvement of quality. The project will focus on documenting, refining and systematically evaluating the unique features of performance-based programmes which ensure that a centre of excellence for the training of talented individuals to professional standards in the

visual and performing arts is maintained (see Appendix C). The Academy maintains that there is much more to be gained by such research in the form of new insights and understandings where the policies and procedures of networks of like institutions are analysed in a comparable and contextualised environment.

At the root of the ANTA framework is the expectation that the industry will drive the training agenda, but in the arts industry, this will rarely be the case. The Arts industry is, in many respects, not an industry with a large capacity to operate collectively or to generate significant amounts of income. In the more exploratory areas, art is created by individuals outside of their working-financial environment. In these situations, the role of the educational providers is to engage these individuals in collaborative projects and encourage them to explore their art further within the financial security of a larger organisation.

There are many outcomes of the Academy which are not described in the collection, and which, if they were, would be very difficult to quantify or record but which form an important element of the Academy's ability to produce quality students, such as

- investigating the changing nature and future of the performing arts industry;
- adapting curriculum to focus on multi-disciplinary approaches to the performing arts, and in particular, the inclusion of multi-media as a basic art form which is permeating most facets of the industry; and
- establishing links with new industries and performing arts institutions.

Before any judgement can be made regarding the Academy's input-outcome relationships, it is important to see the whole picture, which would necessarily include the complementary balance achieved between the training delivered to students in the State funded programme and the higher education programme, and the flexibility

achieved between the sectors. As Sizer (1982, p38) points out, optimising the paths does not necessarily optimise the whole.

5.4 DISCUSSION

It is obvious that what is important to ANTA and the State Training Agency is reflected in the data collection. But is the same true for the training provider? How do institutions faced with a national agenda which is at odds with an established local agenda resolve this conflict of interest? Earlier in this document, it was noted that performance assessment can be used either to:-

1. influence and improve performance; or
2. control and measure in order to make decisions about planning and the allocation of funds.

Cullen (1992, p15) described this as the programme improvement model vs the minimum standards model and advocated strategies to address the former, noting that "*...it is important that the rationale for external interventions is understood within institutions, and that such interventions act to encourage rather than discourage the internal processes and evaluation in those institutions.*" (Cullen, 1992: p12)

Within the AVETMISS framework, it appears that the latter position has become dominant. This chapter has argued that funding and measurement systems are "driving" the policy agenda within the local institutions and hence pre-determining the training outcomes. The Academy maintains that national performance indicators which emphasise input and activity measures, at the expense of quality and output measures such as those advocated by Sizer (1982, pp40-41) promote national conformity around a "minimum standards" model rather than a "programme improvement" model.

In managing the NVETS accountability model, the Commonwealth Government appears to be following the educational profile model now well established in the higher education sector. It is useful to make a comparison here with the higher education sector which, as has been briefly described in Chapter 1, has been undergoing considerable change since 1988. A parallel can be drawn between the desire of the Commonwealth Government for a higher degree of institutional accountability, the introduction of annual institutional profile reporting and the submission of data annually to the Department of Employment, Education, and Training. Much of the data now prescribed by AVETMISS have been available in the higher education sector for many years. With the introduction of the Higher Education Contribution Scheme, data collections provided by institutions have been considerably improved with respect to their accuracy and consistency. Whether intentionally or otherwise, the AVETMISS and the higher education data collections are extremely similar in their design and the structure of the data element dictionary. However, is this an appropriate model to emulate? There are those within the higher education sector who are critical of the current system.

The extent to which profile data [collected from universities in Australia by the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET)] are adequate for State and institutional planning purposes needs to be considered. Not only are some definitional problems extant, but the use of broad classifications masks many of the distinctive features that distinguish the offerings of one institution from those of another. (Western Australian Higher Education Council, 1991: p70)

There has been considerable discomfort with the performance indicators derived from such a collection (DEET, 1991). Glatter (1988, p133) suggests that such procedures are essentially political, used as a method for keeping order in institutions and are not used for solving educational problems. He further suggests that the political perspective is essentially reactive, harbouring a conservative traditional view of change. Because of the inherent difficulty in resolving policy other than by political action, it is thus antithetical to participative decision-making and group problem-solving.

Given the obvious parallels which can be drawn with the higher education data collection, it is difficult to know how the designers of the AVETMISS collection expect to overcome these issues which are already well documented, particularly with respect to standardisation of data and comparability of key performance measures across the various institutions, each prepared to argue for different definitions of inputs, outputs and quality. It is argued by University of Wollongong (1994) that the scarcity of DEET indicators belonging to the organisational 'process' dimensions, as well as their absence from the 'context' dimension indicate some limitations of this indicator system to represent the functioning and performance of modern university. Lindsay (1992) would agree that the quantitative measures currently available through the higher education system are an inadequate basis for making informed decisions.

Educational processes are not well understood and educational outcomes are largely intangible. As a result, quantitative measures of them are at best slanted and partial, and useful judgements often require specialist skills and knowledge. (Lindsay, 1992: p157)

With respect to the assessment of quality in teaching institutions, Lindsay (1992) further discusses the "production-measurement" approach (revolving around discussion of definitions and measurement of resources and outcomes) versus the "stakeholder-judgement" view (which gives at least equal emphasis to the educational activities and outcomes achieved²⁹).

The 'outcomes' view is more educationally sophisticated than the resources view, but less operationally feasible. (Lindsay, 1992: p155)

Back in the TAFE sector, it is difficult to see how more extensive "production-measurement" analysis of the AVETMISS data returns, albeit more focused on outputs and outcomes, will provide for improved decision-making in the visual and performing arts. Rather, the "stakeholder-judgement" view would appear to be the

²⁹ *There is a parallel which can be drawn here between Cullen's centralised/decentralised models of performance management and Lindsay's production-measurement and stakeholder-judgement model.*

prevailing mode of the industry. Public performances by Academy staff and students are regularly reviewed in the media. These reviews indicate strong support for the quality of the Academy's graduates by the industry and the Academy's standing in the arts community (see Appendix E). They also provide compelling qualitative, outcomes-focused data which could provide a contextual background for the narrow, one-dimensional view of training revealed through the AVETMISS data returns.