
1. OVERVIEW - A NATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING FRAMEWORK

Summary of Key Points:

This chapter will argue that the Commonwealth Government sees the vocational education and training sector as critically important for Australia to maintain its economic viability in the twenty-first century. The Government, with a promised \$1 billion increase in Commonwealth funds, is increasingly wishing to gain control over this sector which is considered by the Government to be slow to respond to industry circumstances and the needs of the day.

The new national vocational education and training framework aims to ensure close interaction and cooperation between the State and Commonwealth Governments, industry and vocational education and training providers; an effective training market with public and private provision of training; an efficient and productive network of publicly funded providers; increased opportunities and improved outcomes for all stakeholders; and improved cross-sectoral links.

The AVETMISS information framework has been established as the key reporting instrument for Government to monitor the success of its training initiatives.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The Commonwealth Government is determined to extend its influence in the post-secondary education sector. A vigorous agenda of national reform managed by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) through the National Vocational Education and Training System (NVETS), has clearly established the Commonwealth as a significant force in what has traditionally been a State-dominated vocational education and training sector.

This thesis will examine the new information reporting requirements which have been introduced into this sector by the Commonwealth Government. It will evaluate the effect that these changes have had on the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts with respect to matters such as the degree of autonomy in the management of its own affairs; monitoring of educational outcomes; improving the efficiency and cost effectiveness of the training programmes; and optimising the performance of the sector more generally through the establishment of key performance indicators. It will be primarily concerned with

- the adequacy of established reporting mechanisms for educational and Government planning purposes;

- the suitability of the Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard¹ as a mechanism which claims to integrate the statistical requirements for policy and planning with the information required for management (i.e., a mechanism for institutions to report on key performance indicators and training delivery outcomes, whilst also providing college and institutional decision-makers with the information required for management purposes);
- the design and function of information systems which can provide useful and meaningful data to improve decision-making and the public accountability of TAFE level educational systems; and
- the potential of alternative datasets to assist with planning, managing and monitoring change expected of these institutions.

It is appropriate that, after two years of operating within a national training system, this mechanism be reviewed with respect to the purpose and practical application of its constituent units. This thesis will be concerned particularly with the AVETMISS operating framework, national training delivery profiles and activity-based funding models. This chapter will describe why the Commonwealth is becoming involved in State-based training systems and how it has managed to do this.

1.2 THE CLEVER COUNTRY

Since as far back as the 1930s, there has been a high degree of consistency in the manner in which educational policy has been linked to the economic and social needs of the country.

The cult of 'national efficiency' ... saw its clearest expression in Australia in the philosophy of Tate who regarded 'school power' as holding the key in the world struggle for markets At the same time the belief had

¹ Referred to in this document as "AVETMISS".

strengthened during the depression that the greater provision for technical education and the growth of a skilled labour force would help to lessen the most pressing social problem of the 1930s - that of unemployment. (Bessant, 1972: p138)

This view clearly still predominates in the 1990s (Finn Report, 1991: p7-8). The Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee corroborates this position, maintaining that

Higher education has been invaluable in the analysis of the Australian social, technological and economic position and the identification of optimum directions to ensure economic growth and social stability. It will also be critical in the development of the intellectual basis on which Australia can position itself to move from reliance on a primary resource base to the development of a strong secondary and tertiary economic base. (AVCC, 1991: p3)

There are many who see education as holding the key to "the clever country", and who would wish to extend their influence in order that their ambitions for the sector can be achieved. McNicol (1991) and Marshall (1988) maintain that this is particularly true of the Dawkins² era, where

... a growing conviction developed on the part of the commonwealth departments responsible for economic matters that the resources of the tertiary education sector must be used to ensure any long term solution to these [economic and social] problems. (Marshall, 1988: p121)

In particular, the Dawkins Ministry was keen to establish a closer relationship between higher education and industry (Pennington, 1991). It saw that increased control over the educational sector was fundamental to any effective decision-making. Experience in dealing with State Governments or individual institutions to solve perceived problems through mutual agreement and evolutionary processes had proven this strategy to be unsuccessful (Meek and Goedegebuure, 1989). The removal of the Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) and the creation of the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) was therefore an

² *The Dawkins Ministry of the Hawke Labor Government in the late 1980s.*

acknowledged attempt by the Commonwealth Government to impose a greater degree of coordination and integration upon the tertiary education sector (Marshall, 1988).

1.3 COMMONWEALTH INFLUENCE IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Bowker (1972) maintains that during the early decades of its existence, the Commonwealth Government of Australia showed little interest in education. It was not until 1945 that the Commonwealth Office of Education and the Universities Commission were established. Prior to this date, education was almost exclusively a state matter (Meek and Goedegebuure, 1989). However, close interaction with organisations which emerged as national entities during the latter half of the nineteenth century (such as the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and the Australian Teachers Federation) and an awareness by Commonwealth of the need to develop education in Australia as a basis for economic expansion, encouraged a view that education should be managed from a national perspective.

In the mid-1960s, on the initiative of the Government, a new sector of advanced education was established to replace the previous system of universities and non-universities (comprising teachers colleges, agricultural colleges, senior technical colleges and technical colleges). In 1973 and 1974, the Whitlam Labor Government assumed almost total responsibility for funding higher education. In 1988 the Dawkins Ministry abolished the binary system and established a Unified National System. In 1992, the first of the Commonwealth Government's quality initiatives began to make an impact on Australian universities.

Within as short a period as 25 years, through a series of national policy initiatives, Commonwealth influence in higher education resulted in various new outcomes for the sector, such as universities adopting new corporate identities, improving service functions, becoming more 'client centered', moulding new sub-units into their organisational structures, administering a 'user pays' system of higher education (the

Higher Education Contribution Scheme), responding to a system of annual quality audits and managing larger and more diverse multicampus networks.

1.4 COMMONWEALTH INFLUENCE IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING

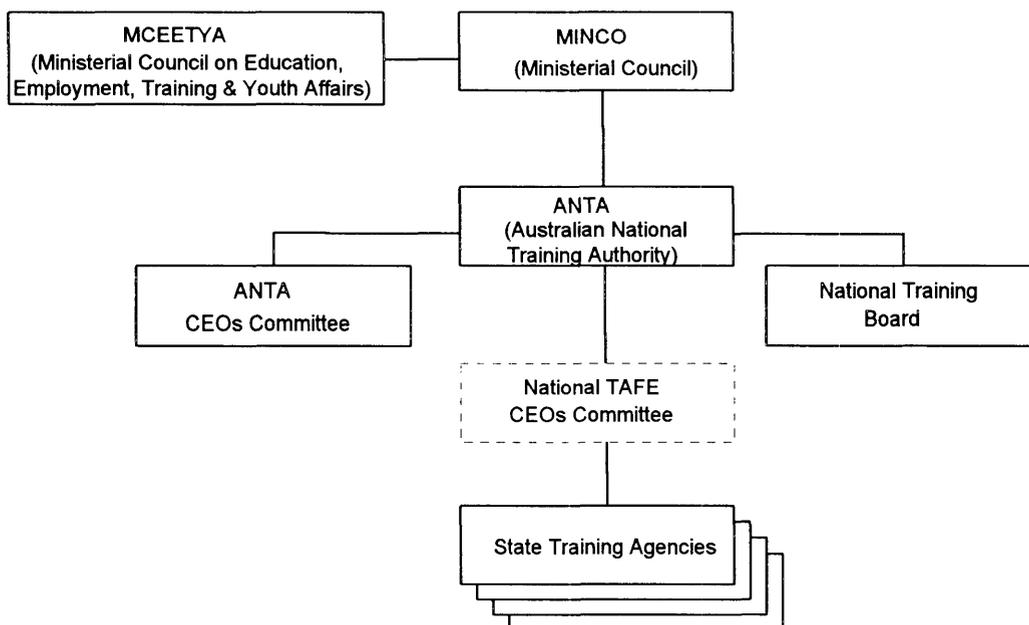
For the vocational education and training sector, 1994 marked the introduction of the Commonwealth Government's first national initiative in the TAFE sector - the National Vocational Education and Training System (NVETS). The new national system is administered by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) established under its own Act (ANTA, 1992) to invigorate vocational education and training systems, and more specifically, to promote

- close interaction and cooperation between the State and Commonwealth governments, industry and vocational education and training providers;
- an effective training market with public and private provision of training;
- an efficient and productive network of publicly funded providers;
- increased opportunities and improved outcomes; and
- improved cross-sectoral links (see ANTA, 1993).

The new national system is the result of a deliberate strategy by the Commonwealth Government to extend its influence into TAFE level education and training programmes and requires the States to adopt a very different approach to planning vocational education and training (ANTA, 1993). Decisions regarding the development of the vocational education and training (VET) system are made for the first time within parameters that have been agreed collectively by vocational education and training Ministers (see Figure 1-1). It is expected that the new national system will improve the quality, accountability and efficiency of the TAFE sector

nationally, and in particular, will foster a client-focused culture; create and promote opportunities for lifelong learning; advance a national identity for the system; and reward innovation and best practice approaches.

Figure 1-1
National VET Decision-Making Bodies



NOTE: Ministerial Councils are formal meetings of Ministers of the Crown who carry the authority of their governments. Ministerial Council may determine to finality all matters in their field of concern (Western Australian Department of Training, 1995b). MINCO's membership consists of the relevant Ministers from each State and Territory and the Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training, who chairs the Council. MCEETYA and MINCO have similar membership and some overlapping issues, but whereas MCEETYA meets only once annually and advises on policy issues, MINCO has more of an operational role in the national framework. (WADOT, 1995a)

In order to administer a national accountability model and to coordinate change in the education and training sector across State boundaries, ANTA has been assigned responsibility for preparing national strategic plans for approval by the Ministerial Council. ANTA will give advice and make recommendations to the Ministerial Council regarding the amount and allocation of funds which will be made available

by the Authority (ANTA) in a given year and provide reports to Ministerial Council on the effective and efficient means of delivering a national system of vocational education and training. Key planning instruments for the national system will include

- agreed national goals, objectives and priorities;
- a national strategic plan for vocational education and training;
- planning parameters which set targets and priorities for the provision of vocational education and training for the year ahead and indicative parameters for the subsequent two years; and
- state training profiles, which will define a comprehensive plan for the provision and support of vocational education and training for the year ahead at the State level and, in aggregate, at the national level.

The NVETS model will require States to assume some control over education and training activity to ensure that targets agreed to at the state level are achieved at a local level. The State Training Profile will ensure a link between state training activity and agreed national priorities, and will emphasise a quantitative, "quality and efficiency" approach based on system outcomes. States will show growth in effort towards the achievement of agreed national targets. Performance measures associated with the agreed initiatives are to be devised.

1.5 COMMONWEALTH MANAGERIALISM

The Commonwealth Government has adopted a managerialist position with respect to post-secondary education and training. Marshall (1992) suggests that the Government's desire to influence these systems stems from a belief that inter-agency and cross-sectoral communication, subjective assessments and independent decision-making processes have, in the past, been inadequate. Through its financial and

political supremacy, the Commonwealth Government has focused its attention on a national reform agenda in a serious attempt to address problems which have been resident in the sector for some years.

Commonwealth initiatives can be viewed as measures to address serious quality and quality assurance problems that have been recognised for many years, and which Australian universities have been slow to tackle. What has been lacking in most Australian universities is a really professional approach to evaluation and to the monitoring of their own activities. (Harman, 1994: p26)

In the vocational education and training sector, measures to introduce change are very recent. However, in the higher education sector, the pattern of Commonwealth reform has now been established for some years. Pennington (1991) believes that the policy changes initiated by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training through the Green and White papers represent the end-stage of a phase of development down the path of central funding, control and regulation by the Commonwealth. There are some who believe that the new form of managerialism introduced by the Dawkins Ministry into the higher education sector emphasised a centralised, top-down approach, allowing limited scope for bottom-up or lateral contributions (Marshall, 1992). These changes have not been welcomed by those Australian universities who argue for more autonomy in the management of their own affairs.

In almost every other field of management and administration, the emphasis is on decentralisation and devolution. The reverse is true for higher education under Dawkins. (Pennington, 1991: p110)

1.6 OTHER TRAINING REFORM AGENDAS

The Commonwealth's strategy to extend its influence over the education sector coincides with, at least in Western Australia, an agenda of reform initiated by the State Government to improve organisational effectiveness, resource efficiency and accountability of TAFE level education and training.

There has been a recognition for many years of the need for a systematic planning framework in Western Australia which focuses activity within the State on the achievement of agreed national and state outcomes, to ensure that resources are deployed to optimal effect and to ensure also adequate management control and accountability. To achieve these objectives, the Western Australian Department of Training has initiated centralised planning and coordination for the sector; biannual performance reviews; and a range of reforms which focus on achieving outcomes in terms of Government policies, national objectives and industry priorities.

These changes aim to advance the Department towards its goal of being a 'best practice' agency by ensuring that vocational education and training is

- more cost effective;
- more responsive to industry and client expectations;
- flexible and adaptable to future shifts in demand;
- of the highest quality; and
- clearly accountable for performance outcomes.

(WADOT, 1995a: p23)

Key initiatives include resource and performance agreements which are signed with each training provider; sub-contracting the delivery of a wide range of programmes through competitive tendering to encourage a more diverse and open training market; and a quality systems framework developed in conjunction with the Australian Quality Council.

Quality is clearly one of the major issues in higher education today ... Ministers, bureaucrats, employers, and business interests have become increasingly concerned about the outputs of higher education institutions, and are asking whether the taxpayers are getting value for their ongoing investment in higher education. In response, governments, government agencies, and higher education institutions are taking various initiatives, such as establishing new mechanisms for evaluation and the measurement of various aspects of performance, for the planning and implementation of measures to achieve quality improvement, and for new mechanisms of quality assurance and quality management. (Harman, 1994: p25)

1.7 THE MODERN MANAGER

Within this climate of national reform, the role of educational managers at all levels is becoming increasingly important. Pressures being placed on institutions to become more market orientated, cost effective, competitive and responsive to Government priorities and the needs of industry have significantly increased the role of these managers as they introduce measures to increase and improve services during periods of budgetary restraint, adapt and respond to the needs of the community through more creative and flexible use of resources, and become more accountable for the standard of service provided (Western Australian Government, 1986).

Pennington (1991), in discussing the evolving purposes and processes in Australian universities, comments on the profound impact recent events have had. Of some significance is the recognition by managers within the tertiary education sector of the need to develop positive orientations to change and to take firm control of their own policy agendas through good management and planning (Gilbert, 1991 and Massaro, 1991). However, a dilemma which faces these managers is how to select from the increasing range and diversity of expectations, those to which they must respond. Money spent in one area is money not available to assign to another area. Advanced planning and strategic information is required to guide the decision-maker who must devise strategies to reconcile competing priorities within a university or TAFE college, particularly where there is no universal agreement on purpose or relative value. For example, is extending a three year undergraduate degree programme to four or five years educationally more effective than reducing class sizes? Is the marginal benefit gained worth the associated cost, compared to the alternative uses of the same resources? How much education is "enough"?

Publicly-funded organisations in the 1990s face two major challenges as they try to prove they deserve the significant resources committed to education and justify requests for more - to improve, or at least maintain service delivery in the face of falling revenues, and to demonstrate structural flexibility so that responses to

political, social and economic changes in the environment can be made quickly, and in accordance with best practice (Tasmanian Government, 1993). These institutions, encouraged to supplement their budgets with funds from increasingly diverse sources are, as a consequence, required to be accountable to diverse interest groups with possibly unreconcilable educational philosophies.

"He who pays the piper calls the tune", but what happens when at least two funding agencies call for different tunes? These modern decision-makers are swamped with decisions to make and problems to resolve. It is their capacity to grasp the configuration of forces affecting their environment, to construct an achievable mission and to convey and obtain commitment to that mission which will significantly affect their success as a leader (Hoyle, 1989). The fact that there is no "best answer" will not discourage the decision-maker from making choices, whether explicitly or implicitly, in a fast-moving environment focused on short-term achievements and immediate benefit.

The complex nature of the tertiary education environment has been recognised for some years. Williams and Blackstone (1983: p104), in a very perceptive paragraph, capture the dichotomies in which the forces for educational change must operate.

In considering improved forms of coordination our aim is to develop a network of institutions that is widely and equitably accessible; and offers students diverse and flexible, but well structured courses; that is excellent over a wide range of teaching, research and public service; that is responsive to changing economic and social circumstances; that is demonstrably efficient in its use of public funds whilst at the same time protecting legitimate claims to academic autonomy; that provides good career prospects for able people; and that is able to do all these things by adaptation without growth.

To deal with this complex situation, the modern manager needs more specific and meaningful descriptions of the entire process of higher education - information which is invariably sought for but not found (Tasmanian Government, 1993). Despite abundant data, it is common to find in large institutions that they are either not

sufficiently useful, or they have not been selected and aggregated into meaningful and manageable forms. Information systems are slow to respond to new user requirements. Reports frequently require tedious extraction and re-keying procedures before meaningful information can be derived. Furthermore, these systems are not sensitive enough, nor have they been designed, to provide predictive information for analysing the consequences of neglecting one programme in favour of another, or for the more complex analysis of supply and demand for graduates in specialised discipline areas. As new demands are placed upon institutions, new insights and understandings are increasingly required in order that the individual contributions, activities and benefits of an organisational unit may be shaped, modified, directed and improved through more intelligent decision-making and informed use of resources (see Figure 1-2).

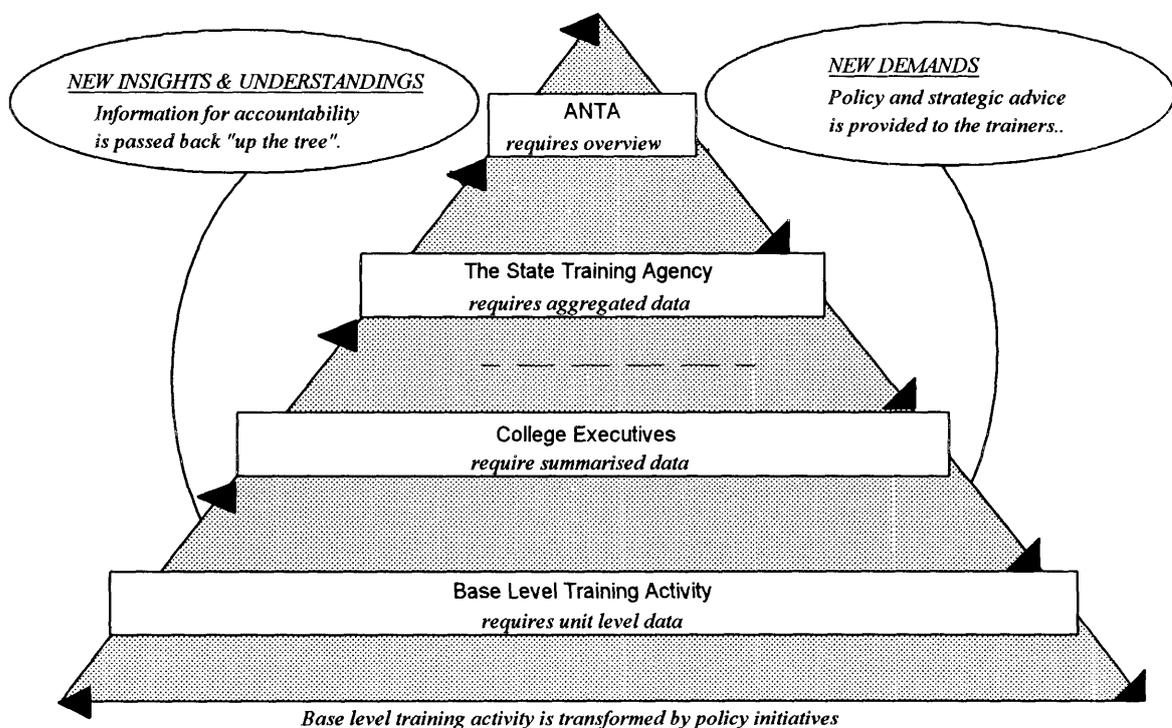
1.8 THE INFORMATION ENVIRONMENT

It has long been recognised that information systems offer the opportunity to turn demands for change, improvement and accountability into a two-way street paved with potential advantages for all involved (Anderson, 1984), provided resource inputs, activities, outputs and their outcomes can be seen as related parts of a whole. Small differences in inputs can be coupled with internal process efficiencies to result in large differences in outputs, and in particular, the ability of an institution to compete and survive. Competitive advantage can reside in organisational efficiencies as well as in local conditions. Educational institutions, to compete effectively in the international market place, must identify and secure a competitive edge (Webb, 1993: p12). Information technology is recognised as an important ingredient in creating these small but significant differences in competitive ability. Computer technology can be used to help make better decisions, deal with change, automate mundane tasks and offer an opportunity to look at things differently. The fast pace of changing technologies and rapid application development brings many new solutions to old problems. Information technology, in particular, numerous advances in

hardware, software, data access, communication between platforms and graphical user interfaces, enables new ways to

- carry out and evaluate business processes;
- retrieve this information in ways which allow individual needs, corporate initiative and idiosyncratic information processing; and thereby
- improve services.

Figure 1-2
Information Reporting and Accountability Requirements



Information systems can process large varieties of comparative data to help identify an organisation's strengths and weaknesses, and describe them concretely within a contextual framework. Appropriate and timely information can help managers understand the management problem and assist with the identification of the solution.

An axiom of the present time in higher education holds that an institution's key to survival (and eventual prosperity) is identifying its uniqueness. What are its competitive advantages? Comparative data help both to identify the advantages and describe them concretely, so that they will be understood in an operational framework. (Brinkman and Krakower, 1983: p27)

An organisation's technology can be made to work more productively for the benefit of all users, and to deliver solutions determined by end user needs. Through an integrated, functional approach to data management, the information needs of users at all levels in the organisation can be satisfied.

There is a perception however that our information systems have generally failed to provide the modern manager with the level of service required. Modern information technology environments are changing in ways that should facilitate the evolution of new "knowledge systems". Software is improving, users are becoming more adept at handling computer and communications technology and there is universal acceptance of the role information technology should play in a modern workplace. Yet despite the opportunities available, there is often a general feeling amongst users of information at all levels that their information systems are inadequate³. These systems, generally built as discrete systems, have "evolved" within their host institutions by automating and upgrading systems designed for a previous generation of managers without fundamentally re-engineering them in the context of the current business environment to take full advantage of the diverse range of options for processing and storing data that the new technology offers. Token outputs for management information within a single business unit may have featured in the end result, but in very few situations would a corporate information system of the kind required by the modern manager have been designed or achieved.

³ *That twenty-two Australian universities are participating in the CASMAC (Core Australian Specifications for Management and Administrative Computing) project - a project designed to provide a complete and integrated information system for universities, and an almost equal number of TAFE authorities are introducing new administrative computer systems, adds some weight to this argument.*

In a wider context, it has been a concern for public sector corporations (Tasmanian Government, 1993) that system implementations have generally suffered from a lack of planning and professional implementation:

- systems which have been delivered have been late and over-budget;
- systems do not meet user requirements;
- plans were not implemented, or only partially implemented - planned benefits were not realised;
- projects were under-resourced; and
- inadequate controls were provided.

These information systems, in addition to being deficient in their functional application, dictate the way in which work within a business unit is conducted. Regardless of the many information technology plans and strategic systems methodologies, large corporate systems have difficulty in re-designing functions and processes to obtain the maximum benefit from their investment in new technology, and in responding to the speed with which new user requirements are introduced in order that they (the users) may act appropriately within their changing work environments.

The problem which is perceived to be most intractable is the lack of delivery of useful information through a system which is easily accessible. There is a general view that there has been little progress in providing a 'one-stop' system available on line through a PC network. (Curtin University, 1994, p2)

Many large corporate systems fail to recognise the extent to which the work environment is dominated by the systems architecture, the lack of appropriate data available to the end user and the restricted range of application tools available for use in order that solutions can be identified and systems developed which will facilitate the end-user's objectives. The end result is an organisation which is unable to perceive poor performance and unable to learn from its mistakes.

1.9 THE AVETMISS PROJECT⁴

It was with this understanding that, in 1991, the Committee on TAFE and Training Statistics (COTTS)⁵ completed a review of the existing national information systems within vocational education and training. This review confirmed that a replacement system should be developed for implementation by the end of 1994. It was recognised that there were major issues associated with the quality of data provided by training institutions. There were also problems associated with data integrity and the consistent collection of vital data describing the activities of the national vocational education and training sector. This sector, with an annual expenditure in excess of \$2.5 billion, is believed to have suffered as a consequence over the past decades through not having authoritative, consistent data on its activities and not being able to demonstrate precisely how well it has performed (AVETMISS, 1995).

The Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) arose out of the need to measure performance, assess increased skill levels and provide an accurate mechanism for setting medium to long term targets in planning for Australia's future training needs. The Standard is designed to provide concise, consistent and well understood information about

⁴ The following data on the AVETMISS project has been summarised from various publicity materials produced by AVETMISS.

⁵ This Committee was established by the Ministers of Vocational Education, Employment and Training (MOVEET) under guidance from the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee (VEETAC). COTTS had responsibility for the Training Statistics Working Party, the NATMISS (National Management Information Statistical Standard) working party and the NISAT (National Information Systems and Technology) working party.

employment, education and training so that planners may accurately plan, trainers may deliver the most appropriate training and governments and industry may accurately assess the impact of training on the workforce and the labour market. The Standard is designed also to identify strengths and weaknesses, and to become a vital component in making the vocational education and training industry a strong, competitive and relevant industry with the ability to focus and plan effectively for the future labour market needs of the nation.

The development of AVETMISS grew from the revelation that statistical deficiencies had become a serious obstacle to sensible policy analysis, system planning and institutional management in Australian vocational education and training by the late 1980's. Accordingly in November 1990, Australian Ministers with sectoral responsibilities committed their agencies to a comprehensive and radical programme of statistical reform. The aim was the development of a new system, applicable to all public and private elements of VET, that integrated the statistical requirements for policy and planning with the information required for management. (AVETMISS, 1995 Volume 1: Foreword)

1.10 OBJECTIVES OF THE AVETMISS PROJECT

The AVETMISS data collection professes to be a mechanism which will accurately and consistently measure the inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes of the vocational education and training sector. It will collect key information from all registered training providers and amalgamate these data into a single national database. Training providers will, in return, have access to this vital national information via an executive information system.

This reporting standard is expected to:-

- (a) assist with the implementation of national policy initiatives and focus the national training effort towards the greatest need;
- (b) allow for consistent reporting by all providers;

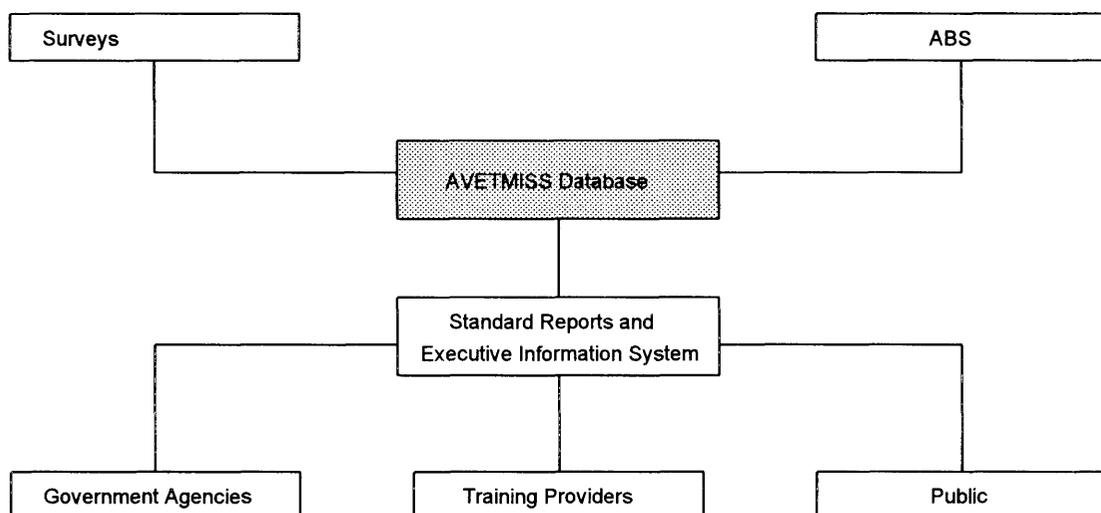
- (c) improve the planning and promotion of vocational education and training at all levels;
- (d) improve the ability of providers to attract government and non-government funding and justify a greater share of the national education and training budget;
- (e) increase the focus on outcomes rather than inputs;
- (f) improve decisions about education and training by providing clear and accurate information to individuals, providers and policy makers;
- (g) allow providers to report, measure, target and improve education and training outcomes;
- (h) provide accurate information about the industry's achievements to government and the public;
- (i) improve international competitiveness and the potential market;
- (j) improve equity and access of disadvantaged and under-represented groups in the community; and
- (k) assist with the planning, monitoring and provision of alternate learning and delivery strategies. (AVETMISS, 1995)

Accurate information on the vocational education and training enterprise is important because

- community support for training programmes depends on community knowledge and the understanding of the value and success of those programmes;

- the availability of government and private enterprise funding for training programmes and training institutions depends on previous performance, relevance to proven needs and programme quality;
- the level of government support given to the different types of sectors of education and training depends on the perceptions of relative social and economic benefit; and
- individual training institutions, as well as government, need to be able to describe and measure their successes and capabilities using accurate, reliable and plausible statistics.

Figure 1-3
AVETMISS Information Flow



The national data collection will utilise information from various sources, over-and-above the data provided from the individual training providers (see Figure 1-3) i.e., AVETMISS relies on information collected from training providers and other

government agencies, from special surveys and from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The AVETMISS (previously NATMISS - National Management Information and Statistical Standard) data will also provide key performance indicators for national comparison and analysis.

The NATMISS data will provide quantitative information to show the complexity, flexibility and diversity of Australia's vocational education and training system. It will present sound performance indicators to show the effectiveness and efficiency of the system and it will provide a valid base on which to plan for the future. (NATMISS, no date: p6)

Such indicators include the following:

1. *Pathways to and through VET:* The extent to which students enrolling in vocational education and training programmes have received prior education/training.
2. *Recognition of prior learning:* The volume of training recognition which is based prior education, training and experience.
3. *Competency-based training:* The extent to which competency-based curriculum has been implemented.
4. *Flexible delivery:* The extent to which flexible, self-paced learning strategies in VET have been adopted.

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| 5. <i>Entry level training:</i> | The effect of the New Entry Level Training System (NELTS) on the national training agenda. |
| 6. <i>National curriculum:</i> | Current levels of utilisation of the national curriculum. |
| 7. <i>Diversity:</i> | The extent of accredited courses provided by non-government providers. |
| 8. <i>Participation:</i> | The extent of participation in vocational education and training by nominated student groups. |
| 9. <i>Outputs:</i> | Numbers of completing students and trainees by occupation groups. |

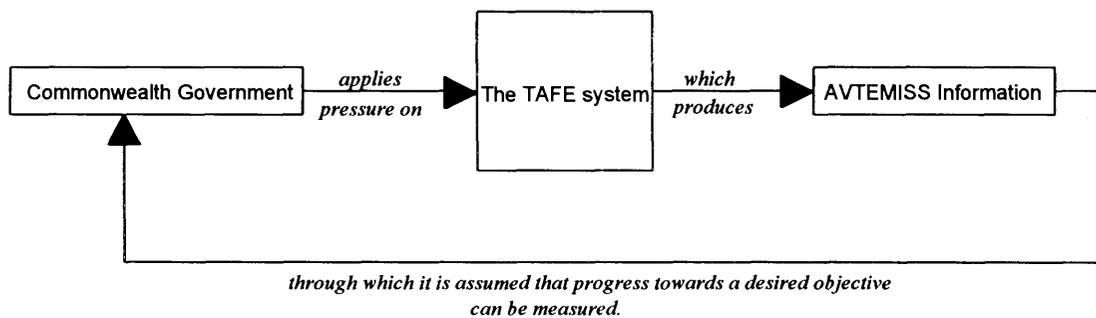
1.11 CONCLUSION

It is significant at this point in time to evaluate the effect that centralised coordination and recent changes to the information reporting requirements brought about by the Commonwealth Government through the national vocational education and training system have had on the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) has been established by the Commonwealth Government as the peak management body for the sector, and is expected to initiate and monitor change within the sector. The key to monitoring planned improvements in the vocational education and training sector, as perceived by Commonwealth and State Governments, is an improved information system which can be used as a sophisticated reporting tool to provide consistent, precise and relevant information on vocational education and training, and enable planners to

work from an authoritative base when monitoring educational performance, the efficient deployment of resources and the outcomes of policy and strategic initiatives introduced into the sector (see Figure 1-4).

Figure 1-4
AVETMISS Information Framework



Through the AVETMISS data collections, ANTA has established a national database comprising unit-level data in order that it can determine by its own analyses whether its ambitions for the sector are being realised. But do the data properly identify the diversity, ambitions and outcomes of the constituent institutions within the sector? Are they adequate for national, state and institutional planning purposes? Will the performance indicators established through the collection provide meaningful and sufficient information to measure what they purport to measure?

The AVETMISS framework claims to integrate the statistical requirements for policy and planning with the information required for management (AVETMISS, 1995 Volume 1: Foreword). In both of these contexts, the AVETMISS data should provide information which will encourage institutions to maximise quality of outcomes, minimise unnecessary duplication within the sector and make sensible economic choices in the competitive training environment which is emerging as a result of current national and state policy. The next chapter will review the purpose, vision, mission and achievements of the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.

Spanning various management infrastructures and government departments, the Academy operates with a diverse range of expectations from each of the stakeholder groups. In reviewing this material, it will be evident that

- (a) the Academy is unique in Australia;
- (b) its mandate extends beyond education and training to the arts industry and the wider arts community; and
- (c) the breadth and complexity of the Academy's responsibilities as a national provider of training and services for the arts industry, operating across multiple educational sectors within a university setting, is not reflected in the course-based training activities and outcomes reported through the AVETMISS data collection.

The Academy claims that, as a management tool, the AVETMISS data are not sufficiently comprehensive to be useful in an institutional context. As a policy and planning tool for government advisers, it is doubtful that the essential activities and outcomes of the organisation are revealed through the data. Furthermore, in a multi-sector training enterprise, it is not always possible to isolate just those activities and outcomes relating to students in State-funded courses from the remainder of the student population.

It is expected that, through an analysis of established reporting mechanisms for educational and Government planning purposes within the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, a clearer understanding will emerge of the extent to which the AVETMISS information can provide useful and meaningful data to assist decision-making at both the State and national levels and the public accountability of vocational education and training systems. It will be evident that the reporting process should be modified to accommodate a greater measure of institutional autonomy,

public scrutiny and accountability for the quality of the training outcomes. It is fundamental to vocational education and training in Australia that a net gain is identified as a result of any change which has been introduced. Are institutions performing better? Are they more accountable? Are they making better decisions? Has the quality of their outcomes improved?

If there have been significant gains made in either the vocational education and training sector nationally or within single educational providers, it is essential that ANTA is able to identify this through the national data collection and gain new insights and understandings in order that the sector may continually improve and develop to achieve the prominence it deserves.

2. THE LOCAL CONTEXT - THE WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ACADEMY OF PERFORMING ARTS⁶

Summary of Key Points:

This chapter places the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts in the context of its complex operating environment, as a national provider of training, operating across multiple educational sectors within a university setting.

Spanning various management infrastructures and government departments, the Academy operates with a diverse range of expectations from each of the stakeholder groups. This chapter examines the broad purpose and mission of the Academy as defined by the various stakeholder groups, and contrasts this against the narrow context in which the AVETMISS reporting framework operates.

2.1 BACKGROUND

The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts⁷ provides an opportunity for highly talented individuals to prepare for professional careers in the performing and visual arts.

The Academy comprises three Schools:

- The Western Australian School of Dramatic Arts which offers courses in arts management, broadcasting, dance, musical theatre, production and design, and theatre;
- The Western Australian School of Visual Arts which offers courses in art therapy, ceramics, painting, printmaking, textiles, drawing and sculpture;
- The Western Australian Conservatorium of Music which offers courses in classical music, jazz and commercial music.

The Academy is a multi-sector organisation, with approximately 60% of its programmes delivered in the vocational education and training sector. Although

⁶ Material for this Chapter has been drawn from various promotional materials distributed by the Academy.

⁷ Referred to from now onwards as “the Academy”.

administratively attached to Edith Cowan University⁸, the Academy enjoys a wide and semi-autonomous brief, whilst at the same time having access to the substantial resources and facilities of the larger organisation. In 1995 the Academy had 1041 students; 448 equivalent full-time students enrolled in the School of Dramatic Arts, 372 equivalent full-time students enrolled in the School of Visual Arts, and 221 equivalent full-time students enrolled in the Western Australian Conservatorium of Music.

2.1.1 Purpose

The Academy's purpose is its primary role as defined by society - the principal stakeholders. It represents the yard-stick against which society will evaluate the performance, contribution and value of the organisation. The principal roles or responsibilities of the Academy are to:-

- provide professional arts education;
- provide professional arts training;
- prepare students for working life;
- provide employers with talented skilled graduates;

⁸ Edith Dircksey Cowan (1861-1932), a prominent social worker, was awarded the OBE in 1920 and became the first woman member of any parliament in Australia when elected to the Western Australian Legislative Assembly in 1921. Established on 1 January 1991, Edith Cowan University replaced the Western Australian College of Advanced Education established in 1982 which in turn was an amalgamation into a single institution of the four previously autonomous colleges of advanced education at Churchlands, Claremont, Mount Lawley and Nedlands. Claremont, the oldest tertiary institution in this state, was established in 1902 as Claremont Teachers College. Nedlands was founded in 1967 as a secondary teachers college, and Mount Lawley (1970) and Churchlands (1972) both as primary teachers colleges. The College was gazetted as an autonomous, multi-campus tertiary institution under the Western Australian College of Advanced Education Act of 1984. The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts, founded in 1979 as one of four independent colleges within the State of Western Australia, was by this Act, incorporated into the tertiary education structure.

- foster development and innovation within the arts;
- contribute directly and indirectly to the economy; and
- identify and fulfil unmet needs within the community.

The statement of purpose implies an expectation on the part of the society and stakeholders for the Academy to

- provide both education and training;
- go beyond education to contribute to the arts as a whole;
- go beyond the arts to contribute to the community as a whole;
- satisfy existing needs within the community and identify areas of unmet need; and
- satisfy the needs of a number of very different stakeholders.

2.1.2 Mission

The Academy's mission represents its *unique* or specific role. The mission is important because it provides overall direction to the Academy community, and a yard-stick against which the organisation can evaluate itself. The mission of the Academy is to provide in Western Australia a 'centre of excellence' -

- for the education, training, motivation and encouragement of talented individuals to achieve their potential as autonomous artists, performers and teachers in the performing and visual arts;

- offering the specialist facilities, talented staff, inspiration, leadership and opportunities needed to help professional performers, artists and teachers, further develop their creative and performing skills;
- that enhances, through its artistic community, wider participation in the appreciation of the performing and visual arts in Australia;
- that contributes directly to cultural life in Australia - helping to develop the nation's cultural identity; and
- that contributes to the economic well being of Australia - through its involvement in arts industries and the supply of excellent graduates.

This mission indicates that management expects the Academy to:

- be committed to best practice and continuous improvement;
- provide education and training to students from post secondary, through to professional levels;
- focus on performance and exhibition first and foremost;
- offer encouragement and support to students and the industry;
- look beyond education to the arts as a whole;
- look beyond the arts to the community as a whole; and
- help develop culture and Australia's cultural identity.

2.1.3 Vision

A vision is that to which the organisation aspires. Directly related to the organisation's mission, the vision addresses the organisation's view of itself in the future. The vision is important because it provides something to strive for. It adds to the organisation's sense of direction. It is the Academy's vision to be a centre of excellence in the arts -

- with a national presence and an international reputation;
- that graduates and works with the very best creative artists, performers and teachers;
- that is an integral part of the Australian arts community; and
- that is the benchmark against which arts academies around the world will be measured.

This vision further emphasises the commitment of the Academy to

- best practice;
- offering the highest possible standard of education and training; and
- contributing significantly to the arts and the international community.

2.1.4 Strategic Competitive Advantage

A strategic competitive advantage is a tangible point of difference. It is a factor or set of factors which sets one organisation apart from the others within its industry or sector. It is something which has a high level of appeal in some markets and, almost certainly, a lower level of appeal in other markets. It is a defensible position. A

strategic competitive advantage is important because it enhances the appeal of an organisation to its primary target markets. It provides a focus for marketing. The principal strategic competitive advantage of the Academy relates to the fact that it is one of the few arts institutions in the world offering a multi disciplinary and multi sector learning environment and community.

Other key points of difference and/or characteristics of the Academy relate to

- its unique geographical location;
- the emphasis on performance and exhibition;
- the socio-economic and cultural diversity catered for;
- the flexible environment provided for students; and
- the high level of industry liaison and contact.

This strategic competitive advantage, above all else, emphasises the fact that the Academy is one institution that will at all times strive to provide an environment for students which is multi disciplinary and multi sector. It implies that there are for students, significant advantages in being educated in an multi sector, multi disciplinary performance and exhibition based arts environment. It recognises the importance of presenting the Academy as one organisation, with the significant benefits that this brings to students and other stakeholders.

2.1.5 Significant Trends and Achievements⁹

The Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts is unique in Australia. It is the *only* school of its kind which offers within the one organisation, full-time vocational preparation in music, dance, theatre, broadcasting, musical theatre, arts management, production and design, and the visual arts.

Courses within the Academy are planned in such a way that students have the opportunity to integrate professional development in their chosen area through both coursework and performance, and to study other aspects of the arts. Outstanding talent demonstrated through audition, interview or portfolio is the significant factor in the selection of students. Teaching staff have enjoyed outstanding careers as eminent performers and teachers in their area of expertise. Rehearsal, performance, and studio practice are major components of all courses. Students are involved in a wide range of public performances and exhibitions. Over 250 public performances and exhibitions are presented each year.

In addition to providing formal courses for its students, the Academy serves the Western Australian community at large in a variety of ways and offers in-service and professional refresher programmes, both on-campus and at selected centres in Western Australia.

- Interest in the Academy's programmes from both local and interstate applicants continues to strengthen (enrolments for 1995 were 20% higher than the previous year), illustrating the Academy's continuing national reputation as a centre of excellence in Arts training.
- The Academy continues to receive strong submissions from country regions to devolve its resources into the regional centres through the provision of

⁹ This section summarises trends and achievements reported by the Academy to State Treasury for the 1995 academic year.

modularised, open-entry, first-level training for the Arts industry. From the commencement of 1996, the Academy has endeavoured to improve the delivery of its programmes through the regional centres within Western Australia. At least two new Certificate-level courses commenced during this year.

- Close relationships with local and national arts industry groups has been extended in the areas of theatre, production and design, music, dance, visual arts and broadcasting through the Academy's participation in industry advisory committees.
- The Academy's academic curriculum continues to maximise the opportunities for students to benefit from its unique multi-arts environment. The Academy recognises the wide variety and often multi-disciplinary nature of the employment market, and continues to prepare its students with generic and artistically-integrated skills which will enable them to adapt to a broader range of workplace opportunities.
- Student graduation rates from the Academy's programmes have increased overall by 46%. This upward trend is expected to continue. The Academy's policy of placing many of its final year students in industry secondment continues to advantage our students both in work experience and subsequent employment. The Academy continues to place better than 70% of these graduates within the first year of graduation.
- The Academy continues to be successful in attracting corporate support for special performance events and exhibitions, and hosted a number of national conferences throughout the year.
- The artist-in-residence programme attracted a variety of internationally prominent artists, and students from the theatre and production and design

programmes were invited to perform at the International Theatre School Festival in Amsterdam.

- The Academy will continue a benchmarking programme with 10 prominent national and international institutions¹⁰. Initiated in March 1995, the programme will target the areas of student admission, enrolment procedures, student assessment and graduate placement. This programme will be accompanied by a review of policies to establish best practice in those areas (see Appendix C).

2.1.6 Features of The Academy's Environment

Autonomy: The Board of Management of the Academy is established under Statute 15 of the Edith Cowan University Act. The Board is responsible for the management of the affairs of the Academy, subject to the direction and control of the University Council (see Figure 2-1). The Academy's autonomous status and independent governing body are seen to be significant strengths in the achievement of the Academy's purpose.

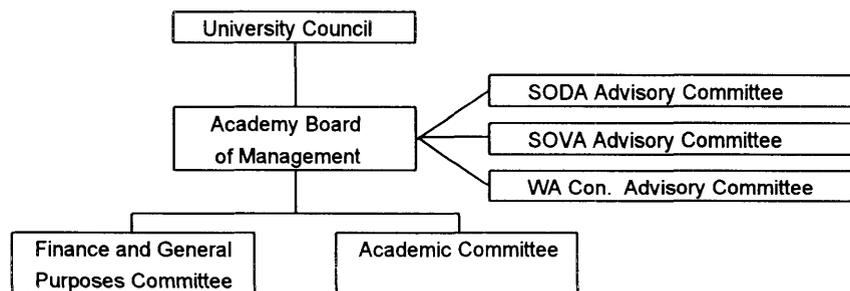
Catchment Area: The activity and teaching programme at the Academy extends beyond the State boundaries into the remainder of Australia. Academy policy emphasises that the selection of students is on quality of performance rather than regional location.

Range and Diversity of Academic Programmes: The Academy does not see its essential purpose as one of providing a diverse range of programmes for its students. Mainstream programmes at the Academy are targeted towards a very high calibre and

¹⁰ *The participating organisations involved in the international benchmarking consortium include the Western Australian Institute of Sport (Perth), the Australian Defence Forces Academy (Canberra), the Victorian College of the Arts (University of Melbourne), California Institute of the Arts (Valencia), Banff Centre (Canada), the Juilliard School (New York), Purchase College (State University of New York), LAMDA (London Academy of Music and Dramatic Art), Slade School of Fine Art (University College London), Royal Academy of Music (London) and Amsterdam School of the Arts.*

specialised student who has chosen a career in the performing arts. Courses offered at the Academy are thus vocationally specific, and are selected and developed solely on the basis of their relevance to industry.

Figure 2-1
Academy Management Structure



NOTES:

SODA - School of Dramatic Arts
SOVA - School of Visual Arts
WA Con. - WA Conservatorium of Music

Public Appreciation: The Academy sees, as part of its commitment to leadership and service, an active role for enhancing and inspiring artistic awareness in its community.

Focus on Quality: The Academy is committed to seeking excellence in teaching and learning, and achieving national and international recognition for the quality of its teaching programmes and student performance.

2.1.7 Funding

The Academy is funded from both State and Commonwealth sources. Its higher education courses are federally funded while its Certificate and Diploma courses are State funded. State funding has been supplemented in 1994 by Commonwealth funds for State students which have been distributed through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

The Academy continues to receive significant corporate support and sponsorship. These funds enable the Academy to purchase new equipment, undertake tours and to present special events for the Western Australian community.

2.2 PERFORMANCE AND ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

As a recipient of State funding, the Academy is subject to the performance and accountability measures of the State Government, and in particular, the national AVETMISS reporting framework. The Academy maintains that the AVETMISS data and the performance indicators derived from this system, although providing a significant quantity of information relating to the inputs to the educational process, do not provide the centralised agencies with sufficient data to adequately reflect the aims, ambitions and complexity of its operation, upon which sensible decisions can be made. Whilst the Academy, like most other providers of training, is supportive of the general thrust for more accountability and benchmark performance comparisons between like institutions across the educational sector, it should be noted that there are good reasons why these initiatives should be treated with due care:

- (a) *Comparable Institutions* - the Academy is the only multi-sector arts training organisation in Australia, and as such is not directly comparable with other educational providers due to both its physical location within Edith Cowan University and the nature of its integrated, multi-arts education and training programmes. True competition is based on a level of service at the right price. It is deceptive to compare input variables across the educational sector as though the playing field were level.
- (b) *The Cost of Preparing the AVETMISS Data* - a considerable amount of work is required to extract and prepare the AVETMISS information on a bi-annual basis. There are growing numbers of staff devoted to maintaining, extracting and

reporting information who could be re-deployed in areas more fundamental to the “business-end” of the organisation.

An assessment of the real costs associated with operating within the ANTA Agreement over the past two and a half years is required. State resources which go into fulfilling ANTA requirements such as national data demands, working group membership, annual reporting requirements and the provision of advice and reporting for specific projects are excessive. (Government of Western Australia, 1995: p15)

- (c) *Non-applicable AVETMISS data elements* - a significant proportion of the AVETMISS Business Module and an even more significant proportion of the Resources Module (still under development) is not applicable to the Academy, operating as it does within the University sector. For example, the Academy does not "own" space in the traditional sense. State-funded students make use of general purpose facilities such as classrooms, libraries, computing laboratories and so on which are owned and maintained by the University. These students are indistinguishable from other students within the University. Due to space restrictions, many teaching facilities such as studios and performing spaces are currently leased commercially. Additional space is utilised through cooperative understandings with local theatre companies. Any attempt to establish benchmark resource utilisation measures must take into consideration such fundamental differences to the acquisition and use of the physical plant.
- (d) *Relevancy* - whilst some of the data is available, a number of the performance indicators are not relevant to the Academy. For example, the Academy currently accredits its programmes through the University. Issues such as the extent of competency-based training formats, the adoption of certain of the National Framework for the Recognition of Training principles and the Australian Qualifications Framework are issues which will take some time to work through, and to some extent, the outcome of the University’s deliberations may well be at odds with the remainder of the TAFE network. Other data which may also be less applicable to the Academy are surveys relating to "employment" and

graduate destinations, both of which have different contexts and meanings for students in the performing and visual arts industries.

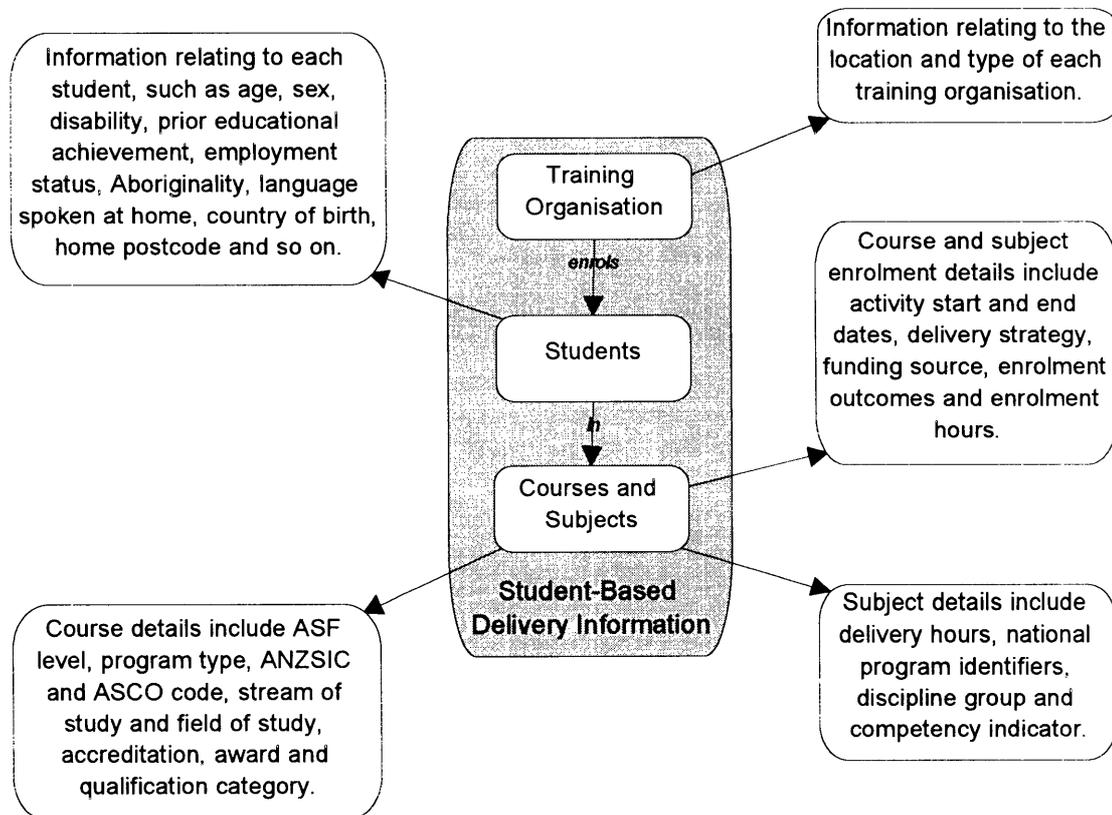
The AVETMISS Business Module data collects information in relation to students enrolling in courses or subjects through a series of fifteen data files which are passed annually to the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. A simplified version of the Business Module is shown at Figure 2-2 (see AVETMISS Volume 2 for a complete overview). The data files include details relating to the training organisation, the range of courses offered and their associated standard industry and occupation classifications, the range of modules offered, personal information on each student (including their prior educational achievements and whether they are disabled in any way), the modules and courses in which these students are enrolled, the awards they have completed in a given year and finally details of any employer or apprenticeship agreements which may be appropriate.

As the data model records only this information, the model invites the assumption that all teaching within an institution is subject/module-based, that all activity can be aggregated under the umbrella of a course and that the sole products of an educational institution are its graduates.

A large component of the educational enterprise is, of course, missing. Much of the activity at the Academy, reflected in its vision, mission, purpose and objectives, is not course-based. For example, the role of the Academy as a research and community leader for the performing and visual arts is not recognised through the AVETMISS data, which assumes that an educational enterprise delivers courses in pre-determined numbers. The Academy has a role within the community, a relationship to establish with the industry and a mission to foster the arts in the broadest possible sense. The Academy makes its resources available to the community to sponsor a variety of pre-admission programmes (such as the Western Australian youth orchestras, a range of school extension programmes and bridging courses). Staff and students engage

themselves in many productions (both internal to the organisation and outside of the organisation) as a learning experience. They are encouraged to do this by the institution, and are supported in their endeavours by the academic community. Staff are active in the membership of external committees. These activities are not recorded in the AVETMISS data, yet each helps to provide a very useful interface between the Academy and the professional arts community, and enriches the pre-graduation experiences of the students.

Figure 2-2
AVETMISS Business Model



Adapted from AVETMISS (1995) Vol. 2 p45: The Business Datamodel

2.3 NON-RECORDED ACTIVITY

Throughout the educational sector, there are a number of institutions whose mission require that the delivery of their teaching programmes is largely through performance.

Institutions involved in performance-based programmes have many features which differ from the more traditional post-secondary programmes conducted in mainstream education. These unique features at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts include:

- *Admission procedures:* The most significant requirement for admission is the student's performance at an audition, where portfolio/performance is assessed, and students are required to undertake specific practical assignments. There is relatively less emphasis placed on secondary school academic results.
- *Staff/student teaching ratios:* Individual tuition is a principal feature of the Academy's academic program, resulting in high costs for the delivery of the training.
- *Integrated on and off-the-job training:* Students at the Academy have the opportunity to integrate professional development in their chosen area through both coursework and performance. The Academy is structured in such a way as to replicate an industry environment and functions in many respects as a professional company.
- *Industry assessment:* A significant aspect of the Academy's educational platform is its ongoing involvement in industry-based tuition and assessment through regular performance programmes (over 250 public performances per year), the active participation of industry leaders in teaching positions and high-profile interaction with professional associations. Invigilation and feedback are provided by industry-based teachers and representatives, media critics, external artist-in-residence programmes and substantial industry secondments.
- *Industry secondments:* The Academy's teaching programme has a heavy emphasis on industry based secondments (both internal and external).

Significance and responsibility is placed on the student as an industry-compatible performer and professional achiever in his/her chosen vocation during this process.

- *Graduate placements:* A successful, aggressive, innovative, national placement strategy ensures a high employment rate for graduates into the national arts industry¹¹.
- *Public mediation and moderation:* Due to the high public profile the Academy has with the community (including the press) there is ongoing public, critical and immediate evaluation of its achievements. Students are not "sheltered" during their training from the pressures of working in a realistic professional environment.
- *Professionalism of staff:* Students are attracted to the Academy because of the reputation and expertise of its teaching staff. This expertise is nurtured within the Academy through an expectation that staff will participate in regular performances, exhibitions and other professional activity, including an ongoing association with national and international arts associations alongside their teaching duties.
- *National and international standards:* Although the training is based in Western Australia, the Academy is preparing students for a national and international work environment. To ensure the Academy's standards are maintained at an optimum level and are internationally comparable, opportunities are provided to showcase the outcome of the various training programmes to audiences and industry representatives throughout Australia and internationally.

¹¹ See details at Appendix D.

Although it can be expected that these elements are common across performance-based training institutions¹², there will no doubt be many similar activities undertaken by the more traditional training providers which also fall outside the scope of the AVETMISS data collection. Figure 2-3 highlights the discrepancy between

- (a) the central core of activity which is recorded in the AVETMISS data (the shaded region), and
- (b) the wide range of activities which, although fundamental to the operating environments of arts institutions world-wide¹³, fall outside this area

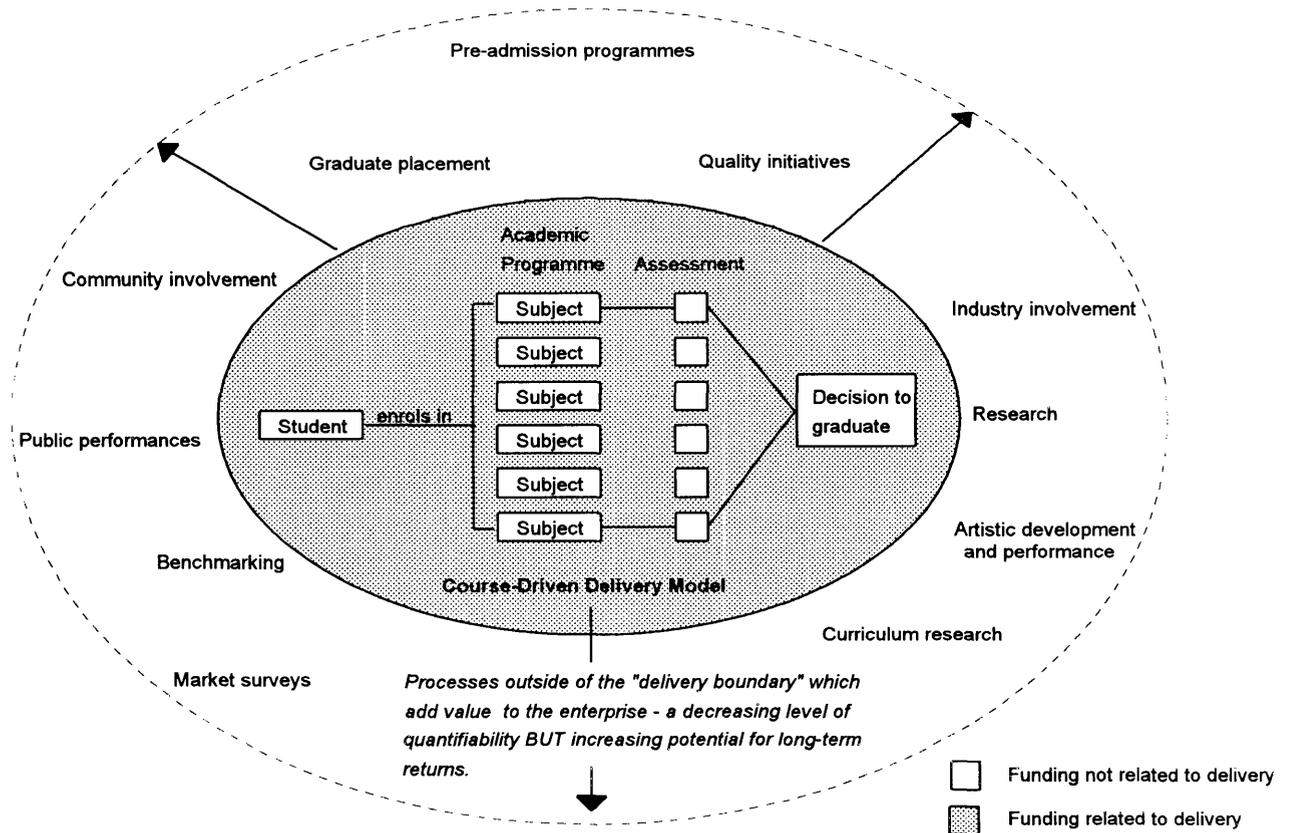
The activities in the non-shaded area (by no means an exhaustive or definitive list) represent processes and services which add-value to the Academy's enterprise. These processes and services are long-term in nature and less quantifiable in terms of both the resources committed and results achieved, yet have the potential to deliver substantial and sustainable improvements in the arts training enterprise which by far exceed the value of the outcomes associated only with the central core of activity.

The Academy contends that the AVETMISS data focuses only on the easily quantifiable aspects of the educational enterprise (i.e., the teaching/delivery activities), and by doing so, de-emphasises those activities which lie at the core of the quality service it provides to both its students and the arts community, upon which its reputation is based.

¹² This statement is being substantiated by the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts through an international benchmarking exercise (see Appendix C).

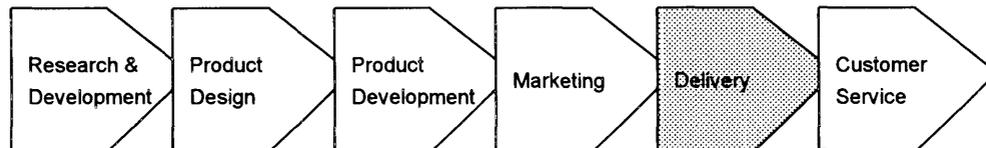
¹³ This statement is being substantiated by the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts through an international benchmarking exercise (see Appendix C).

Figure 2-3
Holistic Training Programme



At the risk of over-stating the case, an analysis of the AVETMISS data elements (see AVETMISS Volume 2, 1995) substantiates the Academy's concern regarding the single-minded approach to quantify and record only the tangible, delivery-related activities of an institution. Figure 2-4 highlights in the shaded area, the small, although not insignificant, part delivery plays in a traditional "value chain" of business functions (adapted from Quinn, 1992). In both figures, activities which fall in the non-shaded area are largely ignored by the AVETMISS data.

Figure 2-4
The Value Chain of Business Functions



2.4 CONCLUSION

Reid (1996) reports that the aim of quality control operations is to ensure that products achieve a pre-determined standard i.e., "the prevention of nonconformities". In an educational environment where creativity, growth and personal development can only be achieved through a diversity of values, this is not a desirable objective. In a competitive funding environment, there is little consistency in the way different organisations approach and prioritise these values. There is no "optimum level" of outcome to be achieved. In an organisation such as the Academy which aspires to be "different", to foster creativity and to develop individuality, the notion of conformism is antithetical to its objectives. The increasing involvement of ANTA in operational matters at the State level and the associated reporting and liaison functions imposed on States as a result of this involvement seriously compromises Western Australia's ability to participate effectively in decision-making and planning processes.

Western Australia has fundamental concerns with the increasingly directive and "hands on" role being taken on by ANTA in the management of vocational education and training within State and Territory borders. ANTA is increasingly imposing operational requirements, as well as strategic directions, on State and Territory systems. In short ANTA has assumed a centralist approach to its functions akin to a "National Training Agency" with management responsibilities for the "National Vocational Education and Training System."
 (Government of Western Australia, 1995: p15)

In a similar way, the Academy advocates a less centralised, less directive approach to the implementation of academic programmes within its organisation. Multi-

dimensional performance and accountability models within the education and training sector have significantly restricted the ability of the Academy to respond quickly to identified needs. To further exacerbate the situation, these models are not unique to the education and training sector and are appearing in some form or another throughout the public sector. In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the range and variety of organisations to which the Academy is accountable. These bodies now include ANTA, the Western Australian Department of Training, Western Australian State Treasury, the Public Service Board, DEET, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, AVETMISS, the Equal Opportunity Commission, the Aboriginal Services Bureau, the Disability Services Bureau and so on. There is a very real cost associated with maintaining a reporting profile with each of these organisations.

To enthusiasts for the brave new world of business-oriented higher education, quality assurance is a comprehensive method for discovering whether a university is delivering what people can reasonably expect it to deliver. To sceptics, it is a device for surveillance and bureaucratisation, a threat to academic values. (Reid, 1996: p23)

In addition, dual accountability models within the State have created problems for the local manager where areas of activity intersect between two Ministerial boundaries¹⁴. Although it must be acknowledged that appropriate accountability mechanisms need to be set in place, and that agencies such as ANTA and the State Training Agency do have a mandate for providing strategic advice, planning and policy at the national and state level, it is evident that these mechanisms need to concentrate less on input and process variables, and more on the outcomes of the system, placed in the context of the organisation's strategic objectives, and the quality and effectiveness of the

¹⁴ *As a multi-sector organisation, the Academy is responsible to both the Minister for Vocational Education and Training and the Minister for Education.*

training delivery. In any event, these accountability mechanisms should not become overly bureaucratic, onerous and irrelevant exercises.