

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

**A study into the influence of head-teacher leadership on
pedagogical practices within TAFE teaching units**

A Multiple Case Study

A Dissertation submitted by

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Acknowledgements

This thesis marks the beginning of another chapter in my professional journey as a VET educator. I started as a teacher at TAFE NSW 20 years ago and progressed to a range of positions including head teacher, ICT manager, manager education and a faculty director within this organisation. I continue to be passionate about teaching and its unique role in influencing positive change in individuals. I believe in the TAFE system and its role in public education by preparing students with authentic and practical skills for Australian workplaces, life, and citizenship.

I dedicate this thesis to the memory of my father, Anthony Christopher Nanayakkara. I thank my mother and my immediate family for their love and support. I hope this work will be an inspiration to my children, Ashley and Aleisha Nair.

I sincerely thank the Faculty of Education of the University of New England and particularly my principal supervisor Dr. Mutuota Kigotho as well as Dr. Stephen Heimans and Associate Professor Robert Boughton, who challenged me to think critically beyond what is familiar. Their constructive feedback, comments, support, and encouragement have refined and enriched my journey throughout this study.

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Abstract

The study explores the connection between head teacher leadership in TAFE and the culture of the teaching unit and analyses how such leadership may influence pedagogical models. Further, the study examines how institutes of TAFE respond to performance expectations brought about by government-instigated reforms within the VET sector. The study is set within the context of a rapidly changing Australian VET structure, changes in VET policies and the competitiveness agenda for the Australian government that links the VET institutions to Australia's economic prosperity.

The study was framed using the following three research questions:

- RQ1) In what ways might the leadership of head teachers influence the pedagogical practices within TAFE teaching units?
- RQ2) How might the culture created by shared experiences within the teaching unit influence the way content is taught in teaching units? How does this culture guide and influence the leadership practice of head teachers?
- RQ3) How does the teaching unit under the leadership of head teachers respond to VET reforms implemented by the Australian government?

This study is primarily qualitative in nature. It is framed within a social constructionist theoretical framework. It incorporates multiple perspectives from teachers, head teachers, and faculty managers from six teaching units across Victoria and New South Wales (NSW).

The study combines multiple case study design (Yin, 2003; Stake, 2006) to frame the data collection and analysis of qualitative data guided by the constructionist theoretical framework (Carroll, Adkins, Foth, Parker, & Jamali, 2008; Collins, 2011). The study uses a number of methodological strands of inquiry. They include a literature review, semi-structured interviews, focus groups, observations and document analysis.

Within the social constructionist theoretical framework, a deductive thematic data analysis process is used in this study to analyse the gathered data and formulate the study findings. This data analysis process is explicitly guided by the specific research questions and the researcher.

The Study highlights the tensions within the teaching units when moving from a supply-based funding environment to a demand-based funding environment within the TAFE sector. Head teachers as the leaders of teaching units are expected to manage these tensions. The pedagogical and

service models used within teaching units need to be transformed to cater to the demand-based funding environment. It is a challenge for head teachers to achieve the performance expectations of VET reforms while upholding the pedagogical excellence and occupational expertise of teachers that have provided educational quality for over a number of decades.

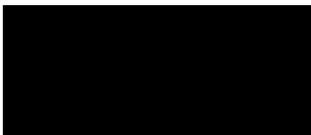
The literature scan that set the scene for this study and the main findings from the investigation suggest that head teachers are limited by the culture of compliance, prescriptive training package requirements, heavy administrative workload, and the 'top-down' management directions stifling the educational leadership of head teachers.

The findings suggest that if TAFE is to continue to be a prominent VET provider in Australia, the TAFE teaching workforce needs to be re-invigorated with a new-found passion for teaching. It is a challenge for the TAFE sector to service the needs of communities and individuals while meeting the performance expectations of a marketised environment. Enabling head teachers to influence the pedagogical structures, practices, and cultures within teaching units is the key to achieving this.

Certification of Dissertation

I certify that the substance of this dissertation has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any other degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this dissertation and all sources used has been acknowledged in this dissertation.

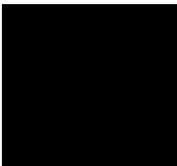


Candidate Signature

7th December 2016

Date

Supervisor Endorsement



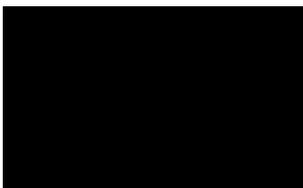
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Associate Professor Robert Boughton

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List of tables and figures

Figure 1 Extract from researcher reflection diary & field notes.....	8
Figure 2 Extract from reflective journal	25
Figure 3 Conceptual View	45
Figure 4 NVivo storage file structure	73
Figure 5 NVivo Node Tree identifying sources and number of references.....	89
Figure 6 NVivo Node Tree.....	91
Figure 7 NVivo tools	91
Figure 8 Use of Auto Code feature.....	92
Figure 9 NVivo extract wizard	93
Figure 10 Node Tree for Individual Case Studies	94
Figure 11 Part of the Tabulation report created by NVivo.....	95
Figure 12 My Research Journal - Reflection.....	96
Figure 13 Thematic Analysis: Head teacher.....	123
Figure 14 Thematic Analysis: Pedagogy.....	134

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations used

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING ACRONYMS

ACPET	Australian Council for Private Education and Training
ACSF	Australian Core Skills Framework
AQF	Australian Qualification Framework
ASQA	Australian Standards Quality Authority
AVETMISS	Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
CBT	Competency-based Training
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IRC	Industry Reference Committees
ISC	Industry Skills Council
NCVET	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NVQ	National Vocational Qualifications (UK system)
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SSO	Skills Service Organisations
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Common Vocational Education and Education Terminology in Australia

Apprenticeships

A training contract between an employer and an employee to learn the skills needed for a particular occupation or trade. Australian Apprenticeships offer opportunities for young people to train, study and earn an income at a variety of qualification levels in most occupations including traditional trades. Upon completion of the Australian Apprenticeship, the apprentice will have a nationally recognised qualification.

Australian Apprenticeships (<https://www.australianapprenticeships.gov.au>)

Assessment of Competency

The assessor is assured that the learner has the skills, knowledge and attributes as described in the module or unit of competency and associated assessment requirements. The assessor is assured that the quality, quantity and relevance of the assessment evidence enables a judgement to be made of a learner's competency.

ASQA Standards for RTOs 2015 - Clauses 1.8 – 1.12

ASQA Audit

ASQA undertakes two distinct types of audits—registration audits and compliance audits. ASQA conducts registration audits to ensure that RTOs are operating (or will operate) effectively within their scope of registration. ASQA conducts compliance audits to assess RTOs' ongoing compliance with the standards for RTOs.

ASQA Fact Sheet - Student Centred audit approach

EBS

Enterprise Business Systems - An integrated student administration system used in TAFE NSW.

ASQA

Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) is the national regulator for Australia's vocational education and training sector. The agency was established as part of a commitment of the Council of Australian Governments to improve the quality and consistency of VET training in Australia.

Australian Government Directory

RTO

Registered training organisations (RTOs) are those training providers registered by ASQA (or a state regulator) to deliver vocational education and training (VET) services. RTOs are recognised as providers of quality-assured and nationally recognised training and qualifications.

Australian Skills Quality Authority (<https://www.asqa.gov.au>)

Training Packages

Nationally endorsed competency standards that must be achieved for each qualification. Training packages consist of core endorsed components of competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications.

Department of Education and Training

VET

Vocational education and training (VET) enables students to gain qualifications for all types of employment, and specific skills to help them in the workplace.

The providers of VET include technical and further education (TAFE) institutes, adult and community education providers and agricultural colleges, as well as private providers, community organisations, industry skill centres, and commercial and enterprise training providers. In addition, some universities and schools provide VET.

Australian Skills Quality Authority (<https://www.asqa.gov.au>)

Volume of Learning

The AQF volume of learning is part of the complexity requirements of a qualification. The AQF volume of learning describes how long a learner, who does not hold any competencies identified in the qualification, would normally take to develop all the required skills and knowledge at that qualification level. The volume of learning includes all teaching, learning and assessment activities that are required to be undertaken by the typical student to achieve the learning outcomes.

Australian Skills Quality Authority (Determining the amount of training fact sheet)

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	2
ABSTRACT	3
CERTIFICATION OF DISSERTATION	5
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES	6
GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS USED	7
TABLE OF CONTENTS	10
UNE DOCTOR OF EDUCATION PROGRAM	12
NOTE ON TERMINOLOGY	13
<u>CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT</u>	<u>1</u>
1.1 RESEARCH CONTEXT	1
1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	7
1.3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK	10
1.4 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY	23
<u>CHAPTER TWO: A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</u>	<u>27</u>
2.1 INTRODUCTION	27
2.2 THE AUSTRALIAN VET SYSTEM	29
2.3 AUSTRALIAN VET HISTORY, POLICY SETTING, AND REFORMS	31
2.4 AUSTRALIAN PUBLIC VET PROVIDER - TAFE	43
2.5 AUSTRALIAN VET CONCEPTS	53
<u>CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY</u>	<u>66</u>
3.1 INTRODUCTION	66
3.2 JUSTIFICATION OF METHODOLOGY	67
3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN	69
3.4 DATA COLLECTION	72
3.5 DATA STORAGE	81
3.6 MANAGEMENT OF GATHERED DATA	81
3.7 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS	82

CHAPTER FOUR: DATA ANALYSIS	83
4.1 INTRODUCTION	83
4.2 ROLE OF NVIVO	84
4.3 PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS	85
4.4 ANALYSIS OF INDIVIDUAL TRANSCRIPTS	85
4.5 ANALYSING INDIVIDUAL CASES	91
4.6 CROSS ANALYSIS OF CASES	94
4.7 RESEARCH RIGOUR & RELEVANCE	96
CHAPTER FIVE: STUDY FINDINGS	97
5.1 INTRODUCTION	97
5.2 HEAD TEACHER LEADERSHIP	98
5.3 IMPACT OF VET REFORMS ON PEDAGOGY AND TEACHING PRACTICE	134
5.4 TEACHING UNIT RESPONSE TO VET REFORMS	156
5.5 ADVICE TO POLICY MAKERS	179
CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY OF FINDINGS	187
6.1 INTRODUCTION	187
6.2 HEAD TEACHER LEADERSHIP	188
6.3 INFLUENCE OF HEAD TEACHER LEADERSHIP ON PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES	189
6.4 INFLUENCE OF TEACHING UNIT CULTURE ON PEDAGOGY	208
6.5 RESPONDING TO VET REFORMS	223
CHAPTER SEVEN: CONCLUDING REMARKS	231
7.1 CONCLUSIONS RELATED TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS	232
7.2 SUGGESTIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	236
7.3 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY	240
7.4 CONCLUSION	241
REFERENCES	243
APPENDICES	265

UNE Doctor of Education Program

The Doctor of Education program at UNE is designed for those who wish to move into educational leadership positions and is focused on workplace change and leadership. Requirements for the degree includes advanced coursework and a thesis or portfolio approved by the Higher Degree Research Committee.

This portfolio presented partially fulfils the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Education.

Note on Terminology

The term ‘head teacher’ has been used in this report to include all TAFE front line managers who has direct supervisory responsibilities for teachers, assessors, trainers, instructors, lecturers, senior educators and managing a teaching unit delivering training in one or more related disciplines. TAFE NSW head teachers and TAFE Victoria heads of department fall into this category.

The term ‘teacher’ has been used to represent full-time teachers, part-time casual teachers, senior educators, instructors, assessors and lecturers. This term is applicable to anyone within teaching units developing training resources, delivering training, conducting assessments or teaching.

The term ‘teaching staff’ has been used to denote both head teachers and teachers.

The term ‘student’ and ‘learner’ have been used to describe anyone enrolled in an accredited or non-accredited qualification at a TAFE institute including apprentices and trainees.

The term ‘customer’ has been used to describe the recipients of training that include learners who are employed, unemployed and school students as well as employers, industry and businesses.