SUPPORT DOCUMENT

Two sides of the same coin: leaders in private providers juggling educational and business imperatives — support document

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Contents

Information sheet

Project title: Leadership in private providers: juggling educational and business imperatives

Researcher's name: …………………………..

I am writing to ask your help with this research project that has been approved by the University of South Australia's Human Research Ethics Committee.

This study is exploring the ways in which head teachers and other staff in Australian RTOs understand and practice leadership – in particular, educational leadership. The phenomenon of leadership as it is played out in private RTOs is an important issue that demands richer understanding. The project aims to further enhance the quality of educational development and delivery, and the stimulating of innovation in the VET sector. In so doing, this project will benefit all end-users of Australia's training system – students, industry and ultimately the whole community.

This research will therefore examine such issues as:

• who are the real educational leaders within private RTOs?

• what do they see as their main challenges?

• how do they manage to handle both the educational and the administrative demands of their positions?

• what skills and capabilities are needed to achieve this?

• how can leadership skills and capabilities be nurtured and supported?

Following a literature review and analysis of other documentation, we will collect data in three ways:

1: An organisational scan of demographic and other data from participant organisations

2: Individual interviews – with educational leaders of RTOs

3: Individual interviews – with other groups of employees

Your part in the survey:

• As an RTO leader (a head teacher, head trainer, etc.) – you are invited to participate in an interview of approximately 30 minutes which will be recorded.

• As another kind of employee – you are also invited to participate in an interview of approximately 30 minutes which will be recorded. You will be asked to comment on the leader of your RTO and your perception of their leadership.

• You will be offered the opportunity to review the written transcript of the session in which you participate and amend if necessary. The research findings will be disseminated via articles, reports and electronically.

Confidentiality:

The answers that you provide will be treated in the strictest confidence. Individuals' responses will be kept confidential by the researcher and your identity will not be linked to your comments in any report of the research. You are free to withdraw at any stage without disadvantage. Only the research team will view the information. Data collected will be stored for a period of five years in a locked drawer on site at the University of South Australia. The research team only will have access.

Further information:

If you wish to enquire further about this research, please contact me on ……………………………………… Alternatively, further information on ethical issues in relation to this project may be obtained by contacting the Executive Officer of the Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of South Australia, Ms Vicki Allen on tel: (08) 8302 3118, fax: (08) 8302 3921, or email: vicki.allen@unisa.edu.au

Consent form

Project title: Leadership in private providers: juggling educational and business imperatives

Researcher's name: ………………………………….

- I have read the Participant Information Sheet and the nature and purpose of the research project has been explained to me. I understand and agree to take part.

- I understand the purpose of the research project and my involvement in it.

- I understand that I may withdraw from the research project at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

- I confirm that I am over 17 years of age.

- I understand that, while information gained during the study may be published, I will not be identified and my personal results will remain confidential.

- I understand that the interview will be digitally recorded.

- I understand that all or parts of the recording may be transcribed into written form. I understand that, once the transcript has been prepared, I will have an opportunity to review it.

Name of participant: …………………………………………………………….

Participant's signature: ……………..………………………………………….   Date: ………………………

I have provided information about the research to the research participant and believe that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher's signature: ………………………………………………………...   Date:………………………

Data collection

Questions for obtaining data in the organisational scan

- When did the organisation start?

- Please describe to me what your organisation does.

- What industries are currently being served by your organisation?

- How many staff are employed in your organisation (full-time, part-time, permanent/casual, etc.)?

- How many were employed this time last year, and this time two years ago?

- Do you have any documentation on this RTO organisation? If so, could I have a look at it (or preferably, take it away to read)?

Questions for head teachers, training managers, heads of learning and development, or staff in equivalent positions within RTOs (referred to from here as 'RTO leaders')

Demographic data (covered in introductory questions)

- Gender

- Age bracket (in 5-year brackets)

- What qualifications do you hold? (industry, educational)

- How long have you been a leader in this organisation?

- Were you employed in an organisation before taking up this position? If yes, in this organisation?

- What industry were you employed in before entering the organisation? (industry type, position). How long had you been working there? What other employment have you had before that?

- What led you to apply for a position in the VET sector? For this leadership position?

- What percentage of your role is associated with teaching/training?

- Where do you see yourself going from here in your career?

Context of the organisation

- Generally speaking, what does the organisation (the RTO, not the wider organisation) do?

- What important factors help to promote the growth/success of your RTO? Which is the most important?

- What important factors inhibit the growth/success of your organisation? Which hinders the most?

Understandings of leadership

- I'd like you to finish the following sentence: "To me, leadership means …"

- What do you see as the most critical challenges you face as a leader? How do you handle these challenges?

- What do you think are the skills and capabilities you need to handle these challenges?

- Do you think these skills are different according to industry? Could you transfer your skills as an RTO leader to an RTO in another kind of industry?

Practices in leadership

- Describe to me 2 - 3 examples of instances when you believe you showed effective leadership.In these cases, what did you do that made your leadership effective?Did others think it was effective? Why? What evidence do you know of?

- What do you do in a situation where you identify that students/trainees could be getting better training, and you think there needs to be a change to the curriculum (i.e. what you teach)?

- How do you decide what are the best outcomes for your students/trainees?

- What do you do in a situation where you want to change an aspect of your delivery (i.e. the way something is taught: a move to online training, a need for smaller groups, on-the job instead of in-class training, etc.)?

- What do you do in a situation where you have had negative feedback about one of your trainers, from several of your students/trainees?

- What do you do in a situation in which a single student/trainee is obviously failing or underperforming?

- What about a group of students/trainees that are failing?

- What about disruptive students?

- What do you do when you identify that one group of your students/trainees is doing very well compared with others?

- What do you do when you identify that one of your trainers is doing an excellent job?

- What happens when one of your trainers comes to you and asks you if an aspect of training can be changed?

Educational leadership

We've just been looking at aspects of what we call 'educational leadership'; that is, the way in which the leader of the RTO makes decisions about what is taught, and how.

We contrast this with the management of the RTO, which is about industry compliance, accounting, OHSW, etc.

- In your job, is there such a thing as educational leadership, distinct from management of the RTO?

- If yes, is it a very important part of the role?

- What percentage of your time is taken up with activities (management or otherwise) not directly related to educational leadership?

- What would you be doing with your time if you had to do less of those other activities?

- What kind of support would you like to have for educational leadership, from your organisation?

Succession, development and mentoring

- If you were to become ill (or leave your position), do you think any of your other staff in the RTO would be able to do your job? What parts of the job would they be able to do? Would the company be able to hire from within to fill your position?

- What training do you think you require to develop in your role?

- Do you yourself participate in professional/personal development? What have you done in the past year?

- How do you think RTO leadership capabilities in your other staff can be developed? What sort of training might they require? What sort of activities? What sort of leadership from you? (internal leadership training activities; support staff to study; etc.)

- If you could imagine an ideal staffing system for this RTO, what would it look like? Would there be any additional staff and what roles would they take?

Any other comments?

Questions for teachers

Demographic data

- Gender

- Age bracket (in 5-year brackets)

- What qualifications do you hold? (industry, educational)

- How long have you been in this organisation?

- Were you employed in an organisation before taking up this position?

  If yes, in this organisation?

- What industry were you employed in before entering the organisation? (industry type, position). How long had you been working there? What other employment have you had before that?

- What led you to apply for a position as a trainer?

- What percentage of your role is associated with teaching/training?

- Where do you see yourself going from here in your career?

Context of the organisation

- Generally speaking, what does the organisation (the RTO, not the wider organisation) do?

- What important factors help to promote the growth / success of your RTO? Which is the most important?

- What important factors inhibit the growth/success of your organisation? Which hinders the most?

Understandings of leadership

- I'd like you to finish the following sentence: "To me, leadership means …"

- What do you see as the most critical challenges your leader faces?How does s/he handle these challenges?

- What do you think are the skills and capabilities your leader needs to handle these challenges?

Practices in educational leadership

- Describe to me 2 - 3 examples of instances when you believe your leader showed effective leadership. Did others think it was effective? Why?

- Describe to me 2 - 3 examples of instances when you believe you showed effective leadership as a trainer. Did others think it was effective? Why?

- What do you do in a situation where you identify that students/trainees could be getting better training, and you think there needs to be a change to the curriculum (i.e. what you teach)?

- What do you do in a situation where you think the RTO needs to change an aspect of delivery (i.e. the way something is taught: a move to online training, a need for smaller groups, on-the job instead of in-class training, etc.)?

- What do you do when you get negative feedback about another trainer, from several of your students/trainees?

- What do you do in a situation in which a single student/trainee is obviously failing or underperforming?

- What about a group of students/trainees that are failing?

- What do you do when you identify that one group of your students/trainees is doing very well compared to others?

Educational leadership

We've just been looking at aspects of what we call "educational leadership"; that is, the way in which the leader of the RTO makes decisions about what is taught, and how.

We contrast this with the management of the RTO, which is about industry compliance, accounting, OHSW, etc.

- In this organisation, is there such a thing as educational leadership, distinct from management of the RTO?

- If yes, is it a very important part of your leader's role?

- Roughly, what proportion of your leader's time is taken up with activities (management or otherwise) not directly related to educational leadership?

- What could your leader be doing with the extra time, if they had to do less of those other activities?

- What kind of support would you like to see for educational leadership, from your organisation?

Succession, development and mentoring

- If your leader were to become ill, do you think any of your other staff in the RTO would be able to do that job? What parts of the job would they be able to do? Would the company be able to hire from within to fill the position?

- What training (if any) do you think your leader needs?

- Do you yourself participate in professional/personal development? What have you done in the past year?

- How do you think RTO leadership capabilities in training staff can be developed? What sort of training would you require? What sort of activities?

- If you could imagine an ideal staffing system for this RTO, what would it look like? Would there be any additional staff and what roles would they take?

Any other comments?

Brief descriptions of the case study organisations

Organisation 1: Enterprise, SA

This is an RTO embedded within a commercial retail operations chain. The business has been based in one state since 1911, although from the late 1990s has now expanded across three Australian states. The organisation prides itself on providing high quality customer service, to both members and the public, and offers an extensive range of products and services. Its vision is to enhance the accessibility of its services to its communities. These features are reflected in the scope of its RTO, which trains the organisation's employees with qualifications so that they have a workforce capability with the appropriate culture, competition and commitment into the future - a workforce that embraces safety, health and well being. The RTO offers 18 qualifications being delivered in all states. These range from Certificate I to IV and Diploma levels in a variety of specialisations connected with the retail service's core business and allied operations.

Organisation sites 2, 4 and 5: Enterprise, SA, Victoria and NSW

This Enterprise RTO is embedded within a company that was formed in 2005, with Australian headquarters in Sydney. The organisation describes itself as a leader in marine transport and logistics, aiming to enhance customers' supply chain efficiency. It operates five sites in Australia; this study interviewed staff on three sites across three States, as well as one of its senior staff members.

The SA site provides customised solutions to meet customer needs, by consistently achieving high container productivity rates, rapid container delivery, and timely information. It offers many ancillary services to assure "one terminal" for all cargo needs. It offers direct on-dock road and rail links connecting the port to extended areas around South Australia and into Southern New South Wales and Western Victoria.

The Victorian site is equipped with the latest terminal control system and boasts easy access to road and rail. It offers a full range of electronic business support to clients, including electronic customs import release of cargo, electronic data interchange (EDI) reporting and web browser based information services. The rail line links Melbourne's outer regions as well as Adelaide and Perth.

The NSW serves New South Wales and other states with quick and easy access to motorways to the North, South and West, and a direct rail link from inside the terminal facility. It offers the latest in container handling equipment, computerised control systems and extensive reefer facilities, and has a full range of electronic business support to clients, including electronic customs release of cargo, electronic data interchange (EDI) reporting and web browser based information services.

A major factor in these sites being both safe and productive working environments is ensuring that the employees who operate container moving equipment are fully skilled and competent. This requires strict setting and monitoring of performance and safety metrics. The standards cover every element associated with the operation of a piece of equipment.

The company RTO is therefore not a traditional 'bricks and mortar' training college. Rather, it brings training, globally and regionally, to where it is most effective and efficient – in the business. The RTO staff support the business in four ways: (a) delivering in-house terminal management and leadership

programmes; (b) assisting the business to improve operator safety and productivity; (c) accrediting third party training providers and linking the business to them; and (d) supporting the business to improve its learning and development strategies. Putting theory and training into practice and adding real value to the organisation is an important aim of the RTO. It offers Certificate I to III courses, as well three units of competency and four accredited courses in its field of work. Trainees come from the company's five operation sites across Australia.

Organisation 3: Commercial, SA

This is a commercial RTO operating across a number of Australian capital cities. The RTO in this study is based in an office in Adelaide, and rents training space to deliver its training. It aims to be a leading provider of cutting-edge, customised learning services, and is committed to working in partnership with organisations and their people to achieve outcomes that make a positive difference to the lives of individuals and the organisational bottom-line. The organisation claims its view of the learning process is holistic, acknowledging that "no one size fits all learners" and that successful learning rests on the application of different modes of learning suited to the needs of each learner. Individual learning contracts are negotiated for each learner and organisation. There are two full-time staff – a CEO and a Training Leader. Additional contract trainers are engaged as needed to cater for enrolment and venue demand. The RTO offers 24 qualifications from three Training Packages in business, retail and training and assessment. It also makes available a number of short (less than one week), non-accredited corporate training programs.

Organisation 6: Industry, NSW

This is an industry RTO, established in 1996, embedded within a trade association operating since 1910. Programs are delivered across its home state by a mix of staff and contract trainers. It offers a range of short courses at its own campus as well as on-site training to client workplaces; it also facilitates traineeships and apprenticeships for its members. It offers 17 qualifications in core and related trades and skills, at levels from Certificate II to IV.

Organisation 7: Commercial, Victoria

This RTO is a specialist tertiary college with almost 40 years of training delivery and involvement with its industry. This institution has its principal campus in one Australian capital city. It offers a range of study options for full-time, part-time and international students. Students learn in a small, creative and supportive environment, taught by a team of specialist staff who offer experience, expertise and diversity. Its one accredited course, an advanced diploma in its core discipline, is accredited by government bodies and recognised by the Australian peak industry body. Graduates of this advanced diploma are eligible to apply for full membership of five Australian professional bodies. A unique credit transfer/articulation arrangement exists between this college and a Victorian university, enabling graduate students to apply to undertake a one year degree conversion in one of two degrees. Postgraduate study can then continue from any of these qualifications.

Organisation 8: Commercial, SA

This organisation has been a RTO since 1995. It is an innovative provider of work-based learning and the use of flexible delivery methods to meet enterprise and individual needs. Its courses, offered across a number of disciplines from two locations in its home state and via online delivery, include accredited training in qualifications, skill sets and units of competency from 10 Training Packages.

Other specialist short courses are also offered which are not accredited, mainly in computer applications. Training schedules are designed to suit preferences of workplaces. Online training facilitation ensures training is delivered in small chunks, allowing learners time to absorb and apply concepts before moving onto the next chunk. The focus on development of skills in a work environment means that evidence can often be gathered from the use of those skills directly for the benefit of the student's work role and/or the organisation's benefit. It terms of trainees/apprentices, this RTO has been delivering training since 1997, and in the last two years, this has extended also to include Australian School Based Apprenticeships. The provider has developed flexible, and online, delivery methods to support the learning requirements of these apprentices ASBAs as they continue to study at school, study VET, and undertake paid work.

Organisation 9: Enterprise, Victoria

This is a service organisation with a federated structure between branches in each Australian state and at its national office. It is a national, multidisciplinary organisation committed to enhancing the health of all Australians. Its principal national community education program was founded in 1982, and the program has since educated more than 200,000 Australians, with over 130 courses scheduled and delivered to 3,000 participants throughout Victoria and Tasmania annually.The majority of courses are coordinated in conjunction with various sporting associations and clubs, secondary and tertiary educational institutions, and regional sports assemblies. The courses however are open to anyone interested in sport. This is done with a full-time staff of approximately 35. The RTO attached to the organisation offers two units of competency related to its work.

Organisation 10: Industry, SA

This is an industry RTO embedded within a parent trade association that has been in existence for over 85 years. The parent organisation is the peak body for its particular industry in SA and is the only employer-based organisation in the State dedicated to protecting and preserving the interest of that industry. The association supports over 1100 members with specific business workshops and trade training to develop and grow their businesses to meet the changing needs of its industry. The focus of its RTO is on organising group training, currently providing for over 500 apprentices/trainees in various trades within the industry. Since 1982, when it commenced operation with 10 motor mechanic apprentices, more than 2000 apprentices have graduated to full time employment as skilled, qualified tradespeople. In total, this RTO operates 13 qualifications under its scope, from Certificates I to III in specialisations relating to its core trade. Programs are delivered across its home state by a mix of staff and contract trainers. It is a primary training stop for members within this industry. It also operates courses marketed to industries outside its industry, such as the five-day Certificate IV in Occupational Health and Safety (OHS).

Organisation 11: Enterprise, NSW

This is an Enterprise RTO embedded within a government service provider. It provides induction and in-service training for recruits; they exclusively comprise the RTO's learner base, as this RTO does not market its services outside of its staff. The RTO has 14 qualifications, 66 units of competency and 2 accredited courses in its scope. All qualifications and one of the two accredited courses are related to its core business (with the other course being in an aspect of OH&S management). The provider is supported by twelve regional training units and training officers who provide educational and assessment processes for certification. The RTO is planning to move some aspects of its training qualification delivery into a partnership program with a tertiary education provider.

Organisation 12: Industry, SA

This RTO is a not-for-profit, industry-based training and resource organisation, providing training and consultancy services through its centre as well as operating mobile/outreach facilities. Since its establishment in 1984, it has, through partnerships with industry, continued to develop and provide a diverse range of services to meet the ever-changing needs of its industry. The organisation is overseen by a Board of Management drawn from industry through representation of key stakeholders to ensure the achievement of corporate goals and objectives. The RTO strives to maintain a high level of staff quality, and offers 57 qualifications and one accredited course across its scope, as well as 14 units of competency. This training provider is widely recognised as a provider of quality advice, information and education services. The organisation is quality conscious and has ISO 9001 Quality Endorsement. Demonstrating an ethos of mobility, flexibility and the ability to meet client requirements, the organisation has been recognised on two occasions in the last few years with Awards for the contribution it has made to enhancing diversity in the workplace.

Organisation 13: Commercial, NSW

This is a commercial RTO operating in Sydney, offering accredited training from a number of Training Packages - including Business, Hospitality, and Business Administration. Before gaining RTO status, it operated (in more recent times) accredited courses and site-specific curricula. The organisation markets courses to school leavers in Business Administration, Business and Marketing, operating these under the aegis of its own contract trainers, as well as forming delivery partnerships with selected other institutions. Pastoral work in conjunction with its 'parent', not-for-profit organisation is also a feature of Business Services' course offerings with short training and accredited courses for staff in the various enterprises associated with this organisation. Commonwealth programs, such as the Job Seekers Program and Productivity Places Program, are also accessed through its Business Services' training program. Seventy per cent of training is off campus.

Organisation 14: Enterprise, SA

This Enterprise RTO was registered in late 2000 and is embedded in a broader service organisation. The parent organisation is a government service provider. The RTO offers five programs, Certificate II (one), Certificate III (two) and Certificate IV (one) and a Diploma to staff trainees in the area in which this service operates. The RTO offers an additional unit of competency relating to a core activity in the service workplace, as well as an accredited course in management.

Organisation 15: Industry, SA

This organisation began its work in its home state in 1952, following on from a national movement dating back to 1907. The organisation takes the energies and dedication of volunteers and trains them for positive community-based objectives. To further this objective, the state-based movement has sought registration as an RTO, so that training would be recognised nationally. The RTO employs 9 permanent staff (a mix of full- and part-time), 10 field agents specialising in the RTO's trade, and up to 40 casual trainers who are involved in program delivery in partnership with a state government department. The RTO also reaches potentially up to 4,000 volunteers state-wide through a network of established local agencies. It offers one Certificate II course in its volunteer field, comprising 16 units of competency; these are mostly delivered in its home state, although some are delivered in two adjacent states.

Organisation 16: Commercial, SA

The RTO offers Certificate III, Certificate IV and Diploma courses in hospitality. It features a business model in which it contracts a third-party RTO to deliver its programs. The third-party RTO delivers these programs to this RTO's standards, including public presentation standards. Its staffing consists of 30 contracted trainers and 10 office staff, including a Principal and a Chief Executive.

The student body has a large international component, with students from more than 80 countries. The organisation maintains strong industry links for maintaining high standards and relevance. Students are provided with industry internships within Australia or overseas that allow them to learn the industry firsthand beyond the walls of their structured classes, which is seen as invaluable in helping them to understand the theoretical concepts they have learnt within a working environment, as well as allowing them to build significant industry networks. Guest lectures by international industry leaders and site inspections also form part of the courses. All teaching staff have extensive industry experience and undertake ongoing professional development. The organisation professes strong commitment to the development of industry competence.