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The impact of flexible delivery
on human resource practices

Survey of TAFE managers

online
LEARNING

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Australian *Flexible* **Learning** Framework
Supporting Flexible Learning Opportunities

flexiblelearning.net.au

Background

In August 1999, the Australian National Training Authority chief executive officers endorsed the *Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000–2004.* The Australian Flexible Learning Framework has been developed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group and represents a strategic plan for the five-year national project allocation for flexible learning. It is designed to support both accelerated take-up of flexible learning modes and to position Australian vocational education and training as a world leader in applying new technologies to vocational education products and services.

An initiative of the Australian Flexible Learning Framework for the National Vocational Education and Training System 2000–2004

Managed by the Flexible Learning Advisory Group on behalf of the Commonwealth, all states and territories in conjunction with ANTA.

AUSTRALIAN
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Contents

Tables

Acknowledgements

Key messages

✧ With flexible delivery, teachers' work has changed significantly. Extended hours, diverse locations and a broader range of activities and clients have become the norm. In addition, more and more technical and administrative staff are performing integral roles in flexible delivery teams, and these roles are not restricted to their traditional support functions. These changes in the nature of work for technical and further education (TAFE) staff generally pose challenges to human resource management policy.

✧ While managers acknowledged the extent of the change and the considerable efforts that their staff are expending to make flexible delivery work, current industrial agreements and existing human resource policy and practices have not kept pace with new ways of working, and nor do they adequately acknowledge the critical input of teaching and non-teaching staff.

✧ TAFE institutes have initiated some changes in human resource practices. However, much of the focus has been on professional development in line with national initiatives in the area. Minimal changes have been made to all other human resource practices although there has been experimentation. This study looks at human resource issues comprehensively, including job design, workforce planning, workload management, recruitment and selection, performance management, occupational health and safety, employee relations, and pay and conditions.

✧ Constraints in current human resource practices in relation to workload management, workforce planning and workplace development have hampered the effective implementation of flexible approaches to teaching.

✧ At the operational level, some managers work around these constraints by negotiating the content and conditions under which individuals and/or teams involved in flexible delivery will achieve required training outcomes.

✧ It is possible that locally negotiated arrangements such as these work for some of those involved in flexible delivery, but not others. Inconsistently applied, they have the potential to be inequitable, thus increasing tensions within and between various classifications of TAFE staff.

✧ There is a heavy reliance upon the goodwill of many teachers and administrative staff who are committed to learners and to the achievement of high-quality educational outcomes. Whether this goodwill can continue to be relied upon is a major concern for managers, especially those responsible for educational delivery.

✧ Industrial agreements and human resource policy and practice must change to reflect more adequately the true nature of the work being carried out by those engaged in flexible delivery.

✧ Sensible solutions to the barriers hindering effective implementation of flexible delivery can only be developed if the stakeholders (teachers, managers, unions) respect each other's views and collaborate to develop workable and equitable mechanisms to support effective flexible delivery.

✧ There is a plethora of effective solutions at the operational level that now need to be examined seriously by key stakeholders to inform systemic human resource policy development. Neither the retention of the status quo nor an ad hoc approach will serve TAFE well in the future.

Executive summary

Overview

The introduction of flexible delivery in vocational education and training (VET) in Australia has raised many issues for managers and practitioners alike. The advent of flexible delivery, along with other major initiatives in the national training system, has occurred within a climate of broader workplace change. So rapid has been the pace of change in the sector generally, that it is not surprising that human resource management policy and practice have not been able to accommodate adequately the diverse needs of the new workplace environment. For managers, teachers, administrative and other support staff, some of the constraints imposed by existing human resource management practices and industrial awards have been particularly acute.

Given these circumstances, this research sought to examine middle and senior management perspectives on the human resource management implications of flexible delivery within their organisations. At the same time, the study investigated changes in human resource practices resulting from the move to flexible delivery.

Because the literature and anecdotal evidence indicated that it was in large public providers that the ramifications of flexible delivery had been most keenly felt, the research specifically focused on technical and further education (TAFE) institutes. Unlike their private provider counterparts, these organisations face particular industrial and human resource management challenges when initiating substantial change which their significant pool of permanent staff will be required to implement.

Fifteen TAFE institutes agreed to participate in the research, with all but one of the mainland states and territories being represented in the sample. Given the strong focus upon human resource practice, the TAFE Industrial Relations Network was also invited to participate in the study. In addition, a framework of nine human resource elements were used in the analysis process. These elements include professional development, job design, workforce planning, recruitment and selection, performance management, pay and conditions, workload management, and occupational health and safety.

Seventy TAFE managers were interviewed, and of these, 51 also completed a questionnaire. Managers included chief executive officers; corporate, human resource management and educational delivery senior managers; and middle managers responsible for flexible delivery programs. Seven members of the TAFE Industrial Relations Network were interviewed.

A multi-method approach was adopted in the research, with information being gathered through a review of the relevant literature, in-depth semi-structured interviews and a questionnaire containing both open and closed questions. The outcomes from these were analysed and validated by a group of selected experts in a workshop convened for the purpose. The findings from this research are congruent with the findings of a companion project on the same topic which involved case studies of four additional TAFE institutes active in flexible delivery.

Summary of findings and implications

Managers participating in this study understood flexible delivery as including online delivery, distance learning, workplace training and assessment, and a blend of online and face-to-face delivery. They acknowledged the value of flexible delivery in meeting the needs and expectations of learners, industry and the wider community. The capacity to deliver training in a range of modes, at times and locations suited to the specific requirements of clients, was seen to be a great advantage for TAFE institutes. In addition, flexible delivery had opened up opportunities for institutes to enter new markets, to make training more accessible and to solve some of the problems associated with small class sizes in areas of limited demand.

There was consensus amongst managers that the shift to more flexible teaching approaches had generated change in a number of ways, most significantly in the nature of teachers' work and the manner in which TAFE staff generally were being required to support flexible delivery. Managers noted a change to team-based approaches, new ways of communicating with colleagues and supervisors, and staff working in different locations over a greater range of days and hours. At the same time, there was general agreement about the increased administrative workload associated with flexible delivery.

Given these significant changes, how has human resource practice shifted in response? Managers identified that professional development was the aspect that had most changed, largely in response to national and state imperatives to build the capacity of the sector to engage more extensively in flexible delivery. No other aspects of human resource practice were seen to have been significantly amended to accommodate the introduction of flexible delivery. In fact, lack of change in human resource practice was perceived in some instances to be hampering effective implementation.

When asked to identify those areas of human resource management where change was required for more effective flexible delivery, participants indicated that aspects of workload management, job design, workforce planning, professional development, strategic management and the development of an appropriate organisational culture were the areas most in need of revision.

Workload management

Given the nature of flexible delivery, teachers were undertaking a range of activities in timeframes and in contexts which no longer clearly matched those described in existing industrial agreements. Workplace visits and assessment; extensive travel; working from home; responding to students seven days a week in an online environment; and the burgeoning administrative tasks which accompanied all of these activities have contributed to ever-increasing workloads.

Increasingly, teachers were expected to manage their workloads according to mutually agreed outcomes rather than according to a set number of annual hours (which currently encompasses a ratio between teaching and preparation hours).

Under these circumstances, existing definitions of what constitutes teachers' work and the agreed formulas for measuring teachers' time were seen as outdated and almost irrelevant by managers responsible for educational delivery who required diverse tasks to be undertaken by their staff.

One solution to the inflexibilities of existing industrial agreements generally being applied within the institutes was the use of locally negotiated workloads. These involved managers and staff, either individually or in teams, agreeing on what, how and when work was to be achieved. However, not all staff were in a position to enter into such arrangements and there was potential for locally negotiated agreements to be inequitable and to generate tension between categories of staff. Moreover, negotiated workloads were considered to make supervision of teachers more complex and difficult to manage.

Managers admitted that they relied on the goodwill of their staff who were committed to the achievement of high-quality educational outcomes, and they were concerned that the efforts of these staff could not be rewarded for work beyond that covered by industrial agreements.

Future industrial awards would need to adopt a much broader definition of what constitutes teachers' work and develop more sophisticated means of measuring that work.

Job design and workforce planning

Current approaches to job design and generic job description frameworks based on traditional modes of delivery were identified as constraining the capacity of TAFE institutes to successfully service flexible delivery. The new ways of working demanded adaptable people with a capacity to manage change and to make full use of information and communication technologies in their teaching. Existing job design and descriptions were inadequate to capture the technical expertise and teaching skills essential for those delivering in flexible learning environments. At the same time, managers suggested that the design and description of jobs for non-teaching support staff had to accommodate specific skills for working in flexible delivery teams.

The monitoring of skill sets and skill gaps was considered crucial to ensure that, in both the short and long term, new staff recruited to the workforce possessed the expertise to augment the existing flexible delivery skill base within institutes. As a component of succession planning, such a process also provided managers with the opportunity to adjust staff profiles as training needs changed, and as teachers left the workforce. While these comments were made with flexible delivery in mind, managers emphasised that these processes needed to be applied across the entire TAFE workforce.

Professional development, strategic management and developing an appropriate organisational culture

Despite the successes of national and state-based professional development initiatives, some context-specific training needs of individual teachers had remained unaddressed. Areas such as time management, managing change, instructional design and the use of a range of technologies were identified as crucial in flexible delivery, as were specific teaching and enhanced technical skills.

In order to bring about necessary changes in organisational culture, comprehensive professional development was needed to build the capacity of operational managers to effectively oversee flexible delivery teams and associated management processes. Early induction into flexible delivery was needed for new staff to ensure that they engaged with institute systems and delivery approaches. Indeed, managers stressed the importance of all staff who were involved in flexible delivery being able to access ongoing professional development activities to build and extend their skills.

Managers also indicated that a whole-of-organisation approach to flexible delivery, including its human resource management implications, was desirable. In this way TAFE institutes would be in a position to plan strategically in order to maximise the opportunities that flexible delivery offered. To achieve such an approach, clear directions must be set by senior and middle managers. Leadership was also nominated as the critical driver of the cultural change deemed necessary to accommodate the innovative human resource practices required by flexible delivery.

Finally, educational managers, human resource managers and unions must engage in full and frank consultation to generate workable solutions to the current barriers in human resource practice which are seen to be hindering effective implementation of flexible delivery. Neither the retention of the status quo nor an ad hoc approach to achieving solutions will serve TAFE, its clients or its staff well in the future.

Context

Research purpose

The purpose of this research was twofold. In the first instance, the goal was to gauge middle and senior management understanding of the human resource issues and implications associated with the implementation of flexible delivery within Australian technical and further education (TAFE) institutes. The other goal for this research was an examination of the changes in human resource management practices which had been initiated in these organisations to accommodate more flexible approaches to teaching.

Because of the particular industrial and human resource management issues faced by these large public organisations and their senior and middle managers in implementing flexible delivery, the focus of this study is on TAFE rather than on the broader vocational education and training (VET) sector.

Policy and practice issues

Flexible approaches to the delivery of VET have resulted in significant changes in the roles and responsibilities of teachers and all staff engaged in the provision of flexible delivery services to learners. Generally speaking these changes have occurred in the areas of planning and development, delivery and assessment, evaluation and maintenance, and administration.

Whether human resource policies and practices in TAFE institutes have evolved to accommodate these transformed delivery practices is a subject of ongoing concern to a range of stakeholders engaging in flexible delivery. Teachers, administrators, support staff, senior managers and unions, not only in Australia, but worldwide, are struggling with new ways of working. Australian human resource practitioners themselves acknowledge the difficulties posed by being bound to work within rules of workload measurement and employment which no longer fit comfortably with today's market-driven and client service-oriented vocational education and training environment.

Although many organisations across all educational sectors are responding to the challenge of modifying human resource practice in order to accommodate flexible delivery implementation, there is a wide diversity of such responses, and all organisations faced with this challenge are likely to be interested in learning how others have responded.

Issues identified in the literature

Most of the VET stakeholders (industrial and employer groups, unions, teachers and governments) have contributed to the literature in this area. However, only one strong message has emerged—the need for professional development for TAFE teachers to build the skills needed for flexible delivery. Other human resource factors such as employee relations, job design, workload management and remuneration have tended to receive less attention.

The implementation of flexible delivery results in changes to work environments and practices which result in staff:

✧ working in different work locations (Volkoff 1995; Walsh 2000)

✧ working over a greater range of days and hours (Kronemann 2001; TAFE NSW 2002; Curtain 2002)

✧ undertaking a wider variety of tasks (Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b; Ellis & Phelps 2000; Schofield, Walsh & Melville 2000b)

✧ communicating differently with colleagues and supervisors (Harper et al. 2000; Anderson & Johnston 1999).

Furthermore, with flexible delivery there is greater variation in staffing needs (Argall 2001; Healy 2003; Victorian TAFE Association 2001). There is also extensive variation between the experiences of individual staff as they respond to the needs of their particular client groups (Victorian TAFE Association 2001; McNevin 2002). While many teachers enjoy the social and teaching challenges of flexible delivery, others are overwhelmed by the necessary developmental and ongoing work required (Johnston 2001; Young 2003). Other VET practitioners who are expected to change their work practices to accommodate changes in VET, including flexible delivery, report limited consultation and involvement in business/program planning. This creates a sense of powerlessness and breeds active resistance in some areas.

TAFE teachers, their unions and employers continue to struggle to find the right mix of permanent, temporary and casual staff to respond to the rapidly changing demands of VET students (Schofield, Walsh & Melville 2000a, 2000b). In addition, TAFE funding, currently measured in face-to-face teaching terms, is increasingly incompatible with high-quality flexible delivery. It places upward pressure on class sizes and restricts time for flexible delivery teacher preparation (Victorian TAFE Association 2001; Curtain 2002; Pendle 2003).

To date, industrial awards and agreements have provided little support to managers and teachers in accommodating flexible delivery in the terms that best meet teacher, industry and student needs. Constraining teacher workloads by continual comparison with face-to-face delivery limits local flexibility. Measurement of all hours of work undertaken by teachers would be simpler and would be a means of recognising the complexity in different programs, student groups, program lifecycles and teachers' experience.

The substantial contribution of non-teaching staff to flexible delivery has been noted by TAFE employers and industrial and research bodies, but is not acknowledged by unions (Victorian TAFE Association 2001; Young 2003; Argall 2001). Indeed, in those instances where employment practices are becoming more flexible, they are located where there has been a whole-of-organisation response, not just one restricted to teaching staff, general staff or senior managers.

A full literature review is available as an appendix to this report.

Research questions

The following research questions were examined in this study:

✧ How do senior managers in TAFE institutes perceive the impact of flexible delivery on teachers' work?

✧ What changes have been made to human resource practices in order to accommodate flexible delivery?

✧ What aspects of flexible delivery have driven the changes in human resource practice?

✧ What do TAFE managers see as the major barriers to flexible delivery in current human resource practices?

✧ What changes in human resource practice need to occur to facilitate broader implementation of flexible delivery?

✧ What common themes and contrasts are apparent in the findings of this research when compared with existing research on teachers' work and management support of flexible delivery?

Structure of report

The next section of this report briefly describes the methodology adopted for the project while the following chapter outlines the current practices utilised by the various TAFE institutes participating in this study. In the section which follows, barriers to the successful implementation of flexible delivery are described. The final chapter identifies some of the challenges to human resource practices the sector must meet to accommodate flexible delivery more effectively. The appendices contain a full literature review, examples of current practice, and the various instruments used to conduct the research.

Methodology

Design of the research

The complexity and variety of perspectives that were likely to be found in this study suggested the application of a multi-method research approach—which became a mix of both qualitative and quantitative research methods, involving a review of the literature, a questionnaire containing both open and closed questions, semi-structured telephone interviews and a validation workshop in which key stakeholders and experts participated. This approach allowed information to be gathered from a range of sources. It also allowed the use of pre-planned questions, while at the same time providing the opportunity to probe for deeper clarification of responses and evaluative comments during interviews.

To assist this process a comprehensive framework of eight human resource issues was used (Stone 1991; Tyson 1995). These issues are:

✧ *Job design* which defines a job in terms of specific tasks and responsibilities and identifies the skills, abilities and qualifications needed to perform it effectively.

✧ *Human resource/workforce planning* which uses statistical analysis to understand employment trends and anticipates recruitment and training needs.

✧ *Recruitment and selection* which implements processes to identify and attract a pool of job applicants from which the strongest candidate can be selected for each position.

✧ *Performance management (rewards and recognition)* which establishes work plans and expectations at team or individual levels and identifies performance indicators and means for reinforcing positive work behaviours.

✧ *Training and development (or professional development)* which assists staff to improve their job performance and prepare themselves for more senior positions.

✧ *Pay and conditions* which makes payments and benefits to staff (both compensatory and motivational in nature). These may be based on resource inputs or workplace outcomes.

✧ *Employee relations* which establishes the legal and cultural relationship between employer and staff and determines the manner in which workplace decisions are made and disputes resolved.

✧ *Occupational health and safety,* which ensures the provision of a safe and healthy work environment and work practices, including preventative and remedial measures (Tyson 1995).

The human resource literature for Australian vocational education and training, and discussion with key stakeholders, suggest that workload management is also a key human resource issue. Because of its importance it has been drawn out as a ninth issue in both this and the case study project (Palmieri 2003). Each VET provider makes provision for managing these aspects of human resources and policies, and procedures in each of these areas may facilitate or obstruct flexible delivery.

Sample

The sample included 15 TAFE institutes whose chief executive officers responded to an invitation to participate in the study which was transmitted through the national secretariat of TAFE Directors Australia. The institutes were located in all but one of the mainland states and

territories—including seven in metropolitan areas and eight in regional Australia. Three of the organisations were universities with TAFE divisions.

Within each TAFE institute, key informants were the chief executive officer, senior managers (corporate, human resource management and educational delivery) and middle managers involved in the management of flexible delivery programs at an operational level.

Questionnaires were provided to the various TAFE managers who were identified as being willing to participate in the research (see appendix 2). In total, 51 managers completed the questionnaire. Details of the numbers of respondents by category are set out in table 1.

Table 1:   TAFE managers responding to questionnaire by category

Position	Questionnaires
Chief executive officer	7
Senior manager—corporate	14
Senior manager—HR/IR*	5
Senior manager—delivery	14
Middle manager—delivery	11
Total	**51**

Note: * Human resources/industrial relations

Seventy interviews were conducted with managers. Interview numbers by manager category are set out in table 2.

Table 2:   TAFE manager interviewees by category

Position	Interviews
Chief executive officer	14
Senior managers—corporate	10
Senior managers—HR/IR	9
Senior managers—delivery	33
Middle managers—delivery	4
Total	**70**

Telephone interviews were also conducted with seven members of the TAFE Industrial Relations Network, a newly formed national body made up of human resource managers and practitioners working in TAFE institutes across Australia.

Analysis techniques

Closed questions within the questionnaire were analysed using Microsoft Excel to calculate simple descriptive data. Open-ended questions were analysed by using a series of broad categories and codes to establish key themes.

Records of interview were analysed by hand, again using a coding and categorising strategy. This allowed a systematic identification of common factors and any inter-relationships among them.

A cross-analysis of the information from both interviews and questionnaires was then undertaken to identify key themes, internal consistencies and independent variations within and across the manager levels. The goal of this process was to identify consistencies and variations in the responses of chief executive officers, senior managers (corporate, human resource management and educational delivery) and middle managers involved in the management of flexible delivery programs at an operational level.

Limitations

The scope of the study was limited to the number of TAFE institutes from all those approached who were prepared, or able, to participate. As a consequence, the research should be deemed as only representative of these organisations rather than for the TAFE sector as a whole.

Invitations were extended to all chief executive officers who were members of TAFE Directors Australia by the national secretariat of that organisation. A request was submitted to the Deputy Director-General (TAFE) of the New South Wales Department of Education and Training (as required by the policy) to determine the New South Wales participants. Only two institutes within that state could take part, and only one was available for this study. The other was allocated to a parallel case study project being undertaken on the same topic (Palmieri 2003).

The scope of the literature review was relatively narrow and no attempt was made to examine more broadly the TAFE workforce or to analyse it in line with the trends occurring in the general workforce. A more in-depth study of mechanisms for enhancing the capability of VET professionals is currently being undertaken for the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

While the original intention was that all those who agreed to be interviewed would complete questionnaires, ultimately there was a discrepancy between the numbers interviewed (70) and questionnaires returned (51).

While 72 interviews were arranged, only 70 were completed.

None of the organisations nor any of the informants participating in this study have been identified in this report. All informants were provided with an outline of the focus and methodology for the research and the confidentiality of institutes and participants was guaranteed. A consent form was completed by each participant (see appendix 2) and all transcripts of interviews forwarded to them for verification to ensure their accuracy.

Current practice

In order to determine a picture of current flexible delivery and associated human resource management practice within the TAFE institutes in the study, managers were asked a series of questions about how flexible delivery worked in their organisation. A particular emphasis was placed on the impetus for implementation, the forms that flexible delivery took and the changes that had taken place in human resource practice as a result of the move to flexible delivery.

Examples of current practice are given in appendix 3.

Understanding of flexible delivery

The managers used a variety of terms to define flexible delivery, many of them stressing that their institutes did not have a particular definition. One of the most widely used descriptions is reflected by the comment that flexible delivery is 'any form of learning beyond traditional classroom delivery', whereby learning is provided any time, place or pace. TAFE Industrial Relations Network members understood flexible delivery in exactly the same way and described it in similar terms. Thus, flexible delivery was generally understood as including many modes of the delivery of vocational education and training, including online learning, workplace training and assessment, distance learning, and blended online and face-to-face delivery. As ANTA stresses in its definition of the term, 'flexible delivery is a learner-centred approach …' (Australian Flexible Learning Framework 2003).

Impetus for implementation

In response to a question about the impetus for implementation of flexible delivery in their institute, managers provided a range of reasons. Regardless of their managerial position, the majority of managers saw flexible delivery primarily as a means of meeting the needs and expectations of learners.

Chief executive officers also considered that flexible delivery was a strategy to enable expansion into new markets. On the other hand, managers directly responsible for delivery of programs suggested that flexible approaches allowed institutes to meet the needs of industry while solving some of the operational problems associated with small class sizes. These are not new needs, but ones that have been emerging as workplaces have been changing since the 1980s (Canberra Institute of Technology 2003).

Responses to the question about the major impetus for their institute's implementation of flexible delivery are set out for the three categories of institute manager and are given in table 3. Note that although managers gave multiple responses, only those designated as the most important impetus have been recorded in table 3.

Table 3:   The major impetus for the implementation of flexible delivery

Impetus	Chief executive officer (n=14)	Senior manager delivery (n=37)	HR/IR corporate (n=19)
Learner needs/expectations	8	19	10
Opportunity for new market	3		
Innovative teaching methodology	3		
Service their markets	3		
Industry needs	3	10	4
Small numbers		4	
Policy initiatives		3	4
Accessibility			3

Flexibility and innovation were also seen as important aspects of flexible delivery. The following comments reflect these views:

> It was part of the whole philosophy of the development of this college. It was felt that it needed to be more flexible to allow for more innovative teaching methodologies and to meet the needs of businesses. It also provided opportunities to develop key competencies in students by giving them opportunities to solve problems, be self-directed and have more choice about topics.

And:

> As training packages have come in and with New Apprenticeships, it is imperative to be flexible so that we can accommodate on-the-job trainees who want to do some off-the-job [training]. It is particularly useful when businesses take on a trainee and they need fully off-the-job training for a period.

Forms and focus of flexible delivery

The majority of managers commented that there were pockets of flexible delivery within their organisations. They acknowledged variations in degrees of flexibility and resourcing, with some programs being funded at higher levels than others.

Interestingly, TAFE Industrial Relations Network informants noted wide variation in the adoption of flexible delivery across their organisations and suggested that one of the strongest driving forces for flexible delivery within institutes was a relatively small number of flexible delivery 'enthusiasts'. Thus, 'torch-bearers' or 'champions' were seen to be highly influential.

It was noted by a number of managers that flexibility was not technology-dependent, but related to a range of approaches to delivery designed to suit the needs of learners. Managers commented that there was a strong trend to a blended form of flexible delivery, and from teacher-led delivery to team-based delivery across most areas. Thus, the most common form of flexible delivery format was identified as online learning blended with other flexible modes. Less common were flexible learning centres and other specialised units dedicated solely to flexible delivery.

Within the organisations participating in this study, flexible delivery approaches were being offered in diverse discipline areas and at a range of Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) levels, including apprenticeship and traineeship programs. A list of the subjects and programs, which were mentioned during interview as being flexibly delivered, can be found in appendix 3.

Changes generated by flexible delivery

For the people involved in this study, the impact of the move to more flexible approaches to the delivery of VET had been significant in a number of ways. All commented on the changes in the nature of work, in the cost of delivery and in levels of student satisfaction. Forty-seven per cent of the interview informants considered that the cost of delivery had risen with the implementation of flexible delivery, while only 37% suggested that student satisfaction was higher. This is consistent with Argall's (2001) observation that VET clients have particularly high expectations of their relationship with their service provider.

In response to the question, *What staffing changes have accompanied the move to flexible delivery in your institute?*, respondents noted as the most significant, the change to communications with colleagues and supervisors (86%); staff working from different work locations (80%); and staff working over a greater range of days and hours (76%).

Major changes were also identified in the area of administrative support by 80% of respondents to the questionnaire. The level of change was attributed to an increase in the tasks demanded by flexible delivery. Several researchers have also noted the contribution made by non-teaching staff to flexible delivery implementation (Victorian TAFE Association 2001; Young 2003; Argall 2001).

Managers and TAFE Industrial Relations Network members all stressed that numerous changes were occurring in the various aspects of human resource practice within these TAFE institutes.

Changes to human resource practice

Questionnaire respondents were asked to rank in order of importance the aspects of human resource management which had most changed in their organisation to accommodate flexible delivery. The framework used is based on Stone (1991). This is discussed in greater detail in the literature review in appendix 1 and in the methodology. While managers provided rankings from one to nine, only the top three are set out in the table below.

Table 4:   Top three rankings for each human resource element where change has occurred

Human resource element	Ranking (%)		
	1	2	3
Job design	13.7	7.8	17.6
Human resource/workforce planning	7.8	3.9	3.9
Recruitment and selection	9.8	15.7	9.8
Performance management	0.0	13.7	13.7
Professional development (including induction)	49.0	19.6	9.8
Pay and conditions	2.0	3.9	0.0
Workload management	13.7	11.8	11.8
Employee relations	3.9	9.8	11.8
Occupational health and safety	2.0	3.9	5.9

Professional development (including induction) was identified by 49% of the respondents as the area in which human resource practice had changed most. It has also been the area which has been the major change agent used to drive the implementation of flexible delivery. Professional development activities included institute, state and national initiatives, with the latter covering such programs as Learnscope and Flexible Learning Leaders. In terms of responding to flexible delivery implementation, no other aspects of human resource practice were rated as highly. Job design and workload management were each ranked most highly by only 13.7% of respondents. This finding unequivocally supports the place of relevant professional development as reiterated time and again

in the literature (Anderson & Johnston 1999; Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b; Curtain 2002; Johnston 2001; Littlejohn & Campbell 2003; Schofield, Walsh & Melville 2000a, 2000b).

Significantly, the aspects of human resource practice that had changed least overall to accommodate flexible delivery were occupational health and safety and pay and conditions.

In the following section some examples are given of the types of changes to the specific aspects of human resource practice being implemented in institutes to accommodate flexible delivery.

Job design

Questionnaire respondents and interviewees were in agreement that the major changes in this area were that position descriptions included more generic skills than previously. This practice ensured that new staff being employed were more likely to be flexible and open to change. Position descriptions also indicated that flexible delivery would be a component of the job, while technological and educational expertise was a position prerequisite. A number of managers indicated that more variation in job descriptions or position profiles was occurring in contrast to a previously much more standardised approach:

> Job design has been expanded to include the range of things that people are expected to do from delivering content to delivering to a wide range of learners, in different situations and in different mediums. There is an expectation that the majority of teachers will know about strategic planning within a team, understand how costings are done, will participate in planning for purchase agreements etc.

Nearly 60% of the chief executive officers and a similar percentage of the human resource managers interviewed considered that differences had been made in job design since the advent of flexible delivery, while only 45% of managers engaged in delivery suggested there were differences in the way jobs were being designed.

Job design was seen to be one of the most important and potentially restricting factors affecting flexible delivery. The three categories of managers interviewed clearly identified the necessity for job design and for the actual job description itself to be precise about the specific skills and knowledge requirements essential for more effective flexible delivery.

The TAFE Industrial Relations Network managers confirmed that there had been some changes made to job descriptions, with one manager indicating that there had been an emerging trend to employ 'workplace trainers to undertake off-site delivery, whilst teachers maintain the instructional design work with the support of librarians and IT [information technology] staff'.

The evidence for changed work practices as a result of flexible delivery implementation is overwhelming in the literature (Volkoff 1995; Walsh 2000; Kronemann 2001; TAFE NSW 2002, 2002b; Curtain 2002; Ellis & Phelps 2000; Schofield, Walsh & Melville 2000b; Howell et al. 2003; Harper et al. 2000; Anderson & Johnston 1999). The extent to which job design may have begun to accommodate these changes is less often mentioned (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

Workforce planning

This was acknowledged as a critical area for TAFE institutes, and a number of the managers indicated that their institutes were now moving to address workforce planning in a more strategic way. One manager noted 'a review of the employment mode of the workforce is forming the basis of strategies for succession management'. Some attention was being given to the skill sets, staffing loads and allocation of staff as a result of the shift to flexible modes of delivery. The literature also documents this need for increased flexibility, in particular, skills sets and shifting patterns of student contact (Argall 2001; Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

During their interviews, 86% of the chief executive officers verified that changes were slowly proceeding in relation to the way workforce planning was conducted in their institutes. However, in

the majority of cases, they acknowledged that flexible delivery was only one of many factors that had generated the need for alternative approaches. Other factors, such as training packages, user choice, the Australian Quality Training Framework, the shift to more training in the workplace, together with the changing nature of work generally, were also acting as catalysts for change.

All managers recognised that succession planning had emerged as a critical issue for the TAFE sector as a whole, but many commented that their organisations had yet to fully address the issue. The TAFE Industrial Relations Network managers confirmed this and a number of them noted that institutes were starting to look at strategic workforce planning five to ten years in advance.

Recruitment and selection

In the recruitment and selection area, there was a much stronger focus on flexibility, adaptability and the capacity to work in a team, all of which were seen to be essential for people working in any form of flexible delivery. For instance, one respondent commented that they were ensuring 'that people are recruited with the qualities such as ability to change, problem-solving, time management skills and communication skills'. Again, these findings confirmed what has been noted by other research in this field (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

However, the responses by chief executive officers and other managers in relation to this aspect of human resource practice were somewhat more disparate. Fifty-seven per cent of institute directors commented that there were differences in the way new staff were selected. On the other hand, the delivery and human resource managers indicated that changes were minimal. A number of educational delivery managers indicated that they had a range of strategies for hiring the flexible delivery staff with the skill sets that they needed. Where standardised duty statements were used, staff focused their interview questions upon specific flexible delivery skill requirements. An alternative to this method of selection was to determine a set of desired criteria that could be articulated first through an advertisement and then in interview. Another strategy was described in the following way:

> Organisations are beginning to keep lists of past students—the best and brightest—who are contacted for casual work when demand increases dramatically; however, this needs a more strategic approach.

The TAFE Industrial Relations Network managers acknowledged that there were some changes being initiated which involved new staff requiring different skills sets, qualifications and attributes, such as flexibility and adaptability.

Performance management

The major changes noted in this area related to the measurement of performance in a variety of work locations, including TAFE institutions, other providers, workplaces, home and other possible locations, with an expectation that staff would be involved in flexible delivery. In the case of one institute, a performance agreement required all staff to possess expertise in information communication technologies by 2005. At the same time, performance management was the instrument being used to identify professional development needs, including those needed for flexible delivery.

It is noted in the literature that identifying performance indicators for flexible delivery is both contentious and difficult (Tyson 1995; Curtain 2002).

Managers indicated in interview that performance management should be driven strategically at executive level. A number of managers considered that teachers were concerned about the perceived focus on efficiency rather than on the quality of educational outcomes for learners. Given the movement towards team-based teaching approaches, performance management had to focus both on the team and the individual and the quality of educational outcomes. Performance management remained important for individuals for career development purposes.

The TAFE Industrial Relations Network managers confirmed these views and noted that work measures continued to be described in 'nominal hours supervised' or dollars, and that in some institutes, staff were undergoing an annual performance review with a strong professional development emphasis.

Professional development (including induction)

In both interview and questionnaire responses, managers noted that their institutes had sustained a primary focus upon flexible delivery for a number of years. They provided considerable evidence of how professional development prepared staff for flexible delivery through a broad range of programs like Learnscope and Reframing the Future. In some instances, professional development had emphasised the provision of a broader range of skills for teaching staff, including such areas as e-learning, online learning, video-streaming and the use of ANTA Toolboxes. Professional development had also included a strong emphasis on training in information communication technologies. Several researchers confirm the complexity of the professional development needs of those delivering flexibly (Anderson & Johnston 1999; Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b, Hall et al. 2001; Johnston 2001; Kronemann 2001).

The TAFE Industrial Relations Network managers commented that comprehensive staff induction programs were a key feature in meeting internal audit and Australian Quality Training Framework requirements. In some institutes, human resource management areas had given staff and managers the authority to define what discipline-specific professional development they needed, with a number of compliance programs supporting them centrally.

Pay and conditions

There was general agreement among all managers that pay rates had not changed in response to the introduction of flexible delivery and did not reflect the time and effort put in by staff involved in those activities. It was noted by one manager that, in most cases, people were 'working out of hours and weekends and this cannot be reflected in salary, only time in lieu'. It was also suggested that informal arrangements were being made to enable flexible practices because existing enterprise bargaining agreements did not accommodate these different delivery approaches.

However, there was acknowledgement that working conditions had changed considerably and existing industrial agreements generally had so far not incorporated these changes. Not only had workloads increased, but the role of the teacher had become so diverse that a range of factors was impacting on conditions. These factors included having to travel to monitor apprentices, trainees and other learners in numerous workplaces in a range of locations at different times of the day or night, including weekends and holidays.

A further important issue raised in interview by a number of managers was that there was no distinction being made with regard to pay and conditions between those delivering traditionally in a classroom and those involved in delivering in a range of flexible ways. Argall (2001) has made the same observation.

From the perspective of the TAFE Industrial Relations Network managers, pay was tied to annual teaching loads governed by the awards. There was some capacity to negotiate at a local level, but they considered that this needed to be applied more widely and consistently (and, therefore, equitably) across organisations.

Workload management

The changing nature of workloads generated by the move to more flexible delivery was one of the factors emphasised by managers as being both complex and difficult. Accompanied by a transition to the use of work groups, group members were managing their workloads on a project-by-project basis after negotiation with their managers. These often quite incongruent activities were generally

occurring outside the agreed parameters of industrial awards or enterprise agreements, as noted by Kronemann (2001) and Argall (2001).

The TAFE Industrial Relations Network managers confirmed the move to more self-managing delivery teams. They commented that these were generally being used as a means of pooling resources and expertise in order to meet client needs. Another change noted by this group was the employment of tutors and markers to reinforce learning or to perform assessment under teachers' supervision. This strategy was lessening teacher workloads to some extent, as was the greater involvement of administrative staff in the day-to-day operational management of flexible delivery.

However, there is also the question of the 'enthusiasts'. As one manager noted:

> The early champions take on higher workloads that are disproportionate to those still using the old methodology.

The majority of managers in the study noted the potential implications or ramifications of such differing strategies for managing workloads.

Employee relations

In both interview and questionnaire, managers suggested that the move to work teams had placed greater emphasis on communication between managers and teams, particularly as people were working in a range of modes in different locations. Managers were required to have a strong commitment to their teams, and members of teams needed to work well together to 'survive'.

One manager commented that there had been an increasing demand for people to work in innovative ways, and this had increased the pressure on individual teaching departments to ensure that people were supported to undertake such activities.

It was suggested that the change to more flexible delivery had generated some tensions between staff involved with flexible delivery and those engaged in classroom delivery. This was perceived to be partially attributable to a lack of understanding by some staff of the nature of flexible delivery and the different working requirements of that mode.

Occupational health and safety

There was limited agreement amongst managers that there had been a number of changes with regard to occupational health and safety resulting from the introduction of flexible delivery. The fact that teaching and other staff were required to travel extensively, to undertake activities in workplace settings, to work from home and to work extended hours or hours beyond the 'normal' day, meant that managers were required to develop strategies for ensuring worker health and safety. The literature also notes this increased need for the application of occupational health and safety principles (TAFE NSW 2002; Harper et al. 2000).

Barriers to more successful flexible delivery

In both the interviews and the questionnaire, managers were invited to detail what they saw as the major challenges or barriers to effective implementation of flexible delivery strategies within their institutes. They acknowledged that the major benefits gained from moving to flexible delivery were that students had much more choice in what they learned, where they learned and how they learned, and as a consequence, opportunities and access had been vastly improved. And, as the literature suggested, benefits had also accrued to teachers from being involved in flexible delivery because it 'provided teachers with opportunities to be innovative, it helped them to develop new skills and provided them with the opportunity to use multiple delivery techniques'.

Despite these obvious benefits, however, managers stated that there were a number of critical challenges associated with flexible delivery that had still to be resolved in their institutes.

General barriers

In the first instance, managers were asked to identify the three most difficult barriers to successful implementation of flexible delivery in their institutes. Initial responses were quite broad in nature, and looked at factors outside the realm of human resource practice. These are briefly discussed below.

Clustered together as the major impediments were staff attitudes and organisational cultures that existed within institutes and which made change in this area somewhat problematic.

Rated as the next most difficult barrier were the technological issues associated with flexible delivery. Responses focused on items such as the inflexibility of student management systems, the cost of ongoing development and maintenance of courseware, issues related to bandwidth, hardware and software, together with the resourcing of increasing numbers of flexible programs.

The third area seen as being complex to resolve related to building of the capabilities of staff to enable them to deliver and support flexible delivery. Managers suggested that some staff were quite reluctant to engage in flexible delivery activities because they did not have the skills or the confidence to do so. Clearly, these comments were closely linked to those made by managers about staff attitudes and organisational culture.

Funding was also recognised as a major barrier. Increased administrative requirements to meet the demands of flexible delivery, ongoing commitment to information technology hardware upgrades and other resources, together with the costs associated with staff being off site were all impacting upon institute financial management, cost structures and funding mechanisms.

In addition, a number of managers commented that the current funding models were inappropriate for flexible delivery as they were based solely upon the 'nominal hours supervised' formula.

While these general barriers were seen to be critical to the effective implementation of flexible delivery, in some instances current human resource practice was also considered to militate against positive flexible delivery processes and outcomes. In particular, elements of human resource management associated with workload management, workforce planning and professional development were considered to be the key impediments to effective flexible delivery. Naturally, these elements are closely interlinked.

Barriers resulting from current human resource practice

In interview, managers were asked to rate the extent to which they considered that human resource practices had hampered the implementation of flexible delivery approaches in their organisations. Using a rating scale of 1 (not at all) to 5 (greatly), just over half of the chief executive officers and a similar percentage of educational delivery managers indicated that they considered current practice did hinder effective implementation to a moderate degree. Human resource and corporate managers, as would be expected, rated current practice in their domains as being less of an inhibitor than did their colleagues. Responses by managerial category are set out in table 5.

Table 5:   Rating of extent that human resource practices had inhibited the implementation of flexible delivery

Manager category	1 Not at all	2	3	4	5 Greatly
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Chief executive officer	0.8	29.0	50.0	0.8	0.8
HR/IR corporate managers	16.0	37.0	21.0	17.0	
Delivery managers	5.0	38.0	35.0	16.0	

Given the diversity of these views, it was not surprising that in interview, a number of managers commented on the apparent lack of understanding their colleagues had of the complexities of flexible delivery. For example, educational delivery managers felt hampered by human resource policy and procedures, while human resource managers were perturbed by the way that delivery managers did not always communicate their problems directly to them. It was evident, however, that there was a desire on the part of both groups to interact more actively to achieve solutions that satisfied everyone's interests and concerns. The literature also notes the slowness with which human resource systems have changed in response to flexible delivery, and notes that this is also the case in the Unites States (NCVER 2002; Howell, Williams & Lindsay 2003).

Workload management

Flexible delivery, by its very nature, requires teachers and administrators to work in ways, in times and in locations that are often well outside the norm as established by industrial awards. Managers considered that existing workplace agreements were far too inflexible to keep pace with the changes that were demanded by the multiple teaching and learning strategies that were being used in this new environment.

> Current teaching awards do not prevent flexible delivery from happening but make it more difficult to organise and manage, and adversely affect teachers' professionalism and trust.

Managers emphasised that these multiple strategies engaged teachers in extensive travel or teaching in a range of locations, including at home. It was not uncommon for teachers to be working at different times of the day or night, including weekends and holidays. They were also required to undertake a good deal of the administration work which appeared to accompany teaching in flexible mode. For example, one manager commented:

> There has been a very considerable increase in teachers' workloads. Included in this is a huge increase in administration, particularly in the tracking of students. This has caused significant pressures on teachers as we do not have good systems for managing this component of flexible delivery.

The diversity and complexity of the activities being undertaken by teachers had increased their loads considerably and, in many instances their personal health and wellbeing had deteriorated as a result, as documented in much union-sponsored research (for example, McNevin 2002; Zipin 2002;

Kronemann 2001). Senior and middle managers in this study consistently commented that teacher workloads were too heavy, with a lack of administrative support largely contributing to this.

Staff were expected more and more to manage workloads according to mutually agreed outcomes rather than by the existing parameters (such as a set number of annual hours comprising a ratio between teaching and preparation time). The measurement of teacher time under these circumstances was seen as quite problematic.

> Tension exists for some teachers where the agreement and what actually happens differs. Traditional measurement of hours no longer fits. We still have to meet client requirements. We need to measure the end result instead of what is required to produce the final product.

From the perspective of the TAFE Industrial Relations Network, the demarcation of activities among teaching classifications was a difficulty for managers and one over which the managers perceived they had little control. This was particularly true where tutors were being employed to facilitate flexible delivery or where teachers were undertaking tasks other than teaching. The debate about what constituted teachers' work was seen to be a challenge for managers responsible for educational delivery who required diverse tasks to be undertaken by their staff.

Managers also suggested that while local negotiation was one strategy for overcoming some of the problems associated with the management of workloads, this approach was potentially inequitable, as not all teachers were in a position to enter into such arrangements. More importantly, inconsistencies between negotiated arrangements even within one institute were likely to be of considerable concern for many teachers. Again, this finding is supported by the claims of union-sponsored research (Kronemann 2001; Australian Education Union 2002a).

Furthermore, mutually agreed outcomes and concepts of negotiated workloads were considered to be undesirable insofar as they made management or supervision of teachers more complex. A number of managers commented that it was possible to over-work or exploit people simply because they were passionate about the new ways of doing things.

> This is a big issue because early adopters will take on more. A manager has to be careful not to diminish people's enthusiasm, but there is a difference in people's natural capacity. Some people love being frantically busy all of the time. They have the potential to burn themselves out.

It was also noted that there was a heavy reliance upon the goodwill of many teachers and administrative staff who were committed to learners and the achievement of high-quality educational outcomes. Whether they should continue to rely upon this goodwill was a major concern for managers, especially those responsible for educational delivery.

In addition, the extent of staff effort in relation to flexible delivery was fully recognised by all managers and many of them were frustrated by the fact that they were constrained in the ways in which this effort could be rewarded. Flat organisational structures together with inflexibility in pay and conditions meant that, at best, time in lieu was one of the few means for 'repaying' people for any work beyond that covered by industrial awards. It was noted, however, that this problem was not one that was restricted solely to flexible delivery. The Victorian TAFE Association has begun planning to address these very issues (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

Because of the non-standard nature of flexible delivery, many managers stressed that there were clear tensions between the new ways of working required and the parameters in existing industrial awards. They indicated that industrial agreements have not kept pace with evolving work practices, including those required for flexible delivery.

Job design and workforce planning

In both the questionnaire and interviews, managers identified current approaches to job design as impacting negatively on flexible delivery. Many of the TAFE institutes had generic job description frameworks, which did not necessarily reflect the characteristics required of teachers delivering in

flexible modes. Most teacher positions had a generic job description based on classroom teaching. Less often, job design was being determined and agreed individually with managers who had to juggle day-to-day delivery demands with the requirement to conform to systems, such as current funding models.

When recruiting, managers were looking for innovative, adaptable, flexible people able to cope with change and teaching using technology. Job frameworks did not reflect adequately the educational expertise, the teaching skills and knowledge, and instructional design skills necessary for those taking on the role of teacher/facilitator in a flexible learning environment. It was noted by one informant that:

> … it would be better if lecturers knew exactly what they were meant to be doing and that was spelt out in the job description. There is a need for improved position descriptors for teachers/ tutors/trainers as there is no specific job design that is adaptable to work-based training positions.

Some managers noted that demarcation was a problem within their institutes. The different rates paid to various classifications of teachers (tutors, assessors, workplace trainers) and the different responsibilities for teaching and non-teaching duties, created friction and were perceived to erode professionalism. Demarcation issues also made the management of actual workloads highly complex.

Managers acknowledged that succession planning was a major issue for all TAFE delivery, not just flexible delivery. While some of the participating institutes had began to address this issue, others were yet to do so. Managers agreed that there was a need for their organisations to employ people with different skill mixes in a range of employment classifications, in order to address in particular, the changing requirements of flexible delivery. They emphasised the importance of being able to adjust the staff profile as training needs changed, but suggested that this was not always possible given the need to keep casual/sessional staff numbers to a reasonable ceiling. It was noted that government policies determined the degree of flexibility possible in some states or territories. Others considered that a shift to more permanent employment would impact upon how flexible their TAFE workforce could really be. While permanency might be advantageous for teachers, managers see it as creating inflexibility in their quest to respond to so many variables. All of these issues are echoed in the literature (for example, Argall 2001; Schofield, Walsh & Melville 2000a, 2000b).

Professional development (including induction)

While the majority of managers suggested that national and state-based professional development initiatives had effectively raised the awareness of staff in relation to flexible delivery, the generic nature of these programs had meant that some of the very context-specific training needs of teachers had not been addressed. Areas such as information technology, information literacy, time management, coping with change, organisational skills, instructional design skills and the use of a range of technologies to communicate with learners were identified as needing closer attention through tailored professional development. Also of concern were skills in online facilitation and online assessment. The literature makes extensive references to these diverse areas of professional development requirements (Anderson & Johnston 1999; Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b, Hall et al. 2001; Curtain 2002; Johnston 2001; Kronemann 2001; Littlejohn & Campbell 2003).

Moreover, given that teachers and their managers working in flexible mode were required to be multi-skilled and to work effectively as a team, comprehensive induction was needed to build teacher and manager capacity. Further, induction was required to maximise the early engagement of new staff into flexible delivery that would lead to changes in organisational culture.

Managers also raised some concerns that the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training did not provide the skills and knowledge required for teaching and learning, particularly in the areas associated with flexible delivery.

Meeting the challenges

In this study managers were asked to identify the critical changes to human resource practices needed to ensure that flexible delivery was accommodated more adequately in the future. Questionnaire respondents ranked in order of importance those aspects of human resource management which most needed changing in their organisation. While managers provided rankings from one to nine, only the top three are set out in the table below.

Table 6:   Top three rankings for each human resource element where change is needed

Human resource element	Ranking (%)		
	1	2	3
Job design	31.4	13.7	13.7
Human resource/workforce planning	11.8	21.6	11.8
Recruitment and selection	9.8	19.6	9.8
Performance management	5.9	5.9	13.7
Professional development (including induction)	13.7	9.8	7.8
Pay and conditions	11.8	11.8	5.9
Workload management	19.6	13.7	17.6
Employee relations	5.9	7.8	5.9
Occupational health and safety	2.0	3.9	2.0

Job design was identified by 31% of the respondents as the area in which human resource practice needed to change most. Next were workload management (20%), professional development (14%), workforce planning and pay and conditions (both 12%). Workforce planning and recruitment and selection were strong second choices with 22% and 20% respectively. Overall, from these data most attention is needed to job design, workload management, human resource/workforce planning, recruitment and selection and professional development.

Significantly, the aspects of human resource practice that they considered were least in need of change overall to accommodate flexible delivery were occupational health and safety and employee relations.

Clearly, the major concerns of these respondents related directly to structuring a workforce with the requisite skills to work effectively in a constantly changing work environment, including those skills required for flexible delivery. Thus, all aspects of workforce planning (including the critical job design and recruitment and selection), workload management and professional development were the areas which, it was believed, required immediate action.

Better job design, workforce planning, and recruitment and selection

In this area, managers stressed that job design and associated job descriptions should more accurately reflect the teaching and technological skills and knowledge required to meet the changing role of the teacher. Job descriptions also needed to clearly state the desirable attributes required of

new practitioners, including such traits as the ability to manage change, to be adaptable and capable of working effectively in a team. An example of this approach is included below.

Job design

One institute, when advertising for a teacher in flexible delivery, advertised the position as a Facilitator of Learning and stipulated the range of tasks expected from any applicant. In the advertisement, more emphasis was placed on communication skills, time management skills and client responsiveness than on the usual teaching qualifications and experience.

Furthermore, the design and description of jobs of non-teaching support and administrative staff within TAFE institutes should also take account of the new requirements of working with or in multi-skilled, work-based teams conducting flexible delivery. It was also suggested by a number of managers that breaking down lines of demarcation between various classifications of teachers and others would assist in this process.

A key theme emerging from the literature was that TAFE staff were expected to alter their work practices to accommodate changes in the sector, including flexible delivery, but many reported limited consultation and involvement in business and program planning. Managers in this study suggested that it would require all stakeholders to actively work together to overcome some of the issues associated with human resource practices and the move to more flexible approaches to teaching and learning. Consultation between teachers and managers responsible for delivery, and human resource management and unions was deemed to be critical if sensible solutions were to be found. Finally, managers indicated that succession planning was needed to ensure their replacement when they leave.

Managers recognised the need for their organisations to be proactive in identifying future education and training needs and this meant careful identification of skills gaps within their existing institute workforce. At the same time, there was a need to monitor staff profiles and recruitment to ensure that the required skills mix was available to meet the needs of particular clients and programs. It was acknowledged, however, that new recruitment strategies were needed to attract applicants with broader skills. All of these factors were also seen to be highly relevant to the technical and administrative components of institute workforces.

Better workload management

It was agreed by the majority of managers that one of the biggest issues to be resolved was that of determining a fair and equitable workload for people working in flexible mode. The distinctions between teaching and non-teaching duties have become blurred in flexible learning environments, and the individualisation and customisation of learning have increased the time spent on student interaction and administration, extending the working day beyond 'normal' teaching hours. Much of this load was unrecognised, and met by the goodwill of teachers. It was noted that there was a need to re-define tasks and duties and to propose a more suitable model for calculating workloads. Any new industrial agreements would need to take these issues into consideration. One local approach is outlined below.

Local workload negotiation model

One TAFE institute had introduced a model that involved negotiation at the local level. This model took into account the modes of delivery teachers were involved with, the numbers and individual needs of students and the experience of the teachers.

In addition, managers agreed that changes to teachers' work had to be reflected in policy, particularly at the institute level. For example, there was a need for performance management to address not only individuals, but also the performance of work-based teams. In parallel, performance indicators needed to be developed so that team members and their managers had a clear expectation of what was required of them.

Professional development

Professional development was viewed by managers as an essential element in inducting staff not only into flexible delivery, but also into institute culture, systems, policies and general teaching. In interview, a number of managers emphasised the need for an institute-wide approach to building the flexible delivery skills of staff. By using individual and team training plans to more strategically address skill gaps, institute capacity to deliver programs in flexible modes could be greatly enhanced. Thus, it was important that ongoing professional development in the area addressed the needs of all staff. Many managers highlighted the need for professional development and individual training plans for all staff to ensure a coordinated approach to the building of team and institute capacity in flexible delivery.

Noting the weakness inherent in the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, managers suggested that ongoing development was required in relation to teaching skills, while teachers also needed to be highly proficient in the use of computer-based systems.

Interestingly, managers in the educational delivery area suggested that they needed professional development to enable them to better manage the diverse requirements and changing work profiles of flexible delivery teams. They identified a need to have training materials and models of good practice, as well as strategies for effecting organisational change. Managers identified some examples of professional development activities which were achieving positive outcomes within their institutes, two of which are included below.

Examples of innovative approaches to professional development

One state facility trained one person from each college as an online coordinator and these people have become champions. They were taken off teaching one to two days per week for three to six months. This state facility also trained a large number of online tutors and paid for the relief.

A TAFE institute developed an interactive online induction package for staff, and a human resource management database tracked staff progression through the program.

The importance of strategic management and developing an appropriate organisational culture

One key theme emerging from the literature was the need for a whole-of-organisation response to the significant changes being generated by the shift to more flexible approaches to teaching and learning. Change was not merely restricted to teaching staff, but extended to all staff, including managers. Managers acknowledged the necessity for planning strategically to maximise the opportunities that flexible delivery offered. Furthermore, leadership was considered highly important in managing the cultural change considered necessary to accommodate the innovative human resource practices generated by flexible delivery.

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Appendix 1: Literature review

Introduction

The need for flexible delivery in VET was identified by government, providers and employers as the needs of workplaces changed throughout the 1980s and 1990s (Canberra Institute of Technology 2003). That change took place in the midst of broader Australian labour market reforms that have seen a growth in temporary and casual employment in preference to permanent or tenured employment, an increase in average working hours and a growth in labour productivity. Government, unions and industry continue to debate the extent and advantages of these changes (Reith 2000). Similar workplace change has been experienced in the United States, Canada, parts of Asia, South Africa and New Zealand and is attributed, in part, to increased global and regional competition (OECD 1997; Bibby 2001; South African Ministry of Labour 2001).

Inevitably, these changes have impacted on human resource management (HRM) within the VET sector. It is difficult, however, to draw parallels between these changes and those in other industry sectors due to the particular nature of the VET practitioner–client relationship, in which there are specific expectations of the interaction. While clients in the health, law enforcement, manufacturing, retail and agricultural sectors may prefer continuity of service provider, they have been shown to be satisfied with competent, generalist, shift-based service provision (Clare 1998; Reith 2000). By contrast, students expect continuity in their service provider and may sustain that relationship for many months or years (Argall 2001). In that environment, some tension can be expected to exist between the sometimes competing interests of VET clients, VET employees and VET employers. Clients want continuity in service provision, employees prefer stable employment and employers say they need responsiveness to change and employment flexibility.

The introduction of flexible delivery options in TAFE in the 1990s was first supported by enthusiastic staff and growing goodwill. As flexible delivery permeates new and more traditional areas, many researchers have identified the need for support systems to facilitate flexible delivery and to encourage its broader adoption (NCVER 2002). Human resource systems are among these, and perhaps one of the slowest elements to change to date (TAFE NSW 2002). This potential impediment has also been identified in the United States adult education sector (Pachnowski & Jurczyk 2003; Howell, Williams & Lindsay 2003).

Consecutive research programs have identified the need for teachers involved in flexible delivery to participate in relevant professional development activity (Anderson & Johnston 1999; Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b; Curtain 2002; Johnston 2001; Littlejohn & Campbell 2003). More recently, some debate about the growing workload pressures on teaching staff, including those in TAFE, has taken place (McNevin 2002; Zipin 2002; Kronemann 2001). The issues of professional development and work volume are just two of many important human resource policy issues. Solutions to these must be integrated with other human resources policy changes.

While the education unions are very active participants in the management of teachers' work, the union approach favours the creation of frameworks and work constraints to guard against potential exploitation and perceived inequities, and to maximise and increase permanent teacher numbers (Kronemann 2001; Australian Education Union 2002a). This appears to contradict the VET business need for flexible staffing and local workload customisation.

Government funding and TAFE efficiency is currently measured in face-to-face teaching hour terms that are increasingly incompatible with quality flexible delivery, and currently places upward pressure on class sizes and restricts time for flexible delivery teacher preparation (Victorian TAFE Association 2001; Curtain 2002; Pendle 2003). While the unions support 'tinkering' at the margins of teachers' work management and additional compensation, the sector requires a realignment of work among teachers and general staff in line with the demands of the work, as is also being contemplated in the university sector (Argall 2001). As flexible delivery becomes the norm, new multi-disciplinary partnerships will be required.

Definitions

> Flexible delivery is a learner-centred approach to education and training which is: based on the skill needs and delivery requirements of clients, not the interests of trainers or providers; gives clients as much control as possible over what, when, where and how they learn; and makes use of delivery methods most useful for the clients including e-learning.
>
> (Australian Flexible Learning Framework 2003)

Online learning is an important and much studied element of flexible learning activity. However, it is not the only element. Flexible learning is also considered to incorporate work-based learning and assessment, delivery through independent learning centres, blended learning and more traditional correspondence programs (Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b; Johnston & Chappell 2001).

TAFE institutions are the chief public providers of VET, funded by the Commonwealth Government and state governments to deliver the range and volume of programs directed by governments. Government funds are tied to the average number of teacher contact hours required for a student to complete each program, as set out in the national training package for each program. TAFE funds are supplemented by commercial programs run for national and international businesses and industry groups (Merrillees 2003; Canberra Institute of Technology 2003).

Human resource management involves the acquisition, development, rewarding and maintenance of an organisation's human resources (Stone 1991, p.8). Human resource activities include: job design, human resources/workforce planning, recruitment and selection, performance management, training and development, pay and conditions, employee relations and occupational health and safety (Stone 1991). Each of these is defined below:

✧ *Job design:* defines a job in terms of specific tasks and responsibilities and identifies the skills, abilities and qualifications needed to perform it effectively.

✧ *Human resources/workforce planning:* uses statistical analysis to understand employment trends and anticipates recruitment and training needs.

✧ *Recruitment and selection:* implements processes to identify and attract a pool of job applicants from which the strongest candidate can be selected for each position.

✧ *Performance management (rewards and recognition):* establishes work plans and expectations at team or individual levels and identifies performance indicators and means for reinforcing positive work behaviours.

✧ *Training and development:* assists staff to improve their job performance and prepare themselves for more senior positions.

✧ *Pay and conditions:* makes payments and benefits to staff (both compensatory and motivational in nature). These may be based on resource inputs or workplace outcomes.

✧ *Employee relations:* establishes the legal and cultural relationship between employer and staff and determines the manner in which workplace decisions are made and disputes resolved.

✧ *Occupational health and safety*: ensures the provision of a safe and healthy work environment and work practices, including preventative and remedial measures (Tyson 1995).

Each VET provider makes provision for managing these aspects of human resources and policies, and procedures in each of these areas may facilitate or obstruct flexible delivery.

As might be anticipated, the literature in this field has largely been generated by the two groups who have the keenest political interests in its findings: government and the education unions. Their findings, however, have not always been at odds.

Government-funded research

ANTA has sponsored research into a range of VET issues, including change management, professional development and VET management skills, some with particular attention given to flexible delivery (NCVER 2002). ANTA publications emphasise up-skilling of TAFE teachers, including skill development in instructional design, online communication and networking.

Several of the ANTA case studies reflect the significant role played by TAFE general staff in supporting flexible delivery and that early adopters of flexible delivery negotiate their workloads outside the traditional industrial award environment. Studies note that flexible delivery changes the range and volume of the tasks expected of teachers, the times and locations of the teachers' work, and requires different skills from those of traditional face-to-face delivery (NCVER 2002). Booker makes the point that the skills needed for effective flexible delivery are often developed through mentoring and networks, but that more structured training in information technology is also worthwhile (Booker 2000).

Recent research also proposes that professional development be accelerated after the pilot stage of flexible delivery to support growing student expectations, and that professional development must keep pace with the strategic role of flexible delivery (Walsh 2000; Littlejohn & Campbell 2003). It must be noted that, while many teachers enjoy the social and teaching challenges of flexible delivery, others are overwhelmed by the necessary developmental and ongoing maintenance work it requires (Johnston 2001; Young 2003).

While the substantial contribution of non-teaching staff to flexible delivery has been noted by TAFE employers, industrial and research bodies, it is not acknowledged by unions (Victorian TAFE Association 2001; Young 2003; Argall 2001). Australian research to date has also tended to overlook the role of general staff in VET and flexible delivery.

Recent work on the role of 'the new VET practitioner' provides a comprehensive view of the experiences of new and established teachers in the flexible delivery environment. Schofield, Melville and Walsh's working papers identify the challenges for VET employers: good job design—'a central but neglected element in HRM'; support structures—'online practitioners can feel very isolated'; and professional development—'high level design, planning and development skills are crucial'. The reports stop short of advocating a realignment of work tasks or industrial changes, but provide strong support for teacher professional development (Schofield, Walsh & Melville 2000a, 2000b).

Two Reframing the Future projects have identified key VET management capabilities necessary to accommodate the modern VET environment, and explored the professional development needs of TAFE teachers in the flexible delivery environment (Merrillees 2003; Healy 2003).

The Victorian TAFE Association's research into emerging TAFE workforce issues is the most detailed available at present, verifying the dilemma of TAFE's aging workforce, noting the difficulties with the present work allocation and management system, and proposing comprehensive human resource management reform (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

Over the next three years, TAFE Victoria plans to review recruitment practices to provide more flexible, family-friendly and lifestyle choice options in TAFE employment; develop staff networking opportunities to share good practice, particularly with part-time staff; enhance workforce planning tools to anticipate recruitment and development requirements; establish staff mobility and

advancement programs; and institute a system of professional development and recognition of all TAFE staff (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

Union-sponsored research

As active partners in VET management, the various education unions have contributed to the review of flexible delivery practices and incorporated findings into their industrial agreements.

Flexible delivery and other parallel changes tend to increase the complexity of student needs and/or increase class sizes, within which not all students will progress uniformly. Students increasingly expect individual and immediate attention from teachers, particularly those in the online environment (Kronemann 2001; McNevin 2002). TAFE teachers also require new skills in information technology, time and resource management, marketing and communications, in order to operate effectively in the flexible delivery environment. TAFE teachers and their unions seek an increase in teacher numbers in order to address this additional work (Kronemann 2001).

Kronemann (2001) surveyed a group of 2600 Australian Education Union (AEU) TAFE members across Australia, and with a 35% response rate, identified an intensification of teachers' work attributed to changes in TAFE funding, new accountability mechanisms, changes in delivery modes, reduced job security, curriculum changes and increased use of technology. A number of interviewees indicated that, without union-supported changes to traditional workload measures, they were actively resisting the changes associated with flexible delivery.

VET practitioners expect to change their work practices to accommodate changes in VET, including flexible delivery, but many reported limited involvement in planning and consultation on change. This creates a sense of powerlessness and breeds active resistance in some areas (McNevin 2002; Fulop & Linstead 1999). In addition, many TAFE teachers do not accept the need for the increased accountability and reporting requirements deemed necessary by government, and consider them an unnecessary drain on teachers' time (Victorian TAFE Association 2001; Kronemann 2001; Zipin 2002)

Kronemann's recommendations as adopted by the Australian Education Union National Executive include: increasing the proportion of permanent staff, greater regulation of workloads, increased dialogue with TAFE decision-makers, and increased resources for TAFE. Kronemann estimates the system workload requires an additional 6500 TAFE teachers nationally. Changes to employment conditions sought include reduced delivery loads to allow for other teaching-related work to be undertaken, restrictions on face-to-face delivery requirements, restrictions on hours of attendance; and additional professional development opportunities. While a number of respondents identified the need for greater administrative and technical support staff, this is not reflected in the report's recommendations.

The survey gives limited attention to non-members (70 of 940 teachers responding). Twenty-two per cent of these non-members also indicated that TAFE was not their main source of employment. This means that the interests of TAFE's significant casual, contract and non-union workforce may not be adequately reflected both in the union's and others' research.

The Canberra Institute of Technology workload survey (2002a) yielded almost identical results, although non-union members did not participate. In addition to the matters identified by Kronemann (2001), these staff specifically sought a reduction in the reporting/accountability requirements associated with flexible delivery.

McNevin's (2002) addition to the flexible delivery debate reflects on early TAFE efforts in adoption of flexible delivery, with a strong need to control and confine flexible delivery in terms of equivalencies to face-to-face delivery. As flexible delivery becomes a larger proportion of TAFE work, McNevin recommends increased flexibility, within union-endorsed workload frameworks. McNevin also strongly advocates a reduction in direct delivery obligations to incorporate additional tasks

associated with flexible delivery. He discourages individual variations in workload and overlooks the opportunity to allocate non-core teaching work to general, technical or other support staff.

The Australian Education Union policy on flexible delivery reflects the preceding research: higher levels of permanent staffing are to be pursued, workloads are to be negotiated within strictly defined, union-endorsed parameters and more teachers are needed to meet the demands of flexible delivery (Australian Education Union 2002b).

While the union literature publicly supports flexible delivery, its overall approach may not encourage the employment flexibility apparently needed to make flexible delivery work. Limited negotiation of work tasks within strictly defined limits may be a step away from the constriction of awards, but it is unlikely to meet the needs of VET in coming years. Nevertheless, there have been encouraging signs of experiment, compromise and a willingness to work towards finding more flexible working arrangements between the parties in the right circumstances. (See Palmieri 2003).

TAFE teachers and their unions seek maximum permanent employment and do not believe this is entirely incompatible with rapidly shifting student demand. However, casual teachers are under-represented in the education unions (Kronemann 2001; Australian Education Union 2002a, 2000b). While TAFEs have increased casualisation during the difficult 'growth through efficiencies program' of the 1990s, a return to higher levels of permanent employment is unlikely with continuing fluctuations in student demand. This represents a continuing supplier view of VET, in direct conflict with the notions of flexible delivery.

Finally, the industrial reality of union support for more teachers obscures the value of non-teaching staff in the education process. Technical, general and support staff skills are well suited to the additional management, administrative and technology aspects of flexible delivery and provide the opportunity for increased efficiencies and lower costs by working with teachers in multi-disciplinary teams (Argall 2001).

The impact of flexible delivery on VET staff

The implementation of flexible delivery results in changes to staff work environments and practices including:

✧ staff working from different work locations including from home, in industry and in flexible learning centres (Volkoff 1995; Walsh 2000)

✧ staff working over a greater range of days and hours (Kronemann 2001; TAFE NSW 2002; Curtain 2002; Pachnowski & Jurczyk 2003)

✧ staff undertaking a wider variety of tasks, particularly information technology tasks, liaison with employers and industry groups, and contributing to reporting systems (Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b; Ellis & Phelps 2000; Schofield, Walsh & Melville 2000b; Howell, Williams & Lindsay 2003)

✧ changed communications with colleagues and supervisors including increased autonomy (Harper et al. 2000; Anderson & Johnston 1999; Howell, Williams & Lindsay 2003)

✧ greater variation in staffing needs as student demand fluctuates and study patterns vary (Argall 2001; Healy 2003; Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

There is also greater variation between the experiences of individual staff as they respond to the needs of their particular client group (Victorian TAFE Association 2001; McNevin 2002).

The impact of flexible delivery on human resource management practices

Given that VET is a human service activity, the vast majority of TAFE budgets support their human resources. As a result, the potential impact of flexible delivery is great (Canberra Institute of Technology 2003; Australian Education Union 2002b). Human resource management is influenced by flexible delivery as follows:

✧ *Job design*: the demands of flexible delivery produce changes in discipline knowledge, breadth of skills, changed responsibilities and accountabilities and produce a change in the required skills, abilities and qualifications needed to deliver VET effectively (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

✧ *Human resources/workforce planning*: with student demand fluctuating more rapidly in response to industry needs and accelerated program completion, the demand for certain staff skills will vary, and greater flexibility in staffing is required (Argall 2001; Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

✧ *Recruitment and selection*: recruitment processes will need to provide for greater staffing flexibility, with more rapid processes and recruitment campaigns to attract industry practitioners and those with the new skills sets required for flexible delivery (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

✧ *Performance management (rewards and recognition)*: increased autonomy of individual teachers, greater task variety and fluctuating student demand blurs established long-range work planning processes. Reduced direct staff supervision must change performance-monitoring arrangements. New workplace behavioural norms are being established and new means of reward are to be developed to respond to the changed nature of work. The identification of performance indicators under flexible delivery is problematic. Measurement of VET outcomes is a contentious issue, and measurement of flexible delivery outcomes is even more complex (Tyson 1995; Curtain 2002).

✧ *Training and development*: flexible delivery demands additional information technology, broader communication and marketing skills and alternative team management practices, which may be formally instructed or informally developed through mentoring. Delivery of training is more logistically complex with more mobile, itinerant and remote workers (Anderson & Johnston 1999; Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b, Hall et al. 2001; Johnston 2001; Kronemann 2001; Howell, Williams & Lindsay 2003).

✧ *Pay and conditions*: traditional payment systems based on measurement of defined activities are difficult to apply to wider task variety. Remuneration for the more demanding or inconvenient work that is also cost-effective to implement is a challenge (Argall 2001).

✧ *Employee relations*: greater autonomy and customisation of work practices changes the power relationships, focusing more on negotiation, compromise and trust. The unions' role changes from prescribing to monitoring. Increased use of temporary and casual staff reduces union membership strength (Kronemann 2001; Argall 2001).

✧ *Occupational health and safety:* a greater variety of workplaces and new work practices increases the need for individual occupational health and safety awareness and action (TAFE NSW 2002; Harper et al. 2000).

Industrial awards and agreements

Industrial awards and agreements provide an insight into the human resource practices of public providers. Private providers are more likely to use common law contracts or Australian workplace agreements (AWAs) and as a result, their human resource practices are less open to public scrutiny. Interrogation of the various Industrial Registries reveals a distinction between the regulation of private sector registered training organisation with public sector origins and those evolving purely

from the private sector. These various policy positions can then be contrasted against TAFE experience as measured by research bodies and unions.

TAFE providers in all jurisdictions use awards and certified agreements to manage their employment arrangements, either at the institute, regional or state level.

While TAFE is well established in all jurisdictions, all TAFE awards have been simplified in recent years and now contain a minimal number of basic employment conditions. The remaining detail necessary in the employment relationship is set down in certified agreements, Australian workplace agreements, memoranda of understanding and policy and procedures.

Current agreements in place in all TAFE jurisdictions are made with the relevant unions (as distinct from those made directly with staff), as is the preferred policy of all state and territory Labor governments. In South Australia and Queensland, the certified agreements encapsulate teachers in the schools and TAFE sector (that is, all public education teachers are covered). In other jurisdictions, the TAFE agreements are currently separate from the schools sector. In Tasmania, Victoria, South Australia, Queensland and the Northern Territory the agreements apply both to teaching and general staff. In the Australian Capital Territory, Western Australia and New South Wales, general staff in TAFE are covered by separate agreements—commonly as part of a wider public service employment agreement (Australian Industrial Relations Commission 2000a, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales 2001; Industrial Relations Commission of South Australia 2001). Agreements and awards are made through a public process, including a staff ballot in the case of agreements, and bind all staff they cover (Tyson 1995).

In all jurisdictions, a maximum number of hours are set for various teaching activities, commonly including face-to-face (classroom) delivery, preparation for delivery, professional development and administrative activities. The limit on face-to-face delivery workloads ranges between 17 and 23 hours per week, over a 34 to 42-week teaching year. Work conducted in excess of these limits is paid at a higher rate, requiring union agreement in some jurisdictions, and work at still higher levels is prohibited (Australian Industrial Relations Commission 2000a, 2000b, 2002a, 2002b, 2003; Industrial Relations Commission of New South Wales 2001; Industrial Relations Commission of South Australia 2001).

Agreements in Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory, South Australia, Western Australia and Queensland make specific reference to flexible delivery work, and the need to be responsive to client needs in the introductory sections of those agreements. These agreements also include clauses requiring improvements in staff productivity, as measured through increased average student contact hours per teacher or reduced average cost of hourly teaching delivery.

Clauses in the Australian Capital Territory and Western Australian agreements specifically provide for the parties to respond to unique or new business situations through negotiated flexible employment conditions (Australian Industrial Relations Commission 2000a, 2000b).

Agreements and awards in South Australia and Queensland provide for defined types of 'classroom' work to be undertaken by tutors or trainers, not teachers (Industrial Relations Commission of South Australia 2002; Anderson & Johnston 1999).

All agreements and awards provide for both permanent and temporary staffing. In Queensland, Western Australia, Victoria and South Australia, the parties have agreed a minimum permanent staffing percentage and union supervision of recruitment to ensure casual and temporary staffing is minimised.

While no current teachers' agreements provide for Australian workplace agreements or performance-based pay, all agreements make reference to workload planning and performance at either the team or individual level.

In Tasmania, TAFE teachers and their union have a memorandum of understanding providing for negotiated teacher workloads within defined parameters. The memorandum identifies flexible

delivery as a key driver for this approach, and has now been in place for more than two years (Australian Industrial Relations Commission 2002b).

With the exception of the Tasmanian TAFE memorandum of understanding, the similarity of TAFE awards and agreements reflects the demarcation of teachers' work from that of other public servants and the prescriptive work practices under which they operate. While several agreements acknowledge the importance of flexible delivery and the need for responsive human resources, the parties have not agreed significant measures to facilitate the new flexible work practices.

At its 2001 conference, the Australian Higher Education Industrial Association discussed parallel concerns in the university sector. Argall (2001) specifically calls for greater flexibility in the allocation of teaching tasks at individual level, changed means of measuring teacher (lecturer) effort and delegation of non-core teaching tasks to administrative, technical and other support staff. Argall even suggests that the flex-time hours measurement and multi-disciplinary model used by general staff in universities is worthy of consideration by teachers.

Related human resource challenges

In spite of the range of research and commentary on flexible delivery, the following issues have to date received little attention, but present significant human resource challenges.

Constraining teacher workloads by continual comparison with face-to-face delivery limits local flexibility in teacher workload management. Measurement of all hours of work by teachers would be simpler and recognise the complexity in different programs, student groups, program lifecycles and teachers' experience (Argall 2001; McNevin 2002; Australian Education Union 2002b).

A multi-disciplinary approach would see all tasks allocated to the staff group best able to perform them—information technology tasks to information technology staff, management tasks to managers, administrative tasks to administrative staff. Teachers are not necessarily good administrators, web designers or marketers and should not be expected to be. Clarification of 'what is teaching?' is needed (Argall 2001; Ellis & Phelps 2000; Walsh 2000).

Survey research and enterprise bargaining reflects teachers' demand for increased pay and improved conditions, particularly reduced workloads. Pay and conditions can readily be converted to an 'all in' time basis; however, teacher reluctance to work the extended hours necessary in flexible delivery suggests inducements would be needed to meet this client requirement (Argall 2001).

TAFE teachers, their unions and employers continue to struggle to find the right mix of permanent, temporary and casual staff to respond to rapidly changing student VET demand. Emerging from a period of rapid cost-cutting, the resulting staffing mix needs to provide stability, some security of tenure and some flexibility. This is most important at the program level and is unlikely to be consistent across the TAFE system, as the needs of each industry are different (Schofield, Walsh & Melville 2000a, 2000b).

Unions, employers and governments have recognised the relatively high TAFE teacher age profile, leading to concern about staff succession planning. While a career structure for TAFE teachers remains important, flexible delivery will change the expectations of teachers and this should be considered in determining the TAFE teacher employment market and the most appropriate means of selection (Victorian TAFE Association 2001).

Conclusions

Literature on this topic comes from all relevant stakeholders, industrial and employer groups, unions, teachers and governments. Despite a substantial investment, research to date has produced a strong message in only one area—the need for professional development for TAFE teachers to build

the skills needed for flexible delivery. Other human resource factors, such as employee relations, job design, workload management and remuneration receive only cursory attention.

A substantial change to the union position of 'more permanent teachers working within defined parameters' seems a remote possibility (Australian Education Union 2002b; McNevin 2002). In the absence of changes in this area, either teacher health or education quality is likely to suffer (Kronemann 2001). While teachers and unions support an increase in teacher numbers, an increase in numbers and task range for support staff would bring welcome relief to pressured teachers, at lower cost. A continuation of separate teacher and general staff industrial agreements is likely to see flexible delivery addressed as a teacher issue—rather than an issue for TAFE more broadly. This results in a more limited range of possible solutions than need be the case.

Teacher support for accountability mechanisms could be improved through suggestions for process re-engineering and/or delegation of these administrative tasks to other job classifications. Governments and managers are unlikely to remove VET funding accountability mechanisms, but simplification may well be supported.

It would appear that as a function of TAFE's own business preoccupation with professional development, TAFE stakeholders are unable to recognise the potential of other complementary human resource changes necessary to respond to changing client demand. Indeed, universities face similar challenges and impasses. While ongoing investment in professional development is admirable, in the absence of other human resource changes, flexible delivery will continue to rely on staff goodwill—a commodity becoming scarce (Kronemann 2001; Ellis & Phelps 2000).

Flexible delivery in TAFE presents many challenges to traditional teaching and human resource management practices. While somewhat subjective, union studies of teacher experience in flexible delivery demonstrate a commitment to quality VET delivery through a variety of mechanisms, but some resistance to the changed work practices it has brought about.

While teachers, employers and unions have recognised several of the human resources challenges in flexible delivery, recommended and observed changes in human resource practice to date are modest.

There is no evidence in the literature that non-teaching staff in TAFE have contributed their views on flexible delivery practices; and nor has their contribution to it been measured. In spite of this, a number of opportunities for changed human resource practices derive from the experience and coordination of general staff.

However, rather than dwell on additional research requirements, TAFE employers and their staff need to trial modified work practices, and allow the trial results to inform human resource policy development. The retention of the status quo will serve neither TAFE, its staff nor its clients well into the future.

References

The references cited in this literature review can be found on pages 30 and 31.

Appendix 2: Research instruments

Questionnaire for senior managers

1. RTO name **(confidential)**		

2. Your name **(confidential)**		

3. Your Position **Tick the box that best matches your position in the Institute**

CEO	☐	Senior Manager–Delivery	☐
Senior Manager–Corporate	☐	Middle Manager–Delivery	☐
Senior Manager–HR/IR	☐		

4. Name the three ways (1 being the predominate one) that you have introduced flexible delivery into your Institute?

1. _____

2 _____

3. _____

5. What staffing changes have accompanied the move to flexible delivery in your institute?

Staff working from different work locations	☐	Staff undertaking a wider variety of tasks i.e. IT tasks	☐
Staff working over a greater range of days and hours	☐	Change communications with colleagues and supervisors	☐
Greater variation in staffing needs as student demand fluctuates	☐	More casually employed staff	☐
More team-based approaches	☐	More support staff	☐
Other *(please specify)*	☐		

6. What other changes have occurred as a result of the move to flexible delivery?

Cost of delivery up	☐	Student satisfaction higher	☐
Cost of delivery down	☐	Student satisfaction lower	☐
Administrative tasks increased	☐	Administrative tasks decreased	☐
Other (please specify)	☐		

Past or Current

<table>
<tr><td colspan="3">7. Which of the following changes to the Human Resource practices in your institute have been made to accommodate flexible delivery? <i>Please rank in order from 1–9 (1 being most important and 9 least important) which aspects have changed the most and provide a brief explanation of the changes.</i></td></tr>
</table>

HR element	Rank (1–9)	Outline of change(s)
Job design		
HR/Workforce planning		
Recruitment & selection		
Performance management		
Professional development (including induction)		
Pay & conditions		
Workload management		
Employee relations		
OH&S		
Other (please specify)		

Future

> **8. Which areas in current human resource practice do you consider need to change to better accommodate flexible delivery in your Institute?** *Please rank in order from 1–9 (1 being most important and 9 least important) which aspects have changed the most and provide a brief explanation of the changes*.

HR element	Rank (1–9)	Outline of change(s)
Job design		
HR/workforce planning		
Recruitment & selection		
Performance management		
Professional development (including induction)		
Pay & conditions		
Workload management		
Employee relations		
OH&S		
Other (please specify)		

9. In rank order, what do you consider to be the 3 most difficult barriers to successful implementation of flexible delivery in your Institute and what 3 things would most assist you in the implementation of flexible delivery?

Most difficult barriers

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

What would most assist?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

10 What have been the benefits of the implementation of flexible delivery?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

11. How has flexible delivery affected your financial management e.g. cost structure and funding mechanisms? *Please provide a brief overview of these changes*

12. What other aspects of flexible delivery and HR do you consider should be covered in the interview?

Relevant documentation on HR practice and flexible delivery.

If you are aware of documents in the <u>public domain</u> (either within or external to your Institute) that can be accessed by the research team, please list below:

Any other comments

Thank you for your participation

The impact of the move to flexible delivery on human resource practices in registered training organisations project

Notes to accompany questionnaire

Question 1 and 2: Confidentiality

For the purposes of this research all information will be analysed and reported in a manner which does not identify either you or your organisation.

Question 3: Definitions of senior management positions

Senior manager: *Corporate* means responsible for corporate management and the institutional allocation of resources (e.g. General Manager)

Senior manager: HR/IR means responsible for human resource management and industrial relations (e.g. Manager HR)

Senior manager: Delivery means responsible for educational delivery and the allocation of resources for flexible delivery of programs (e.g. Dean, Associate Director)

Middle manager: *Delivery* means responsible for educational delivery and the allocation of resources for flexible delivery of programs (e.g. Head of Department, Program Manager)

Question 4: Definition of flexible delivery from literature review

> Flexible delivery is a learner-centred approach to education and training which is: based on the skill needs and delivery requirements of clients, not the interests of trainers or providers; gives clients as much control as possible over what, when, where and how they learn; and makes use of delivery methods most useful for the clients including e-learning.
>
> (Australian Flexible Learning Framework 2003)

> Online learning is an important and much studied element of flexible learning activity. It is not the only element however, flexible learning is also considered to incorporate work-based learning and assessment, delivery through independent learning centres, blended learning and more traditional correspondence programs.
>
> (Canberra Institute of Technology 2002b; Johnston & Chappell 2001)

Questions 7 and 8 HR: Textbook definitions

When ranking the changes from 1–9, one is most important and nine least important.

✧ Job design: seeks to define a job in terms of specific tasks and responsibilities and identify the skills, abilities and qualifications needed to perform it effectively.

✧ Human resources/workforce planning: uses statistical analysis to understand employment trends and anticipate recruitment and training needs.

✧ Recruitment and selection: processes to identify and attract a pool of job applicants from which the strongest candidate can be selected for each position.

✧ Performance management: establishment of work plans and expectations at team or individual levels, identification of performance indicators and reinforcement of positive work behaviours.

✧ Professional development: induction, assist staff to improve their job performance and ensure they can understand their job and prepare them for promotional opportunities.

✧ Pay and conditions: payments and benefits made to staff, both compensatory and motivational in nature. These may be based on resource inputs or workplace outcomes.

✧ Workload management: how VET staff workloads are prescribed and managed, for example, part-time work parameters, ceilings on type or volume of work.

✧ Employee relations: the manner in which workplace decisions are made and disputes resolved.

✧ Occupational health and safety: the provision of a safe and healthy work environment and work practices including preventative and remedial measures (Tyson 1995).

Question 12: Other aspects

During interview, further expansion of the following topics will be sought:

✧ the make-up of flexible delivery in your institute

✧ impetus for implementation of flexible delivery

✧ changes to HR to accommodate flexible delivery both formal and informal

✧ barriers/what needs to happen.

You may wish to comment on additional aspects of HR and FD [flexible delivery] and these should be listed on the questionnaire.

Documentation

Are there any documents in the public domain relating to this topic generated either by your institute or in your state?

    Yes ☐   No ☐

If they are available can you provide copies or details of their location in the space provided on the questionnaire.

Thank you for your support for this study. Your input is appreciated.

The impact of the move to flexible delivery on human resource practices in registered training organisations project

Interview questions for TAFE senior managers

Thank you for returning the questionnaire, we will be elaborating on some of the points you raised in this interview.

After the interview the key points for each question will be summarised and faxed for verification.

1. How do you define flexible delivery in your organisation?

Flexible place of delivery (e.g. classroom, workplace, home study centre etc.)

Flexible completion times

Flexible times of delivery (e.g. when suits learner, how many hours in day and weeks in year)

Flexible use of technologies (and if so which ones and how are they used e.g. students having an email account, access to videoconferencing etc.)

Flexible access to staff (and how they can be accessed)

Flexible assessment approaches (alternative approaches available)

Flexible access to learner support services and information systems (what services can be accessed and how)

Flexible programs of study/customisation (i.e. the degree to which they can be individually negotiated)

Flexible enrolment times

Flexible learning pathways

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

2. Which areas in your institute offer the most flexible delivery? Why is this so?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

3. What was the impetus for the implementation of flexible delivery? (*cost-saving, student needs, service a student group, insufficient student numbers in a class*)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

4. What do you perceive the main impacts of flexible delivery on the teachers' work have been? (*longer working hours, volume of work, working from a range of venues that aren't institute-based*)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

5. What specific issues have been raised by staff involved in flexible delivery?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

6. **How are these elements different in flexible delivery compared with mainstream?**

HR element	Difference between flexible delivery & mainstream
Job design	
HR/workforce planning	
Recruitment & selection	
Performance management	
Professional development (including induction)	
Pay & conditions	
Workload management	
Employee relations	
OH&S	

7. **What FORMAL arrangements have you implemented in response to these issues and how well have these worked?** *(certified agreement at organisation, state or regional level)*

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

8. **What else would you like to be done to address HR issues in flexible delivery?**

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

9. **Could you rate on a scale 1–5 the extent to which HR issues have inhibited your implementation of flexible delivery?**   1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5

The impact of the move to flexible delivery on human resource practices in registered training organisations project

Interview questions for TAFE IR Network members

Please use this set of questions to jot down your thoughts prior to interview.

1. **How does flexible delivery impact on the working lives of TAFE staff? In your jurisdiction?**
   (e.g. work from different locations, at different time, different staffing levels)

   _____

   _____

   _____

   _____

2. **What are the main changes to HR practice over time that your organisation has implemented to accommodate flexible delivery?**

HR element	Outline of change(s)
Job design	
HR/workforce planning	
Recruitment & selection	
Performance management	
Professional development (including induction)	
Pay & conditions	
Workload management	
Employee relations	
OH&S	

Other (please specify)

_____

_____

3.   **To what degree have these changes been effective?**

_____

_____

4.   **How does your organisation measure teacher activity in flexible delivery?**

_____

_____

5.   **Who does the work associated with flexible delivery and how is it accounted for/measured?**
     (e.g. Development of course material, student email, online discussion, student induction, assessment)

_____

_____

6.   **What changes in HR would you like to see put in place in future to meet the demands of flexible delivery**

HR element	Outline of change(s)
Job design	
HR/workforce planning	
Recruitment & selection	
Performance management	
Professional development	
Pay & conditions	
Workload management	
Employee relation	
OH&S	

Other (please specify)

_____

_____

7. What are the barriers to these being implemented?

_____

_____

8. In your jurisdiction, what HR authority/delegation do middle managers have? *(i.e. what can they approve/change?)*

_____

_____

9. How would an individual staff member/manager in your jurisdiction influence/changes HR practices?

_____

10. What industrial arrangements operate in your jurisdiction? *(tick all that apply)*

Instrument	Coverage						
	Public education teachers	TAFE teachers only	Non-teaching public sector staff only	All TAFE staff	All public education staff	All public servants	N/A
Federal award							
State award							
Certified agreement negotiated at regional/state level							
Certified agreement negotiated at institute level							
Other instrument (e.g. Agreement, MOU) Please specify							

Letter to CEOs

8 June 2003

Dear Institute Director

Re: Participation in FLAG/NREC research projects into the implications of flexible delivery for HR practices in RTOs.

The Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG) through NCVER has commissioned two important research projects to ascertain the implications of flexible delivery on HR practices in TAFEs. We are writing to you to invite you to participate in this critical research.

The Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education (CURVE) at the Canberra Institute of Technology is conducting the first of these studies. This research will examine senior management views and understandings of flexible delivery and its impact on various aspects of Human Resource Management within individual TAFE institutes.

Key informants to this study will be you, as the CEO, together with your senior manager responsible for corporate management and the institutional allocation of resources, your senior manager responsible for human resource management and industrial relations and a senior and two middle managers responsible for educational delivery and the allocation of resources for flexible delivery of programs.

The research will involve an initial fax-back questionnaire and a follow-up telephone interview of approximately one hour in duration for each of your nominated managers.

The second study will be jointly conducted by TAFE Frontiers and Phoebe Palmieri Pty Ltd. It will examine the changes in HR practices implemented to accommodate flexible delivery approaches using a case study approach.

There is a very tight timeframe for both projects, with the sponsor requesting completion by the mid-September. If you are willing to participate in either one of these projects would you please indicate your interest to Margaret Fanning at TAFE Directors Australia by *15 July 2003.*

Further details will then be supplied as arrangements for your organisation's participation are confirmed. Meanwhile, if you have any specific questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me on the number below.

We welcome your participation, and look forward to your organisation's contribution to this important and timely study.

Berwyn Clayton
Director/Principal Researcher
CURVE
Canberra Institute of Technology
PO Box 826
Canberra 2601
Ph: (02) 6207 4844

Letter to TAFE IR Network members

28 June 2003

Dear IR Network Member

Re: Participation in FLAG/NREC research projects into the implications of flexible delivery for HR practices in RTOs.

The Flexible Learning Advisory Group (FLAG) through NCVER has commissioned two important research projects to ascertain the implications of flexible delivery on HR practices in TAFEs. We are writing to you to invite you to participate in this critical research.

The Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education (CURVE) at the Canberra Institute of Technology is conducting the first of these studies. This research will examine senior management views and understandings of flexible delivery and its impact on various aspects of Human Resource Management within individual TAFE institutes.

Key informants to this study will be you, as a member of the TAFE Industrial Relations Network, representing a state based departments responsible for human resource management and industrial relations.

The research will involve an initial fax-back questionnaire and a follow-up telephone interview of approximately one hour in duration for each of your nominated managers.

The second study will be jointly conducted by TAFE Frontiers and Phoebe Palmieri Pty Ltd. It will examine the changes in HR practices implemented to accommodate flexible delivery approaches using a case study approach.

There is a very tight timeframe for both projects, with the sponsor requesting completion by the mid-September. If you are willing to participate in either one of these projects would you please indicate your interest to Margaret Fanning at TAFE Directors Australia by *15 July 2003.*

Further details will then be supplied as arrangements for your organisation's participation are confirmed. Meanwhile, if you have any specific questions about the project, please do not hesitate to contact me on the number below.

We welcome your participation, and look forward to your organisation's contribution to this important and timely study.

Berwyn Clayton
Director/Principal Researcher
CURVE
Canberra Institute of Technology
PO Box 826
Canberra 2601
Ph: (02) 6207 4844

Information sheet and consent form

Project Title: ***The implications of the move to flexible delivery for HR practices in training organisations: Survey of managers***

Principal researcher: Berwyn Clayton (Director, CURVE)

Phone: (02) 6207 4844
Fax: (02) 6207 3322
Email: berwyn.clayton@cit.act.edu.au

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the above-mentioned research project. The Australian Flexible Learning Framework, through NCVER, has commissioned two important and complementary research projects to ascertain the implications of flexible delivery on HR practices in TAFE institutes.

The first of these projects is being conducted by the Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education, Canberra Institute of Technology. The purpose of this research is to gauge senior management understanding of the human resource (HR) issues and implications associated with flexible delivery within TAFE institutes.

Therefore, we are seeking input from CEOs, senior managers responsible for corporate management and the institutional allocation of resources, senior managers responsible for human resource management and industrial relations and senior and middle managers responsible for educational delivery and the allocation of resources for flexible delivery of programs.

The interview will take approximately 45–60 minutes. It will be recorded, and notes will be taken. Information obtained will be published. However, at no time will you or your organisation be identified and any personal details that you provide, during the course of your participation, will remain confidential. All data collected for this study will be retained by the Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education at Canberra Institute of Technology and will be stored for a period of seven years.

Participation in the research is voluntary and you have the right to withdraw your consent at any time.

If you have any specific questions about the project please do not hesitate to contact me on the above number.

Thank you again for your interest and cooperation.

Berwyn Clayton
Director/Principal Researcher
Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education
Canberra Institute of Technology, PO Box 826, Canberra 2601

CENTRE UNDERTAKING RESEARCH IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION (CURVE)

CANBERRA INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

CONSENT FORM

Project Title: *The impact of the move to flexible delivery on HR practices in RTOs*

Principal researcher: Berwyn Clayton (Director, CURVE)

Phone: (02) 6207 4844

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

✧ I understand that I may not directly benefit from taking part in the exercise.

✧ I understand that I can withdraw from the exercise at any stage and that this will not affect my status now or in the future.

✧ I understand that I may be audio-taped during the interview.

✧ I understand that the tape will be stored at the Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education (CURVE) for a period of seven years and that only the researchers directly involved in the exercise will have access to it.

✧ I understand that, while information gained during the exercise may be published, I will not be identified and my personal details will remain confidential.

✧ I confirm that I am over 18 years of age.

Name: ....

Signed: ....

Dated: ....

I have explained the exercise to the participant and consider that he/she understands what is involved.

Researcher's signature and date:

....

Please fax this form back to:
Berwyn Clayton (Director, CURVE)
Fax: (02) 6207 3322

The impact of the move to flexible delivery on human resource practices in registered training organisations project

Protocol for interviews with TAFE CEOs and senior managers

1. Number of sites and interviews

As an interviewer, you have been allocated the following institutes and informants:

Chief Executive Officers:

Managers: Corporate, HR and Educational Delivery

2. Preparation

Contact each informant and set up an interview time. Inform each manager that the interview will take *45–60 minutes*. Each interview will be conducted by telephone. To ensure that there is a high degree of consistency in the interviews, a semi-structured approach is to be used, with the designated questions and prompts being consistently applied across all interviews. Fax/email to participants:

✧ Information sheet

✧ Questionnaire

✧ Notes to accompany questionnaire

✧ Focus topics for the interview

✧ Details of the interview

✧ Consent form.

3. Questionnaire

Analyse relevant questions before to determine those requiring 'teasing out'.

Consider specific areas e.g:

✧ The make-up of flexible delivery in their institute

✧ Impetus for implementation of flexible delivery

✧ Changes to HR to accommodate flexible delivery

✧ Formal arrangements

✧ Barriers/what needs to happen.

4. Interview

Each interview to be audio-taped so that a record is available for later write-up. Confirm with participant their willingness to be taped. Discuss issues of confidentiality, e.g. audiotape and consent forms.

5. After interviews

✧ Summarise interviews with TAFE CEOs and managers.

✧ Forward individual summaries by email to participants for modification/verification.

✧ Consent form to be completed and returned to interviewer by fax. (These need to be collected and sent to CURVE for safe-keeping and audit purposes.)

6. Timeframe

All writing up to be completed by 21 August, in order that emerging themes and issues can be identified in the Interim Report.

The impact of the move to flexible delivery on human resource practices in registered training organisations project

Protocol for interviews with TAFE IR Network members

1. Number of sites and interviews

As an interviewer, you have been allocated the following institutes and informants:

TAFE Industrial Relations Network:

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2. Preparation

Contact each informant and set up an interview time. Inform each manager that the interview will take *45–60 minutes*. Each interview will be conducted by telephone. To ensure that there is a high degree of consistency in the interviews, a semi-structured approach is to be used, with the designated questions and prompts being consistently applied across all interviews. Fax/email to participants:

✧ Information sheet

✧ Focus topics for the interview

✧ Details of the interview

✧ Consent form.

3. Interview

Each interview to be audio-taped so that a record is available for later write-up. Confirm with participant their willingness to be taped. Discuss issues of confidentiality, e.g. audiotape and consent forms.

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✧ Summarise interviews with TAFE IR Network members.

✧ Forward individual summaries by email to participants for modification/verification.

✧ Consent form to be completed and returned to interviewer by fax. (These need to be collected and sent to CURVE for safe-keeping and audit purposes.)

5. Timeframe

All writing up to be completed by 21 August, in order that emerging themes and issues can be identified in the Interim Report.

Appendix 3: Examples of practice and flexible delivery subjects and programs

Examples of practice from the interviews

Enabling culture examples of practice

✧ Having a research and development unit, which is essentially some people who can work creatively facilitates an enabling culture. Its essential role is to make contact with good contemporary teaching practices around the world, take part in international forums, bring ideas here and develop some sort of profile for the institute which then gives more credibility to our staff in relating to staff in other institutions etc.

✧ Frank, honest communication with operational staff and active funding and coaching support from chief executive downwards, to 'turn around' marginal programs helps this culture.

✧ Creation of a national centre for unique, largely trades programs with very active industry support has played an enabling role. The high profile of the centre encourages otherwise reluctant staff to try flexible delivery approaches.

✧ With the 'Director invites' series about 5 or 6 times a year, this institute invites high-profile speakers from around Australia, sometimes international. They also bring in primary and high school students to talk to staff, just to get an idea of what the generation is looking for.

✧ With an FD [flexible delivery] Internship a teacher gets 3–5 weeks off teaching to go to the institute Educational Products Services area to develop a product. There are 10–12 teachers selected each year.

✧ Funding for resource development a big issue. One institute has linked up with a private publisher who is endorsed by the Australian Quality Council. They are the specialists for Australian Rural and Remote Training Systems. They share the copyright. The institute provides the specialist input and they do the writing.

Job design examples of practice

✧ One organisation, when advertising, presents the position as a 'Facilitator of learning … achieve quality outcomes by …'; then includes some of the tasks expected by the FD lecturer. Requirements were higher for communication, time management and client responsiveness. Annualising hours makes it more manageable.

✧ The development of a complex point system that allocates different points to different types and levels of activity to build up a workload even though it is possibly less flexible, is an example of creative job design.

✧ Workplace trainer/tutor and/or training consultants work with teachers to support VET delivery in workplaces, sharing the marketing, resource development and one-on-one support tasks.

✧ Recognised positions of advanced skills lecturer and principal lecturers to lead initiatives like flexible delivery provides an example of specific job design.

✧ There is a need for differentiation between work value and workload in flexible delivery.

Workforce planning examples of practice

✧ One institute brought in markers. These people were trained as markers (industry specialists) and they backfill when teachers go on long-service leave.

✧ One institute implemented specific positions to reflect personal skills and achievements of the lecturers without financial remuneration.

✧ Government has implemented a graduated retirement policy enabling people to reduce their hours and attendance and gradually leave the system, thus allowing others to come up. They prepare people to be more competitive in merit selection to counter the conflict with this.

✧ An Educational Leaders Program has been introduced to deal with the issues of certificate IV teachers not having the educational background.

✧ Government preference for permanent staffing increases the need to support career transition for teachers in areas of declining need. Student demand forecasting by teaching areas is an early indicator of this potential need.

✧ One institute is identifying and funding the qualification of approximately six people each year who do not have a teaching degree and would like to study one. These teachers will be funded to do their degree and are anticipated to be in the system for another ten years. They are also expected to do some subjects online or using a blended mode, and some units looking at flexible learning issues.

Performance management examples of practice

✧ PPR [performance planning and review] for older teachers will include developing IT [information technology] skills.

PD [professional development] examples of practice

✧ One state facility trained one person from each college as an Online Coordinator—these people have become the champions. They were taken off teaching 1–2 days per week for 3–6 months. This facility also trained a large number of online tutors and paid for the relief, with some still doing it 4 years on.

✧ Staff are taught how to cater for the different learning styles, tailor their teaching materials, study skills, team building and managing challenging behaviours for flexible delivery.

✧ An interactive online package has been implemented for staff to undertake induction and the HR database tracks them to ensure they do it.

✧ Flexible delivery is included in staff induction.

✧ A 2-hour workshop is undertaken with every teacher on how to do a student needs analysis.

✧ Staff induction is delivered online, including induction to online learning activities and support systems.

✧ An induction plan which includes the teaching and learning services division providing advice on flexible delivery services, support, workshops and opportunities to share experiences is developed.

✧ Lecturers are trained in Indigenous culture.

Pay and conditions examples of practice

✧ At the moment one organisation gets around this issue by giving overtime. There is a need for this to be freed up to allow for flexibility but not allow people to run themselves into the ground in the process.

✧ One organisation has a different certified agreement in the Industrial Skills Training Centre which doesn't require as high qualifications and they do more hours in a year. There are now more areas wishing to make similar arrangements (e.g. nursing supervisors).

Workload management examples of practice

✧ Rationale of 20 hours for 10 students in class equates to one student for 2 hours.

✧ A local workload negotiation model that recognises the modes of delivery, number and individual needs of students and experience of teacher has been introduced.

OH&S examples of practice

✧ Lecturers have done 'Drive for Life' course and driving after dark is discouraged.

✧ Working from home requires the work area being checked for OH&S.

✧ Wellness programs to maintain health and balance work and family to stop burnout have been introduced.

List of flexible delivery subjects/programs

The areas offered include: Apprenticeships and traineeships, as well as:

IT, Hairdressing, Child Studies/Children's Services/Childcare, Community Services, Health, Business Studies, Admin Studies, Aged Care, Welfare, Horticulture, Forestry, Hospitality, Food Processing, Beauty Therapy, Dental Hygiene, Animal Studies, Library, Automotive, Engineering, Metals, Transport, Mining, National Transport Industry Skills Centre, Motor Sports, Architecture, Construction, Property and Real Estate, Asset Management, Commerce, Building Trades/ Carpentry, Painting and Decorating, Internet and Network Technology, Engineering, Frontline Management, Electronics, Sewing and Dressmaking, Electrical, Refrigeration, Beauty Therapy, Tourism, Multi-media, Graphic Art, Preparatory, General Education, Nursing, Manufacturing, Transport and Aviation, Art, Lands, Parks and Wildlife, Electricity and Water, Scaffolding, Language and Literacy, ESL, Joint Diploma/Degree in Business (between a TAFE and a university) and the Australian Centre for Workplace Safety.

NCVER