



MAKING BETTER USE OF
VET RESEARCH

The why, the how and the
role of librarians

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Abstract

Doing research is only the first step on the research journey, although it is often the only step we actually take. Certainly up until now it has been the biggest step. The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has been exploring ways of taking further steps in the research journey. These steps are focussed on ways of making the outcomes of the first step more accessible and useful to those who might use the research. Why we are placing this emphasis on better utilisation of research, as well as how we are going about it will be discussed. The paper will also consider the role that librarians can play in the process.

Introduction

The national research and evaluation strategy for vocational education and training in Australia 1997–2000 (NCVER 1997) noted that major changes have occurred in the vocational education and training (VET) sector in recent years which have not been subject to systematic research and evaluation. Decisions about the future of the VET sector need to be firmly grounded in independent investigations and analyses of what has happened and is happening in Australia and overseas.

A number of developments led to a reconsideration of how best to develop our approach to national VET research and evaluation. These included:

- ❖ a heightened concern about the need to review, evaluate and measure achievements of the VET sector in the context of the general debate about the performance of Australia's education and training systems
- ❖ a growing realisation that, despite all the increase in VET research and evaluation activity, it has not been easy to apply the results to improve decision-making with respect to VET planning, policy, benchmarking, priorities and resource use

The strategy (NCVER 1997) was developed with the goal of providing the underpinning research base needed to contribute to the improvement of Australia's vocational education and training systems.

It has a range of underpinning design principles. These are that it:

- ❖ identifies a limited number of key priority funding areas and focusses on developing a program of research and evaluation which is comprehensive rather than one which is broad but lacking in depth
- ❖ balances the need for forward-looking research with research and evaluation which meets the immediate and short-term needs of various stakeholders
- ❖ encourages those working in the VET sector to engage in research and evaluation activities in order to ensure that the benefits of the skills gained accumulate within the sector
- ❖ captures the range of the VET sector's research and evaluation work and the statistical data collected through the National Advisory Committee on Vocational Education and Training Statistics (NACVETS) in order that research efforts are better co-ordinated and duplication is avoided
- ❖ develops co-ordinated, collaborative and responsive networks of researchers, evaluators and other stakeholders so that research and evaluation involves the most appropriate individuals and groups in the process
- ❖ encourages and builds a constructive but critical research and evaluation culture in order to enhance the contribution of research and evaluation to policy and practice in the VET sector
- ❖ ensures that the results of research and evaluation studies are disseminated widely and in forms which maximise their use in advising policy and practice

(NCVER 1997 p.5)

A range of these principles are concerned with better utilisation of research and the building of a research culture and skills within stakeholder groups. VET providers are one of the more important of these groups. We are particularly concerned with the directors and senior managers of these providers, those who provide support services within these providers and the teaching staff.

Librarians within providers, and particularly those in TAFE institutions, have a vital role to play in the better dissemination and use of the outcomes of VET research. In this paper I want to cover:

- ❖ briefly, the history of research in the sector
- ❖ the role of research and why it can be useful to managers and practitioners in TAFE providers
- ❖ the research needs of VET providers and, in particular, the range of professional development and other needs at the provider level
- ❖ how we are disseminating research and other information to help ensure its greater utility and use
- ❖ why TAFE librarians are an important part of this process

A brief history of research in VET

Comparative to other sectors of education VET has been under researched. Limited research was undertaken until the formation of the ANTA Research Advisory Council (ANTARAC) in April 1994. The establishment of ANTARAC followed the report 'No small change' (McDonald et al. 1993) which proposed the development of a research and development strategy for VET in Australia. The report found that:

- ❖ current research was fragmented
- ❖ there was little fundamental and general-issues-based research in VET
- ❖ the research that has been carried out was not fully used
- ❖ the big issues in VET needed much more intensive research
- ❖ there was no strong critique of VET policies and programs

What research was conducted prior to ANTARAC's formation was undertaken, or funded, by State/Territory training authorities (which, in times gone by, had a greater measure of research capacity than at present), agencies such as the Department of Employment, Education and Training now Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), the NCVER and a small number of academics in universities or colleges of advanced education.

The vocational education and training research database (VOCED) attempted to collect and document what research was conducted, but did so with limited resources. Robinson and Hayman (1998) provide a summary of the history of the National VET Clearinghouse and the VOCED database it supports. Its international affiliations are also described.

The creation of the ANTARAC led to an increase in the number of active researchers in the field and a significant increase in the body of work taking place, particularly in universities

One of the issues in this process was that, while research work was being done, relatively few knew what was going on, what work had been completed and published, and where information on the findings could be obtained.

In late 1996 the NCVER took over management of the national VET research program. This led to:

- ❖ NCVER developing the national strategy which forms the basis of the research program (see NCVER 1997)
- ❖ a program of research and evaluation work being developed and funded following consultation with key stakeholder groups (Robinson and Guthrie 1998 describes the first year of the program in some detail)
- ❖ NCVER managing the outstanding projects funded under the auspices of ANTARAC.

A key component of NCVER's work in managing the research and evaluation program and the program of statistical and surveys information, however, is aimed at ensuring the dissemination and best utilisation of this information whether it is undertaken and published by NCVER or by other sources.

In August, 1997 a web-based version of VOCED was launched at the last ALIA TAFE national conference in Sydney and, since then, significant resources have been committed to enhancing this database. I'll deal with the developments in VOCED briefly later in this paper. Sarah Hayman, the manager of our Information Services and Clearinghouse Branch can also demonstrate VOCED to you and talk about what we are doing if you visit our stand here at

the conference. If you do not get a chance to see and use the database while you are here at the conference, please do not hesitate to contact us at any time.

The role of research and other information in decision making and practice

A project funded by ANTARAC to examine the impact of VET research in decision making in the sector (Selby Smith et al. 1998) found that VET research does have an impact, but not in the way people think.

The authors note that the research process is accumulative. They point out that much research does not stand on its own as a piece of work but adds to that which existed before. This accumulating body of knowledge contributes in decision-making to the creation of a climate of opinion and the development of a set of ideas, so that at any given time certain ideas, approaches or ways of thinking are in 'good currency', whilst others are not or are no longer. Over time, they believe research's main contribution may be to the 'big ideas'.

They point out that there are outputs in addition to 'new and better information'. One of these is the development of research skills and attitudes, and trained personnel (human capital). They contribute to the maintenance and development of the research system and can contribute to varying degrees to decision-making. These outputs are often overlooked. However, the contribution of human capital to improved decision-making was demonstrated in a number of the case studies reported in the project. The absence of these research outputs substantially weakens VET decision-making. A report by Sedden and Malley (1998) for the Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE), is concerned with the work of research at the provider level and will be considered shortly.

Finally, the impact of VET research project provides evidence that individual research studies are used and have influence on VET decision-making in policy and planning, practice and performance within provider organisations, and community relations; but examples of individual studies may not be typical, so that the value of research cannot be judged by them alone. The influence of the direct relationship between research and decision-making has generally been discredited. The strongest message from Selby Smith et al.'s project (1998) was the extent to which those who make decisions in VET are likely to be unaware of the research which forms the (indirect) basis of their decisions. It is most likely that, even when the advice on which those framing policy has a strong basis in research, this fact will not be understood by the decision-makers.

Another message from the impact of VET research project Selby Smith et al. (1998) is that much decision-making in fact has not used research: the volatile policy climate in VET and the time pressures on key players have all militated against the considered use of data as a component of decision-making. As a result, decision-making processes do not pay sufficient attention to the existence of important research-based information. As one quote in the report pointed out:

On a good day, ideas may gain a hearing amidst the swirl of political considerations, but it must be very good and rare day indeed when policy-makers take their cues mainly from scientific knowledge about the state of the world they hope to change or protect.

Finally, Selby Smith et al. (1998) point out that if more effective use is to be made of research, the awareness and accessibility of research findings needs to improve. In part, the loss of corporate memory caused by the downsizing or even the demise of research branches in State Training Authorities has reduced the accessibility to primary research for decision makers. Just-in-time approaches to decision and policy making militated against the effective use of research. An effective dissemination and utilisation of research findings requires that research evidence be placed more to the forefront in the process than it is at present.

In addition, if policy and practice are to be better served by research, there is a need to focus on the common interests of researchers and users of research rather than, as is commonly done, on their differences. Models for achieving this need to go far beyond simplistic notions of users 'understanding' researchers and vice-versa.

This is why we are emphasising a range of approaches to dissemination, better utilisation and the more active engagement between those *creating* and those *using* VET research and other information.

Using and doing research at the provider level

Seddon and Malley (1998) developed a staff development strategy for supporting research priorities in the State Training Service in Victoria for the Office of Training and Further Education.

The key relevant findings of this research are that:

- ❖ understanding the changing context within which VET operates and a focus on responsiveness and meeting client needs can be assisted through research and evaluation at the provider level
- ❖ research-type skills are involved in problem solving, policy analysis, environmental scanning, review and planning, market research, data analysis, needs analysis and approaches to teaching and learning as well as quality management and assurance processes at the provider level. Research is also relevant when there are debates over policy and practice within the sector itself. In addition there is a range of project-based research occurring within the sector. Finally, there are projects which focus on reflective practice and action learning principles. VET organisations therefore need to develop their capacity to produce and use knowledge in ways which advise and optimise their operations
- ❖ research has been undervalued in a system which sees itself in terms of teaching and program delivering. Research by practitioners remains largely unacknowledged because of poor links between individual or enterprise-based research and organisational development
- ❖ good research in VET produces knowledge and understandings which are useable and useful, and which stand up to external scrutiny
- ❖ a range of resources, work practices and organisational arrangements at the provider level are needed to support research – including collaborative arrangements with other organisations and individuals. Barriers to research include time, resources, expertise and culture in that order. However, the sector and its enterprises should move towards an approach to research which helps to build the capacity of the organisation

Professional development needs in research at the provider level

An essential precursor for VET enterprises is an environment which encourages and has a capacity for:

- ❖ doing research
- ❖ reading and using research
- ❖ managing research as a part of the organisation's overall operation
- ❖ actioning research in strategic ways

This requires attention to:

- ❖ *research literacy of staff* so that they can read, interpret and use research. (It also, conversely, implies that researchers outside providers are literate and they, or others, are mindful to the needs of those who may make use of their research. If the research is too remote from a provider's needs its utility is substantially reduced.)

- ❖ *the research skills of provider staff* to conceptualise, design, do, report and use research – as well as validate it
- ❖ *managing the research process at the provider level* – so that research is connected meaningfully to the needs of the organisation

Major weaknesses in research capacity within providers identified in Seddon and Malley's work were :

- ❖ market research
- ❖ the use of databases
- ❖ the translation of research outcomes into actionable proposals

The major perceived need for skills development for provider staff was seen to be in research skills and methodology, such as:

- ❖ literature searching and review
- ❖ research conceptualisation and clarification
- ❖ research design and methodology
- ❖ data collection and analysis
- ❖ report writing and dissemination
- ❖ research validation

Value was also seen by those consulted in the course of Seddon & Malley's work in access to discussion networks, forums and seminars to share information and help improve the skills needs outlined above. The most favoured ways of acquiring these skills were on-the-job training or mentoring, or independent learning. Other approaches favoured included opportunities for further study and training sessions provided either within the organisation or externally.

Other needs they identified included:

- ❖ skills in sourcing research findings, reviews and abstracts. This is where librarians can really help
- ❖ the capacity to understand, translate and connect research findings and trends (i.e. improving research literacy)
- ❖ making judgements about the quality and relevance of research
- ❖ undertaking action research and using reflective practice. Provider staff should be participating in, contributing to and communicating research and knowledge production as part of their work. The former national staff development committee (see ANTA 1997) and the Making Changes projects of the mid 1980's (Guthrie et al. 1986 and Guthrie 1987) are relevant here. The 'Framing the Future' initiatives and the previous CBT in action program also adopt this approach
- ❖ management and organisational development, and the research needed to underpin managerial decisions and organisational development
- ❖ promoting the building of research capacity
- ❖ supporting collaborative arrangements to encourage VET staff participation in joint ventures with other research professionals
- ❖ using seminars and conferences as forums where researchers, practitioners and others can discuss topical issues
- ❖ using 'research apprenticeships' involving both universities and VET organisations (this could also involve the provision of study leave by VET organisations)
- ❖ establishing a pool of funds to support research by individuals or groups

- ❖ providing status rewards or other appropriate recognition for those who use or do research
- ❖ negotiating credit for research-based professional development activities in formal university awards

Seddon and Malley (1998) suggested that opportunities for professional development can be provided through:

- ❖ extended engagement in research by work placements, mentoring, staff exchanges and through post-graduate study
- ❖ short course research training which needs to be delivered just-in-time and flexibly, using self-paced resources, structured programs, workshops and conferences
- ❖ programs which combine extended 'research' activities with specific skill development programs
- ❖ linking 'research' activities with other requirements of the system or enterprise
- ❖ encouragement to join professional associations such as the Australian VET Researcher's Association (AVETRA)

In an increasingly casualised and 'contracted' VET workforce the question of how the work and performance management of practitioners will be supported at the provider level becomes critical. It also became increasingly difficult, in such an environment, to undertake longer-term and meaningful research which maintains or builds the capacity of the providers.

How research and other information is being disseminated to improve its use and utility

The report 'No small change' noted that:

The purpose of research and development in vocational education and training is to create new knowledge of vocational education and training which ultimately may lead to changes in practice. However, information collected in this project suggests that the use of new knowledge is retarded by:

- ❖ a perception of most practitioners that research is not very useful
- ❖ relatively little research being undertaken by practitioners
- ❖ a lack of many effective linkages between researchers, practitioners and policy-makers

In short there is lack of a 'research culture' in vocational education and training. The goal of the proposed dissemination strategies broadly is to develop a research culture in which there is a coalition of researchers, policy makers and practitioners. (McDonald et al. 1993)

As such McDonald et al. (1993) noted that the key principle for effective dissemination is the need to change people, not to deliver information. This 'people come before products' approach they proposed means that the following three dissemination strategies are of decreasing effectiveness:

- ❖ getting people together to exchange and interpret information ('people centred')
- ❖ helping people in the field 'obtain information and make choices' ('people assisting')
- ❖ distribution of material ('information centred')

The implication here is not that 'information centred' and 'people assisting' initiatives and strategies are to be avoided, but rather that by themselves they are unlikely to prove effective. Their main value lies in the support that they offer to the strategies above them in the list.

Other key principles underlying the strategies suggested by McDonald et al. (1993) are that:

- ❖ optimum effectiveness generally requires the use of multiple simultaneous approaches to the dissemination of research
- ❖ there needs to be an expansion of dissemination of research and development to improve its use by practitioners and policy makers.

They suggested that the strategies needed to be based on the assumption that all three approaches to knowledge diffusion outlined above need to operate effectively if research and development are to make the fullest contribution to vocational education and training reform. This requires a shift of emphasis away from linear approaches to more interactive approaches in which the relationships between research, policy and practice are more intimate and more complex. They proposed the following initiatives:

- ❖ fostering of quality action research
- ❖ establishing various networks of vocational education and training researchers, practitioners and policy makers

- ❖ enhancing and expanding the dissemination role of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research in order to support the expanded research effort in an effective and efficient way
- ❖ monitoring and dissemination of useful overseas developments
- ❖ inclusion of dissemination strategies in research briefs
- ❖ an international network for vocational education researchers on the Internet and
- ❖ greater use of the media

They suggested that dissemination should be viewed as an integrated package of measures to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of knowledge diffusion in vocational education and training. The success of each innovation outlined above, therefore, depends to some extent, on the successful implementation of the other proposed innovations.

Many of these initiatives are outlined above form part of our present approaches to improving research dissemination and use. Other organisations have also addressed the issue (see Morris and Spark 1997).

The NCVER's dissemination approach has five broad objectives. These are:

- 1 Better *design* of products and services based on stakeholder requirements
- 2 Better *utilisation* of the products and services provided under the auspices of the strategy and for its different stakeholders
- 3 Improved *accessibility* to research and evaluation information for all stakeholders; and
- 4 Increased *visibility* of research and evaluation information, with the consequent increase in the extent to which such information is used.
- 5 More active *engagement* between all of those involved in creating and using research and other information

The dissemination approach being adopted by NCVER has three important underpinning principles:

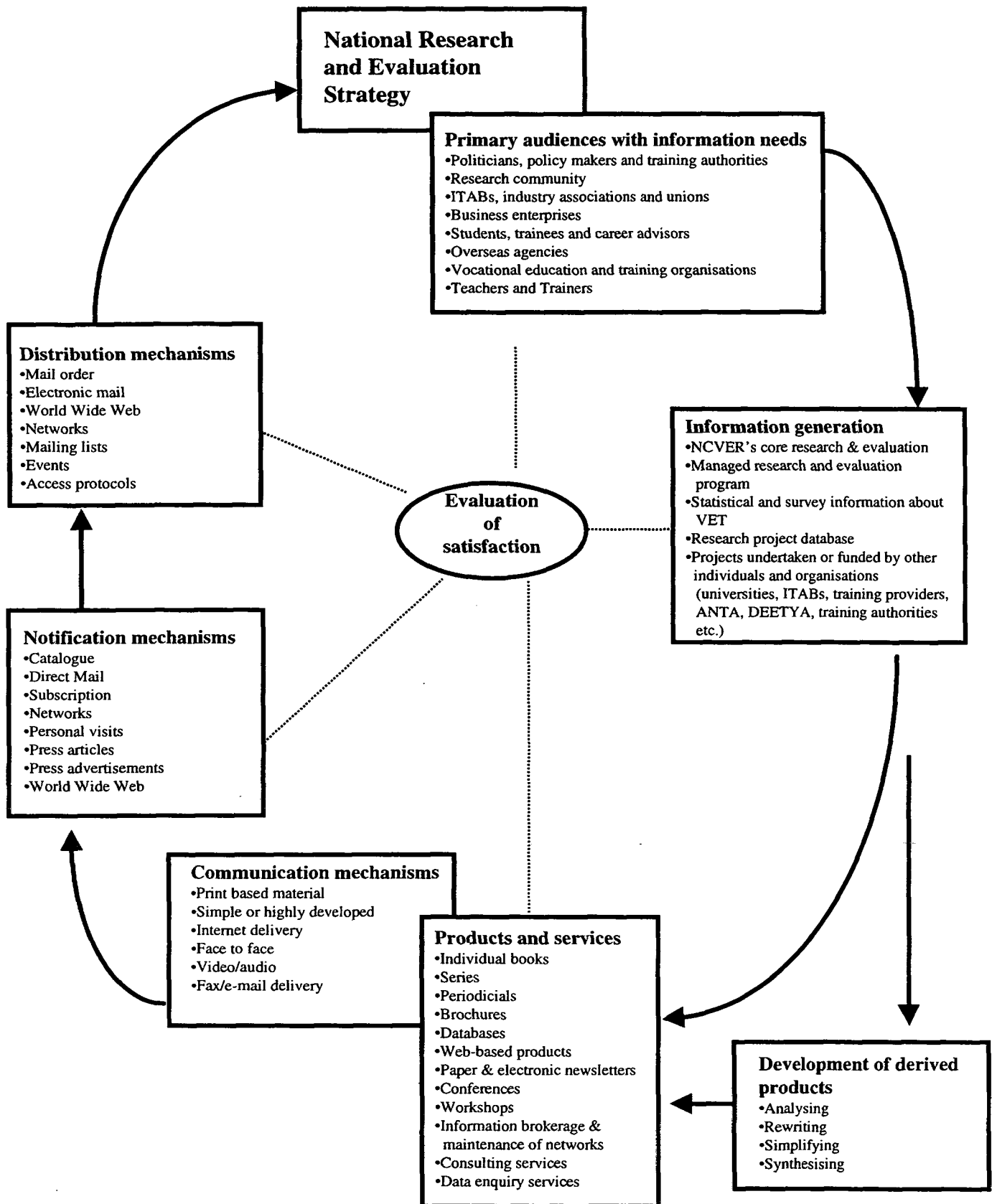
- 1 A clear understanding of who the stakeholders are in the overall research and evaluation program. The dissemination approach needs to recognise that individual priorities and projects will be important to different stakeholders, and even different subgroups within the broader categories of stakeholders. Therefore, the ways in which these stakeholders like to receive this information needs to be clearly understood and catered for when dissemination is being planned. In short the dissemination process must be stakeholder focussed.
- 2 The variety of stakeholders, their various information needs and preferred ways of receiving information potentially require a wide range of products and services to be developed. Thus the dissemination approach for the strategy could be said to occupy a range of specific and carefully identified stakeholder 'markets'. The dissemination approaches chosen need to be carefully planned to obtain an appropriate balance between the costs of producing them and the extent to which they are taken up and used by the intended stakeholder groups.
- 3 The variety of stakeholders and products will require the development of a supporting production and dissemination infrastructure drawn both from within and outside the NCVER. This infrastructure must also make best use of the dissemination arrangements controlled by the stakeholder groups themselves.

Figure 1 outlines the marketing components of an approach to dissemination. They involve:

- ❖ the primary audiences (or stakeholders) and their information needs. These are fundamentally the same as those outlined in the national research and evaluation strategy

Figure 1

The approach to marketing and disseminating the outcomes of VET research and evaluation



- ❖ the mechanisms through which information is generated, including both the managed national program of research and evaluation work and the NCVER's own in-house program. Both of these are advised by the strategy and its associated workplan prepared for the National Research and Evaluation Committee (NREC). Research conducted or funded by other players may also feed in and be incorporated within the dissemination framework (and this is where the need for a strong support of the VOCED database by researchers and VET providers comes in!)
- ❖ a set of *primary products*, arising from the research approaches adopted (usually reports, academic papers or other articles) and a range of derived products and services which involve analysing, targeting, reworking, simplifying and synthesising the primary research products. It may also involve using a variety of different authors and media. These products and services are tailored to meet the needs of stakeholders. In this way NCVER, in collaboration with researchers and other individuals and groups, is acting very much in the brokerage role described by Selby-Smith *et al.* (1998). To that end, increased amounts will be spent on fulfilling this brokerage role. However, there needs to be more research into what the preferred products and services of the stakeholders are, and how they should be delivered. Moreover, little work has been done in relation to the relative costs of the various dissemination approaches;
- ❖ a series of *notification and distribution mechanisms* so that stakeholders are aware of what is available and when, where and how it can be obtained. These are important underpinning components of the dissemination approach to ensure that information is readily available in appropriate forms and formats. Again, VOCED and other information sources and networks are important sources of this information.
- ❖ the *on-going evaluation* of the products and services produced under the auspices of the national managed research and evaluation program to ensure that there is a genuine dialogue between those providing and those using the information so the products and services are meeting stakeholder needs and that the dissemination approaches used are appropriate and cost effective.

So far we have:

- ❖ conducted some market research – An internal report produced for NCVER (Figgis 1998) provided further useful information to support and guide our strategies and approaches
- ❖ begun to plan and implement the dissemination approaches. As much as possible we are looking at ways of engaging stakeholders in debate. To that end a variety of briefing workshops have already been held for policymakers and key industry groups such as the ACCI, BCA and the ACTU. A series of provider-based workshops is being planned
- ❖ begun to develop the full range of products and services (*The Research at a glance* and *Research says* series are examples)
- ❖ developed the infrastructure to support product development and dissemination, including our web site and our database of stakeholder contacts
- ❖ begun work to improve the capture of relevant Australian and international VET research

NCVER has developed a research strategy against the dot points outlined below, and progress and plans related to each of these 'elements' of the strategy are reported in this paper.

The elements of the strategy include:

- ❖ the publication and distribution of more research
- ❖ the upgrade of the NCVER's web site
- ❖ the enhancement of the NCVER's research and information user database
- ❖ the enhancement of the VOCED research database
- ❖ the development and use of 'Research roadshows'
- ❖ the extension of the '*At a glance...*' series

- ❖ the strategic use of conferences and workshops
- ❖ the better use of the media to get the message out
- ❖ the revitalisation of the '*Getting to grips with...*' series and other related products

Progress to date

The publication and distribution of more research and information

Robinson (1999) has described the measures being taken to increase the impact of vocational education and training research. In particular he describes, in a similar way to this paper, the approaches we are taking to improving the dissemination and utilisation of VET research. One or more products of each of the NCVER's own research program as well as the national managed program will be published. In addition, a range of value added statistical and surveys publications have been developed, several continuing on an annual basis.

At this point:

- ❖ 37 reports and 15 '*Reviews of research...*' were published in 1997 and 1998. So far nine reports, including four '*Reviews of research...*' have been published this year.
- ❖ about 57 reports and other publications arising from the NREC and core grant programs are being reviewed or prepared for publication at present
- ❖ Five statistical publications were produced in 1997 and 15 in 1998 and six so far in 1999
- ❖ a list of forthcoming publications has been consolidated for planning purposes
- ❖ drafts of other possible publications are being considered for publication
- ❖ 'marketing' plans are being prepared for information releases as well as the range of individual reports and projects. Increasingly this process will begin soon after the project has been commissioned. Opportunities for marketing and dissemination synergies are being explored
- ❖ a summary of each research project in progress is mounted on the web site
- ❖ a VOCED entry and an entry for the publications catalogue is prepared when each project is completed
- ❖ a flier for each publication is produced for use on the web site in its 'News and events' section. This flier may also be used or edited to supply copy for the '*Research says...*' leaflet that was recently prepared. Past 'News and events' entries are 'archived' and can be searched for on the site. The flier may also be used singly for promotional purposes, or combined with other related fliers to inform clients and other end users of the spectrum of reports on particular topics or issues that are available
- ❖ an executive summary will be produced for each project and statistical publications for incorporation on the web site. This summary will be adaptable in print form for use on conference stands and in workshop or briefing kits

The enhancement of NCVER's web site

At this point:

- ❖ the web site has undergone a major upgrade to improve its appearance, organisation, level of content and navigation arrangements. Search facilities have been added to a number of site components to enable users to tailor their searches as much as possible
- ❖ a work plan is being developed and implemented to ensure continued enhancement of its functionality and features as well as maintaining the currency of its content

- ❖ content in the 'About us' and 'Statistics' sections of the site are being progressively upgraded. In addition the NCVER's publications catalogue is being mounted on the web in a searchable form. E-commerce arrangements are being negotiated with our service provider to enable electronic funds transfer and ordering
- ❖ research fliers are beginning to be produced and incorporated on the 'News and events' section of the web site. Fliers will also be produced for statistical and surveys publications
- ❖ content from the new leaflet *Research says* has been mounted on the web
- ❖ past entries in the 'News and events' section of the site are being archived so that they are searchable on the site
- ❖ a comprehensive list of projects in progress is available on the research component of the site. Further work is required here to update content, incorporate the core research project summaries and improve functionality
- ❖ the 'News and events' section will be used as an opportunity to showcase other research in progress, that is, research being conducted by other organisations both in Australia and overseas. A format for submitting possible content for the section will be developed and publicised with researchers and other bodies. A bulletin board for the site is also planned.

The enhancement of the NCVER's research and information user database

At this point:

- ❖ a work plan for upgrading and maintaining the 'Contacts' database has been developed and is being implemented. Implementation will help to improve the dissemination and use of statistical and surveys information as well as the outcomes of in-house and managed research programs

The enhancement of the VOCED research database

At this point:

- ❖ work is in progress to capture all Australian-based VET research and evaluation that has been completed and published
- ❖ work has begun to capture VET research and evaluation work completed and published overseas. This includes indexing all key VET journals and monographs
- ❖ plans are in hand to further improve the functionality of this on-line database

Robinson (1999) describes the plans for this enhancement in somewhat greater detail

The development and use of 'Research roadshows'

At this point:

- ❖ a kit has been developed for a series of policy briefing workshops for ANTA, DETYA and all State/Territory training authorities. To date workshops have been run in all major State/Territory capitals with the exception of Darwin
- ❖ plans are being prepared for a series of provider-based workshops and the production of a range of associated resources
- ❖ It is planned to develop a series of short publications to support the workshop program using the existing 'Focus on...' format maintained by the Information Services and Clearinghouse Branch at NCVER. These papers would be used in a way similar to the current issues-based papers produced for the policy briefing workshops. They would also be mounted on the web and used in the forthcoming planned institute-based workshops as well as for handing out at conferences where we plan to have a display. In addition,

sheets summarising the findings of completed projects might also form part of the kits prepared for the workshops

- ❖ topic lists have been proposed as part of the forthcoming program of provider-based workshops
- ❖ statistical and surveys information will be incorporated in the workshop program as appropriate.

The extension of the 'At a glance...' series

At this point:

- ❖ four further publications in the *Research at a glance* series are planned (*VET for early school leavers, Life-long learning, Competency-based training and The changing nature of work*). All these titles have been commissioned and will be released over the remainder of year
- ❖ expressions of interest have been sought for the production of further titles in this series
- ❖ an extensive range of *At a glance* publications developed from the annual statistics and surveys have been published on an annual basis and supplemented by special issue releases. The usual annual publications for 1999 will be supplemented by 'At a glance...' publications on School leavers undertaking VET, Student outcomes survey, 1999, and Employer satisfaction survey 1999
- ❖ the annual 'Overview' publications of Australian VET Statistics and Australian Apprentices and Trainees will be produced in 1999. These will be supplemented by special 'Overview' issues on Commuter distances, Rural and remote students, Socioeconomic aspects and Australian personal enrichment education and training programs

The strategic use of conferences and workshops

At this point:

- ❖ two researcher workshops are being planned for those researchers involved in the range of CBT evaluation projects and those concerned with return on investment for training projects. Both these series of projects were conducted under the auspices of the national managed research and evaluation program. This may lead to, or facilitate, the development of a range of value-added products from these series of projects. These workshops are essentially a process for refining research output for the stakeholder oriented workshops below
- ❖ small and short issue-based workshops will be developed. Unlike the researcher workshops, these workshops are targetted at a VET stakeholder audience. These may be by invitation or targetted at particular end-user groups. The first of these, on CBT, will be held in September 1999

The better use of the media to get the message out

At this point:

- ❖ a media strategy has been developed and is being implemented
- ❖ NCVET staff are to be briefed about the process and appropriate media training will be undertaken
- ❖ release dates for statistical and surveys publications are being timetabled
- ❖ current media coverage of relevance to the statistics and surveys contracts, as well as for key issues, is being monitored
- ❖ opportunities for producing/placing articles in the specialist or mainstream media are being undertaken as part of the development of the dissemination plans for projects and

issues/topics. A similar process is being implemented for statistical and surveys information

The revitalisation of the '*Getting to grips with...*' series and other related products

At this point:

- ❖ at least five *Getting to grips with* titles are in publication or are available as advanced drafts. Topics in preparation include: *Training packages, Self-paced learning, Using quality frameworks in the classroom, Work experience and On-line learning*
- ❖ other relevant products are being prepared for publication, for example two packages for staff and student use on working with students with psychiatric disabilities
- ❖ other publications/products could be developed for use in the planned provider workshops or as a commercial workshop/product. These will draw upon the expertise of staff across the organisation

Making better use of research—roles for TAFE librarians

The preceding sections of the paper have aimed to provide a history of the research effort in the sector and the roles it can and does play in policy formulation and critique, as well as informing practice. The use of research at provider level as a process for building the capacity of institutes was also considered. To use research requires the development of research capacity and skills, which requires some professional development for a range of staff.

Librarians, therefore, have a pivotal role to play in what I believe your profession refers to as Selective Dissemination of Information (SDI) in relation to research and other information. This includes:

- ❖ marketing the information and other services you can provide to the management and staff at your institute (being more proactive)
- ❖ gathering intelligence about the information needs of managers as well as individuals and groups of staff and then finding ways of fulfilling these needs
- ❖ monitoring a range of information sources, including VOCED, NCVER's web site, OLIMCH (the Open Library Information and Materials Clearinghouse at Adelaide Institute in South Australia), DETYA and ANTA's sites, as well as gathering a range of publications and newsletters
- ❖ helping us to evaluate the quality, style and usefulness of the printed and electronic information we are producing to support the sector
- ❖ making suggestions about other products or services we could consider developing and implementing
- ❖ helping to distribute and inform people about some of the value – added products NCVER and their bodies are developing
- ❖ being a focal point when particular issues are being debated within the institute (eg marketing strategies, planning scenarios etc)
- ❖ assisting individuals and groups of staff with their professional development (eg. in teacher or teacher/training or those participating in *Framing the future* projects)
- ❖ helping us by mounting a display of research and other products when a 'roadshow' visits your institute, and arranging visits by individuals and groups who may be interested in its contents
- ❖ providing inputs of local project information to the VOCED database and contributing to the 'News and events', section of our website to publicise activities at your institute
- ❖ assisting the clearinghouse officers based in your State/Territory. In return these people are a valuable resource who can help you to improve the service you provide (our website contains their contact details,) or you can contact Sarah Hayman.

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