Approaches for sustaining and building management and leadership capability in VET providers: Literature review on leadership and suggested reading list – Support document

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Overview

This resource provides:

- First, literature review on recent thinking about leadership and management, and how to build capability, and
- Second, a list of selected readings on leadership, change and managing people.

Investigating approaches for building and sustaining leadership: A literature review

Executive Summary

This paper provides a brief overview of recent thinking about the nature of leadership, and in particular the character and behaviours we expect of more transformational leaders. Transformational leadership is focused upon organisational change and behaviours that inspire employees and that promote opportunities for creativity, innovation and new ways of thinking and behaving at work. These leaders promote workplace cultures that are supportive, intellectually stimulating and risk-tolerant. Transformational leaders are fully aware of the value of coaching, mentoring and being seen as role models for the values and behaviours that are important in the new organisations that emerge through either incremental or more transformational change. Leaders today are also more tuned into the roles of emotions and values in shaping the behaviour of their employees, and their contributions as leaders in building positive psychological states and emotional capital in the workplace. In particular, leaders engage in what is being labeled as "artful authenticity" by leveraging off their personality strengths and weaknesses to build deeper relationships with their employees.

Within the VET context, it is clear that leaders as transformational agents are responding to multiple drivers for change. National and State governments are demanding actions that respond to skills shortages, the improvement of skills and qualifications profiles, the continued removal of barriers to skills acquisition, up-skilling and employment for people who are disadvantaged in work and training, and organisational responses that require more flexibility, customisation and partnerships with industry and other players. Significantly, a variety of recent reports into VET leadership are beginning to describe the range of managerial and leadership capabilities that are required of a range of staff in training organisations. This report details the primary findings of those reviews in terms of drafting a set of capabilities required of the executive, managers, teaching staff and support staff in training organisations so that their organisations can respond to such drivers for change, as well as competing priorities and tensions. Finally, a variety of human resource strategies are briefly overviewed that can be accessed by leaders and their organisations to identify and to build individual capabilities, and in turn their organisational capabilities.

Defining leadership

What VET institutions are doing well in terms of leadership behaviour and its development is only just being understood. Recent reports show that VET workforces, especially at the managerial and supervisory levels, require an extensive range of management and leadership capabilities, as well as professional and more generic skills, to meet the continued challenges for change, innovation and to build strong and sustainable organisations for the future. What then do we mean by leadership, and what are the capabilities that we expect of leaders today in our organisations?

There is a long history of debate about what we mean by the concept of leadership. As a single domain of research and practitioner interest, there are possibly more models about what we mean by leadership than any other area of the social and behavioural sciences. In addition, there is a vast array of definitions of leadership that support each of these models. Classified today, however, as a "mature field" of research and understanding (Hunt, 2004), this is not to deny that there are many different and very useful views about the make-up and behaviours of leaders.

A useful first step in moving through this definitional maze is to recognise the distinction between managing and leading. According to Gosling and Mintzberg (2003), however, one risk of this separation is that management is pushed into the background. They argue that no one aspires to being a good manager, as all of the focus and rewards are linked to leadership. On the other hand, as a counter to this negative view of management, it needs to be recognised that (see Buckingham, 2005; Huy, 2001; Gosling & Mintzberg, 2003):

✧ There is a transition from technical specialist to supervisor to manager to leader, and the development of good managers is a critical step in how organisations go about nurturing and growing their future leaders

✧ Management and leadership are overlapping domains of activity, and each concept adds meaning to the other. Management without leadership encourages an uninspired style that typically maintains the status quo. Leadership without management encourages a disconnected style that promotes arrogance and isolation

✧ Management supports the efforts by organisations to plan, budget, coordinate and to compete for today. Leadership supports the efforts of an organisation to set a vision and direction for the future.

A second step in sorting through various definitional positions about leadership is the need to appreciate the distinctions between the older and newer theories of leadership. In the 1970s, behavioural theories of leadership dominated our thinking, with their attention upon path-goal relationships, leader-member exchange theories, and normative decision theory. In the 1980s,

these traditional theories that emphasised natural cognitive processes used by leaders faced competition from newer theories about the styles of charismatic, transformational and spiritual leadership (see Yukl, 1999, 2002). These newer theories, in contrast, emphasised emotions, values, and acknowledged more than in the past the symbolic behaviour and role of the leader in making events meaningful for followers.

In environments of uncertainty and change, transformational theories explain how leaders can influence followers to commit to difficult goals, and to achieve more than previously expected. Their focus is best summarised by the catch cry "encouraging ordinary people to do extraordinary things". However, these newer theories about transformation and change also have a stake in the past. In particular, they recognise the older heroic leadership stereotype, especially how leaders motivate followers to make self-sacrifices because they trust, admire and are loyal to the leader (Latemore & Callan, 1998). A critical component of these newer theories about what leaders do, and how followers respond, is the aspirational goal or vision (Yukl, 2002). The vision is a motivational device, a statement about a highly desirable future that is meaningful for followers, and which over time they identify with and commit to.

As described in *"Odysseus for today: Ancient and modern lessons for leaders"*, Latemore and Callan (1998) argue that the main features of such post-heroic leaders is that they:

✧ Lead from within their teams rather than from out in front

✧ Promote shared leadership with their followers

✧ Guide, mentor and coach

✧ Achieve credibility and trust through honesty, competence, by being forward-looking and through being visible and accessible.

While it might be the dominant school of thought about leadership at present, the transformational model is not without criticism. The major interest of transformational theory is the leader's direct impact upon the individual employee. Much less attention is given to how these same leaders shape group and organisational processes. In addition to a perceived over-emphasis upon the relationship between the leader and his or her employees, these theories pay little attention to task-oriented behaviours such as how leaders clarify their expectations to staff, set goals, plan, coordinate, allocate resources and monitor the performance of their staff (see Yukl, 1999, 2002). Also, they are criticised for not describing the importance of contextual or more situational influences upon leaders' behaviours.

In reply, defenders of transformational theories do not see this approach, or others, as providing the complete theory of leadership. The criticisms about a lack of attention to roles such as planning, giving rewards and monitoring, are not the focus of writers who describe the behaviours of more transformational leaders. The "plan, organise, budget and control" type of leadership in their eyes is really about what is called "transactional" forms of leadership, or

adopting Kotter's (1990) position, more about managing than leading. The next section describes in more detail the core behaviours that researchers today are really more focused upon in attempting to define and to understand the key behaviours of the more transformational leader – that is, the leaders of major change.

Transformational leadership

In a recent review of the leadership field, Hunt (2005) described the increasing popularity of theories, studies and case studies about the transformational leader. The popularity of this theory of leadership both among leadership researchers and practitioners owes much to its emphasis upon the nature of change in organisations. More than other frameworks, transformational leadership focuses upon the significant role that leaders can play in promoting both personal and organisational change, and the role of leaders in assisting their employees to meet and exceed expectations about performance (Avolio, 2005).

As noted by Callan, Latemore and Paulsen (2004) in their article in the Mt Elzia Business Review, *"The best laid plans: Uncertainty, complexity and large scale organisational change"*, leaders today are skilled at "disturbing the organisational system" in a manner that approximates their desired outcomes. Change leaders do plan change, but they expect the unexpected. They ensure that their organisations and employees capitalise on all of the opportunities that are presented by change. Because the best laid plans are not sufficient for successful change due to the inherent messiness of the change process, successful organisations that change readily and successfully need staff at all levels who feel that they have the capabilities to capitalise on new opportunities. That is, leadership is required at the top, but also at different levels of organisations, in order to stay innovative and competitive.

There is considerable agreement that transformational leadership is comprised of at least four interrelated behaviours or sets of actions. They engage in (Avolio, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003):

✧ Inspirational maturation – articulating an appealing and evocative vision about what the organisation wants to become, and about how it wants to serve its customers and related stakeholders

✧ Intellectual stimulation – promoting opportunities and organisational cultures that encourage creativity and innovation among staff

✧ Idealised influence – providing a role model for staff at all levels

✧ Individualised consideration – engaging in coaching and mentoring roles that empower staff.

Major lessons from theory and research into transformational leadership are that (Avolio, 2005):

✧ Subordinates judge leaders as more effective when they engage in transformational behaviours

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✧ Transformational leaders exist at all levels of organisations

✧ The more transformational is the leadership at higher levels in the organisation, the more it is found at lower levels, including in its teams.

As well as the lessons and direction they provide for managers and leaders of change, transformational leadership frameworks have opened up related and significant discussions about the links between employee performance, and the roles of positive emotions, emotional intelligence, authenticity and the promotion of innovation in organisations. Strong conceptual and empirical links are being established in more recent times between being more transformational as a leader, and emotional intelligence (Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000), the importance of authenticity (Goffee & Jones, 2006), and higher levels of creativity and innovation among employees (Mumford, Scott, Gaddis & Strange, 2002). These aspects of transformational leadership are now discussed in more detail.

Finally, as part of this discussion about the concept of leadership, it is important to note that there is a separate and complementary literature about the concept of educational leadership. Models of educational leadership include the managerial, participative, interpersonal, transactional, post-modern, contingency, moral and instructional perspectives (Bush, 2003). Educational leadership in VET can be defined as those professionals "with a passion for teaching, learning and assessment, who seek to improve delivery in order to meet the needs of client groups, actively resolve problems as they arise and who inspire other professionals to follow their lead. Their inspiration for others is not based on position but in their leadership abilities" (Western Australia Department of Education and Training, 2005).

Leadership, emotions and authenticity

In contrast to the predominantly cognitive emphasis of many conceptions about leadership, there is growing recognition of the role of emotions and values on leader and follower behaviours. More attention is being given to various emotional and social aspects of leader behaviours (i.e. values, self-awareness, management of self and others, emotions) and their impact on producing higher levels of trust, engagement, well-being and performance among employees (e.g. Ashkanasy & Tse, 2000; George, 2000, 2003).

The recent focus upon leadership and emotions is also linked to other debates. These discussions include the role of the leader in managing the social, emotional and psychological impact upon employees of large scale and disruptive change (Paulsen et al., 2005). In addition, there are debates about the ethical and moral imperatives of leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2003) and, in turn, the important role of leaders in building positive psychological states and emotional capital (e.g. self-esteem, hope, optimism and personal expressiveness; Seligman, 2002), if organisations

and their staff are to grow and thrive in highly turbulent environments. Recent collapses of well-known organisations have fuelled these debates.

While there is continued controversy about definitions of emotional intelligence (Jordan, Ashkanasy & Hartel, 2002), possibly the best known writing is by Goleman (1995, 1998). According to Goleman, emotionally intelligent leaders manage themselves and their relationships effectively. In particular, they display sets of behaviour that demonstrate:

✧ Self-awareness (i.e. self-confidence, realistic evaluations of their strengths and weaknesses)

✧ Self-management (i.e. self control, trustworthiness, conscientiousness, adaptability, initiative)

✧ Social awareness (i.e. empathy, ability to build networks and to navigate politics)

✧ Social skills (i.e. visionary leadership, developing others, communication, change catalyst, teamwork, conflict management).

Goleman (2000) argues that our leaders need many different styles of leading, and the more styles a leader exhibits, the better. More emotionally intelligent leaders are more able to switch styles (i.e. authorative, democratic, affiliative, and coaching) due to their higher levels of self-awareness, ability to read a situation, and adaptability. Transformational leaders in particular establish more intellectually stimulating workplaces that in turn also foster more openness, creativity, and willingness by their employees to challenge the status quo.

As noted above, one important aspect of emotional intelligence is the ability to develop realistic evaluations about oneself as a leader. The related concept of authenticity has its roots in humanistic psychology and especially philosophy, including Greek philosophy (e.g. "To thine own self be true"). While a natural off-shoot of the transformational view of leadership that I have argued earlier attends more to emotions and values, authentic leaders on the other hand are (Goffee & Jones, 2006; Luthans & Avolio, 2003):

✧ Not interested in faking their leadership, in that they are true to themselves, rather than conforming to the expectations of others

✧ Motivated by personal convictions rather than by gaining status, rewards or personal benefits

✧ Not imitators of others' leadership styles, but lead from their own personal point of view

✧ Guided by personal values and convictions

✧ Motivated to excite people to higher performance.

Building upon this description, Goffee and Jones (2006) in *"Why should anyone be lead by you?"* argue that authenticity is more than "being yourself". Leaders engage in "artful authenticity" that involves deliberate acts that leverage their personality to build a deeper relationship with their followers. Central to this is the leader's ability to know himself or herself, and to deliberately use parts of their personality as leadership tools, whether those parts are strengths or weaknesses. Good leaders know what works for them and are willing to admit to their humanity, strengths and weaknesses. They are often guided by strong levels of intuition and emotional intelligence.

These expressions of humility, quiet determination and willingness to take the blame strongly parallel what Collins (2001) also labels as "Level 5 Leadership" in his popular book, *"Good to Great"*. Level 5 leaders build enduring greatness through a paradoxical combination of personal humility and professional will.

Like transformational leaders, and Level 5 leaders, authentic leaders are not necessarily described as charismatic by others. Rather through artful authenticity, they build enduring relationships, work hard, and convey their values to others through words and very often through their actions (George, 2003). Authentic leaders, like transformational leaders, are confident, optimistic and hopeful. However, it is more their own deep sense of self, and where they stand on issues and values, that distinguishes them from the classical profile of more transformational leaders (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Leadership and innovation

Creativity and innovation are "hot topics" in most western nations today. This topic is especially relevant to VET organisations that are attempting to be more innovative in how the structure their organisations, their training and the projects that they pursue in a highly completive raining marketplace. In a knowledge-driven global business environment, the creative processes that ultimately produce innovations implicitly involve leadership. Leaders play a major role in building organisational cultures that facilitate creativity and in turn innovation in organisations (Mumford et al., 2002). We know from research into the links between innovation and leadership (Jaussi & Dionne, 2003; Jung, 2000; Sosik, Avolio & Kahai, 1998) that:

✧ Transformational leaders through their values and actions contribute to the problem solving of their employees, and to more divergent thinking that promotes creativity

✧ Transformational leaders play a major role in building workplace cultures that are supportive, intellectually stimulating and risk tolerant

✧ Employees who identify with their leader as a role-model learn vicariously to be more creative by watching the leader as a creative individual who often thinks "outside the box".

Transformational leaders promote and create an intellectually stimulating and collaborative work environment (Mumford et al., 2002). As transformational agents, they create and sustain an organisational culture that nurtures creative efforts and facilitates the diffusion of learning. In a recent review of innovative organisations, Callan (2004) further argued that risk is integral to creativity and innovation in organisations. Creative work needs leadership support because it often involves dealing with complex, ill-defined problems that require the production of new and practical solutions. Employees need permission and support as they generate new ideas and novel solutions to these problems. A critical enabler is this "failure-tolerant" leader (Farson & Keyes, 2002) who demonstrates unequivocally that stumbles on the pathway to innovation are forgiven and are to be expected.

Developing management and leadership

What is meant by the terms "management development" or "management and leadership development" is still hotly debated in the literature. Cullen and Turnbull (2005) in their meta-review report multiple perspectives that attract multiple definitions. Most definitions emphasise that management development is a deliberate and planned activity driven by strategic and organisational objectives. In fact, management development has a substantial and positive impact on organisational performance when there is a fit between management development and business strategy (Mabey & Ramirez, 2004). From the Centre for Creative Leadership, McCall and his colleagues (1988) define management development, as it can and should be practised in organisations, as:

> "An organisation's conscious efforts to provide its managers (and potential managers) with opportunities to learn, grow and change, in the hope of producing over the long term a cadre of managers with the skills necessary to function effectively in that organisation".

This definition supports our position that management and leadership development in training organisations, as well as in other contexts, provides employees with opportunities for learning, change and the development of intellectual capital. Management development needs to be constructed to attempt to achieve the following expectations (see also Werner & De Simone, 2006):

✧ Management development needs to be linked to the organisation's strategic plan and business plans and strategies

✧ It needs to be responsive to the needs of the organisation and the individuals being developed; that is, individual learning focused within organisational learning

✧ A thorough needs assessment is essential, determining what managers do and the core capabilities they need to perform effectively now and in the future

✧ Specific objectives need to be set for the overall program and for each of its components, with the involvement and commitment of senior management in all phases of the process

✧ Seamless programs that cut across hierarchical and functional boundaries need to be used

✧ A variety of developmental opportunities are required, with both formal and on-the-job learning, with links between what is learned in the classroom and what people are actually doing in their jobs

✧ Action should be taken to evaluate the program regularly and to modify and update it as needs change

✧ It is important to be opportunistic so that management development is flexible and open to respond to the business needs and issues facing the organisation.

Returning to the issues about how we might classify opportunities for management development, a well-accepted typology is that management development consists of three sets of activities (see Cullen & Turnbull, 2005; Werner & De Simone, 2006):

1. Management education that uses predominantly a classroom setting in institutions that

provide certificates, diplomas or degrees around the acquisition of a broad range of conceptual knowledge and applied skills. In recent debates about the state of management education, Mintzberg (2004) in *Managers not MBA's! A Hard Look at the Soft Practice of Managing and Management Development* proposes that business schools in particular have adopted the wrong model, focusing too much upon the study rather than the practice of management (see also Pfeffer & Fong, 2002). Mintzberg, along with many others, argues that effective development of managers and leaders requires a combination of experience (craft), insight (art) and analysis (science). Management education needs to place less emphasis on the science or theory of managing and leading, and to provide more opportunity for doing and reflecting upon the craft and art of managing

2. Management training focuses upon providing specific knowledge and skills that are immediately applied within the organisation or to a specific role. Research reveals that technical capability is an important foundation for effective management in particular, especially in organisations that are focused upon interactions that coordinate, control and manage resources around formal policies, procedures and rules (Blanchard & Thacker, 2007)

3. On-the-job experiences are planned or unplanned events for a manager to develop self-knowledge and to practise or enhance their capabilities. Managing is a complex, often reactive, political and integrated endeavour. A focus upon on-the-job learning supports the recognition today that a manager's role requires a range of capabilities around conceiving, scheduling, communicating, controlling, leading, linking and doing (Mintzberg, 2004)

Organisations invest in the training and development of their managers and leaders due to a range of organisational benefits, employee benefits and wider community benefits (see reviews by Blanchard & Thacker, 2007; Saks & Haccoun, 2002). The major organisational benefits centre on creating sustainable and prosperous organisations. Good management and leadership are critical for good organisational performance. Developmental opportunities are learning opportunities that not only give managers the knowledge and skills to help the organisation achieve its strategic intentions, but this capability and learning facilitates positive change and innovation. Capable managers in turn are more confident and effective in dealing with their often complex and demanding jobs. They display higher levels of job satisfaction, commitment and engagement. Organisations with a strong commitment to management and leadership development find that the returns are positive and high in terms of organisational productivity, organisational learning, continuous improvement, and quality and customer service.

In addition, management and leadership development have benefits that extend beyond the organisation, and into the broader community. The knowledge and skills that employees gain in the workplace help to build a more educated and skilled pool of employees for local and regional communities. This capacity building raises the employability of individuals, their standards of living as well as assists in maintaining and enriching the daily lives of employees and their families. In turn, these benefits flow onto sustaining regional communities in particular.

Specific strategies for developing leaders and managers

There is no shortage of scholarly advice about how to design sound management and leadership development (e.g. Kayes, 2002; Rynes, Trank, Lawson & Ilies, 2003; Grey, 2004). In fact, the major challenge is to be different, and to seek out paradigms that offer new opportunities for developing managers and leaders. Development opportunities for managers make a difference when they encourage self-discovery, questioning and learning about managerial practices and leadership behaviours (Kayes, 2002). A useful way to start is to use the analogy of the inner and the outer theatre. Kets de Vries (2001a, b; 2005) in his various discussions of the inner theatre of the executive has explored the interface between psychoanalysis, psychotherapy, dynamic psychiatry, leadership, and the dynamics of corporate transformation and change (see also Callan & Latemore, 2006).

Critical self-examination and reflection are major learning processes that are used to construct and to explore the "inner theatre". Although reflection is a natural and familiar process, many busy managers lose touch with the use of reflection as a tool for making sense out of their organisational and personal life experiences (Daudelin, 1996). Reflective approaches help managers to free themselves of old mental models and to question perspective-limiting assumptions. The process of self-disclosing and questioning leads many managers to embrace opportunities to develop fresh perspectives about their leadership habits (Kayes, 2002). Driving reflection to explore the inner theatre is the powerful use of:

✧ Appropriate self-questioning (e.g. "What did you do when you were at your best as a leader? How did you feel?" or "Why would anyone want to be led by you?")

✧ Feedback from many of the diagnostic tools that are now available, including 360 degree feedback, when introduced and managed around an appropriate set of guiding principles (see Toegel & Conger, 2003)

✧ Journaling in that writing about work experiences generates emotions and deeper meaning (Kolb, 1984)

✧ One-on-one coaching offers "deep support" (Zuboff & Maxim, 2002), and expert coaches create a safe climate, where respect and trust are evident, and where the shared life-world of leaders can be supported and challenged (Dovey, 2004). Kets de Vries (2005) advocates that leadership coaching in a group has the highest pay-offs. In particular, the group can exert the considerable pressure required to create behaviour change in individuals

✧ Access to outsiders who have different points of view such as management consultants and educators, customers and competitors who have strong opinions about one's organisation, and as well access as to successful leaders and managers from the same or different industry

✧ Involvement in action learning projects that honour all styles of learning: creative discussion, information gathering, practical instruction and self-discovery (Kolb, 1984). Action-learning projects typically involve solving organisational problems using teams that move through a cycle of action, reflection, learning and renewed action. The effectiveness of action learning is supported by evidence that most managers learn about leadership on the job, from observing good and bad role models, and from resolving organisational challenges and personal hardships (Lombardo et al., 2001).

In addition, there is substantial evidence of the benefits from the deep levels of learning that occur for leaders and managers through the use of the "outer theatre" of learning on the job (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2004; Callan & Latemore, 2006). This mix of developmental activities includes the use of new positions, challenging roles, changes in the scope of a job, new start-ups, fixing up a problem, special projects and challenging employee issues such as diminished or poor performance; the use of a mentor or coach to support reflection; reflecting upon hardships at work such as a failure, a missed opportunity, a missed promotion; and more team-based development activities that require the use of cross-functional teams that apply action learning principles to generate new learning and often innovative solutions to operational problems.

Management and leadership in vocational education and training institutions

Drivers for change

A large number of reports have detailed the drivers for change in the vocational education and training (VET) sector, and in turn, the challenges facing VET leaders, managers, teachers, support and other staff. The drivers for change include (Chappell, Hawke, Rhodes & Solomon, 2003; Dickie et al, 2004; Guthrie, 2004; Mitchell, McKenna, Perry & Bald, 2005):

◇ National and State governments are demanding actions that respond to skill shortages, the improvement of skills and qualifications profiles, recognition of prior learning, the continued removal of barriers to skills acquisition and the up-skilling and employment of people who are disadvantaged in work and training.

◇ VET organisations need to better understand and to respond to several trends in the marketplace, including the growing group of part-time, casual and seasonal teachers and trainers. VET employees are moving between several employers as self-employed workers. Demographic changes, including the ageing of the VET workforce and the need to attract and retain Generation X and Y employees in a highly competitive job market, are also making an impact. As the skills shortages increase, VET employers will increasingly have to compete to attract a skilled workforce with associated changes in the expectations of employers and employees. However, it is argued by many that the image of VET, together with aspects of employment in VET, will make it difficult to attract and retain skilled staff.

◇ There is also ambiguity in the VET system about the skills and capabilities that are required by its wide variety of client groups. There is a more diverse customer base that has grown in sophistication. They are demanding products and services that require a re-thinking of positions adopted in the past about service delivery, flexibility and customisation. The introduction of a more competitive training market, with the arrival of private training providers and new funding arrangements such as user choice and fee for service, are also driving the pace of change.

◇ There is evidence that developments in VET practice – flexibility, customisation and larger partnerships – are evolving far too rapidly for industrial agreements, jobs design, HR practices and related views about the capabilities required of staff. The intensification of the workload among managers and teachers has increased the range of responsibilities and capabilities required to effectively perform these roles, but training is lagging to support the development of these new capabilities.

Discussion of these drivers also brings into play the existence of competing priorities and tensions that currently exist in the lives of VET leaders, managers, teachers and support staff. Mulcahy (2003) describes these broad tensions as choices between business strategy and

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education, national policy and local reality, entrepreneurship and accountability, and managerialism and professionalism. Or in slightly different terms, others describe the competing tensions that currently exist between staff and corporate needs, and social policy imperatives and the need to operate in a competitive training market (e.g. Mitchell et al., 2003). In response to such drivers for change, VET and other organisations need staff with designated levels of capability in a wide range of areas that are critical to meeting the daily and longer-term needs of an organisation.

Staff and organisational capability

According to Stephenson (1992), individual capability is an integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding that are used appropriately and effectively by individuals to perform various roles in the workplace. Capability refers not only to current knowledge, skills, qualities and understanding, but also to an individual's potential in each of these areas. Capability is both about the present sets of skills, qualities and understanding, as well as required sets for individuals to operate in the changed environments that will emerge in the future. Individual capability creates organisational capability. In particular, successful human resource practices build upon what Hamel (2002) defines as organisational capabilities, that is, what makes an organisation unique, and its source of sustained competitive advantage. Organisational capability is the ability of an organisation to meet its business objectives. Leonard-Barton (1999) proposes that the uniqueness of an organisation, its sources of sustained competitive advantage and its capacity for action are drawn fundamentally from this pool of staff capability.

Statements of required staff capability are typically captured in capability frameworks for groups such as executive, managers and supervisors). Capability frameworks (see Callan, 2005; Foley & Conole, 2003):

✧ Provide a unifying influence across an organisation and its various business units in terms of an understanding of current and required capability among staff

✧ Inform the recruitment of new staff around preferred capabilities, as well as facilitate mobility, progression and succession planning issues in an organisation

✧ Promote a more strategic approach to human resource management through determining required staff training and development activities to grow capabilities.

However, a large number of reports continue to conclude that the VET approach to human resource management remains typically reactive and poorly planned (Dickie et al., 2003; Mulcahy, 2003; Schofield, 2002). As Dickie and her associates (2003) propose, there is a preoccupation with the past and the present. There is too much focus upon operational HR issues (e.g. staff recruitment, selection, salaries, leave) and there is little or no work that adopts a future-oriented focus. In contrast, strategic HR practices focus more upon developing and supporting the achievement of business goals to improve organisational effectiveness (Noe et al., 2000). Central

to achieving such business goals is the development and promotion of an organisational culture that attracts and retains people with the recognised capabilities that will drive the future performance of an organisation.

VET leaders, managers and their capability

While competency is the ability to demonstrate what knowledge and skills have already been gained, capability is concerned as much with future knowledge and skill requirements as with immediate requirements (Finch-Lees, Mabey & Liefooghe, 2005). According to Stephenson (1992), individual capability is an integration of knowledge, skills, personal qualities and understanding that are used appropriately and effectively by individuals to perform various roles in the workplace. Capability refers not only to current knowledge, skills, qualities and understanding, but also to an individual's potential in each of these areas. Individual capability creates organisational capability. In particular, successful human resource practices build upon what Hamel (2002) defines as organisational capabilities, that is, what makes an organisation unique, and its source of sustained competitive advantage.

There is a large and rich literature that describes the capabilities required of leaders and managers in contemporary organisations. These frameworks do not state what the ultimate set of required capabilities is, but rather they should be seen to offer an understanding of the foundations of leadership and managerial work, and in turn, the targets for development. In addition, such frameworks highlight that leadership and management development is a "work in progress" that attends to short-term needs, but also should be seen as a longer-term process.

According to Whetten and Cameron (2002), the most frequently cited capabilities required of effective managers today are verbal communication (including listening); managing time and stress; managing individual decisions; recognising, defining and solving problems; motivating and influencing others; delegating; setting goals and articulating a vision; self-awareness; team building and managing conflict. Other typologies cluster rather than specifically list the required capabilities. For example, in another assessment of what are the main categories that will be important for managerial success in this new century (see Allred, Snow & Miles, 1996), the five categories identified are: a knowledge-based technical speciality; cross-functional and international experience; collaborative leadership; self-management skills; and personal traits such as integrity, trustworthiness and flexibility.

Recent research in the VET context highlights similar sets of technical, conceptual and interpersonal skills required of leaders and managers. In addition, these projects have also put forward various typologies of managerial and other capabilities that again are a guide rather

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than a "finished work" in terms of guiding management development in VET. A brief review of the capabilities required of the target groups in this research – executives, managers, teachers and support staff – is now presented.

Transformational leadership focuses upon the significant role that leaders and managers must play in engaging with their staff to support and to challenge organisational practices during quite rapid times of change. A leader's role is to promote the personal and organisational changes required for individuals and their organisations to survive and thrive in our global, highly competitive environments. In particular, modern leadership and management requires individuals to be more focussed upon the future, upon innovation and change, and the roles of enabler, coach and mentor to both motivate employees and to build both confidence and capability to meet these challenges. To address these challenges, individuals need to have well-developed capabilities in emotional management (i.e. emotional intelligence) and a real understanding of themselves (i.e. authentic leadership).

In the last five to seven years, a considerable amount of attention has been given to understanding the challenges facing leaders and managers in the VET context. A number of these reports have put forward typologies or capability parameters based upon detailed prior reviews of the changing nature of the VET context, including our understanding of external pressures for change, client expectations, the changing business of VET and new professional identities. A summary of this work on capability includes the following:

✧ Mitchell and his colleagues (e.g. Mitchell, 2002a; Mitchell, 2003a; Mitchell, 2004; Mitchell & Young, 2002; Mitchell, Clayton, Hedberg & Paine, 2003) propose that leaders and managers require skills in three domains: traditional management, change management, and strategic management. The research suggests that VET managers have primarily focused on traditional management (e.g. controlling, budgeting) but have not focused sufficiently on change management (e.g. forming a coalition of supporters of change) or strategic management (e.g. making strategy in response to unexpected developments). This body of research highlights in particular the impact of the information age upon the need for dramatic changes in VET institutions in the introduction of new types of online services and supports that make institutions more flexible and customer-centric to survive and grow in a highly competitive training market. Strategic managers will need to take the lead into this new reality also.

✧ Falk and Smith (2003) emphasise that individual VET leaders must be able to respond to internal and external change through their character attributes (i.e. consistency, ethics, integrity and control); networking, partnership and alliance building skills; through risk taking, initiative and innovation; and capabilities around visioning (i.e. vision , future trends, proactivity).

✧ Mulcahy (2003) identified seven domains of activity for VET leaders and managers: business management (e.g. project management, planning and budgets, setting targets and goals, using new technology; business development (e.g. sales, marketing, identifying new business opportunities); strategic leadership (e.g. future-casting, setting corporate directions, promoting a shared vision, strategic thinking); change leadership (e.g. create a vision for change, build new cultures); people-centred management/human resource development (e.g. communication, consulting with staff and clients, mentoring, coaching, building and supporting teams); education management (.e.g. coordinating and scheduling teaching teams,

coordinating courses and staff meetings); and boundary spanning (e.g. forming productive alliances, liaising with industry, public relations).

✧ Callan's (2001, 2005) reports have emphasised in particular the development of leader and manager capabilities that reflect the dominant requirement in VET today for transformational capacities. In line with the previous discussion of leadership and management as overlapping but distinct domains of activity (e.g. Kotter, 1990), Callan (2005) has proposed separate capabilities for leaders and managers.

Leadership capabilities involve: corporate vision and direction (e.g. promoting and communicating a clear vision for the organisation; building a successful corporate team, inspiring people to commit); strategic thinking and planning (e.g. undertaking effective strategic analysis, advocating strategic initiatives that keep the organisation ahead of its competitors); change leadership (e.g. inspiring alignment of vision, values and behaviours, fostering and supporting individual change agents); communication that influences (e.g. negotiating persuasively, encouraging debate); business and entrepreneurial skills (e.g. managing risk, knowing how to close a deal); and advancement of the interests of VET (e.g. being able to position the institution to respond successfully to changes to policy issues and funding).

Manager capabilities, according to Callan (2005), involve: change management (e.g. adopting a planned and staged approach to change, celebrating short-term wins); development and management of people (e.g. seeking opportunities to give advice, actively seeking out talent); performance management (e.g. allocating budgets and managing resources to achieve agreed outcomes); financial management (e.g. practising and encouraging fiscal responsibility across all levels of staff); and strategic support (e.g. assisting in the development of strategic priorities and plans).

✧ Foley and Conole (2003), like Callan (2005), have put forward capability frameworks for leaders and managers separately. Leaders (i.e. directorate leadership) display organisation vision and direction; grow the core business; engage in innovation and risk taking and change management; develop and empower people; use communication and interpersonal skills to engage others; have good self-efficacy; understand and work with industry and the community; and work with the vocational education and training system. The capabilities for middle managers involve: organisation vision and direction; growing the core business; developing and empowering people, communication and interpersonal skills; change management; working as a team; and working with the vocational education and training system.

VET teachers and capability

VET teachers and trainers need to juggle multiple identities. They have one identify located in being an industry specialist, with a detailed knowledge of a specific industry, its history, current challenges, equipment and training systems (Chappell & Johnston, 2003). Once located in a training organisation, they can also develop the identity of pedagogical specialist. However, if teachers and trainers stay positioned in an organisation, the industry specialist role tends to dominate (Chappell & Hawke, 2003). In addition, identities differ between public and private sector teachers, with the identity of public provider teachers anchored more in the importance of education and training as a social or public good. On the other hand, it is argued that the focus of teachers in private training organisations is more upon the outcomes for the individual student (Chappell & Johnston, 2003).

A number of recent reports build upon our understanding of the capabilities required of teachers to operate in these multiple contexts that require a mix of industry specific, as well as more pedagogical capabilities. In terms of skills in integration as well as innovation, Mitchell and his associates (2003) provide numerous examples of the creativity of leading VET teachers, and their capabilities around integration, innovation and clever assessment devices.

However, in viewing teacher capabilities as a whole, Schofield (2002) is concerned that teachers are being recruited in subject areas that are in demand now, but not necessarily will be in demand in the future. A new focus is required upon capacity building among teachers that emphasises quality, creativity, professional judgment and growth rather than simply compliance (Schofield & McDonald, 2004). The VET context requires teaching staff who:

✧ Have and can choose from a sophisticated pedagogical repertoire. Teachers require access to more learner-centred and work-centred approaches rather than traditional transmission pedagogies (see Chappell, Hawke, Rhodes & Solomon, 2003; Dryen, 2003). The future VET pedagogy needs to support this shift from teaching to learning-directed learning where the teacher is one of a number of resources available to the learner (CURVE and the University of Ballarat, 2003; Dickie et al., 2004).

✧ Can work with multiple clients in multiple contexts, and can integrate the learning experiences from a variety of contexts. In terms of this diversity, NCVER for example in its Student Outcomes Survey, identifies student audiences that now include apprentices and trainees, those who want to start their own business, established workers seeking to upskill, those who are waiting to get a job, those using VET to articulate to higher education, career changers and disengaged learners (Callan, 2005). Teachers need to see themselves as working in the knowledge and service industries that are characterised by increasingly diverse client bases that include groups of much younger customers and different types of customers than in the past, as well as the traditional cohort of 19-25-year-olds (Dickie, et al., 2004; Guthrie, 2004).

✧ Can manage the convergence of new telecommunications, e-business, and online learning to create new opportunities in the variety and delivery of education, training and services to students (Mitchell et al., 2003).

✧ Want to develop capabilities that will allow them to respond to what are to be the likely areas of greatest impact upon their professional roles, that is, new technologies, the increasingly competitive training environment, more flexible delivery, training packages, changes to funding, and more industry partnerships (Callan, 2001, 2005; Dickie et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2003). To be successful in these environments, VET practitioners will require a range of knowledge sets and skills that allow them to consult with industry towards designing appropriate pedagogy and support systems for an increasingly diverse and e-savvy client groups.

✧ Are creative and innovative. Mitchell and his associates (2005) cite examples of practitioners who demonstrate substantial creativity in implementing a qualification not previously required in a local region; embedding sustainability principles in the delivery of training packages; and establishing simulated working environments for the delivery and assessment of a training package (also see Callan, 2004 for other examples of similar innovative practices).

In a recent review, Callan (2005) identified five required capability areas for VET teaching staff: expertise in teaching and learning (e.g. demonstrating an understanding of a range of learning theories and techniques that inform practice, adapting learning and teaching strategies to suit individual students and learners); flexible delivery and assessment (e.g. the ability to factor on-site

assessment to suit the systems of the workplace, having knowledge and skills in forms of flexible delivery, including distance, blended, online or work-based learning); learner support (e.g. the ability to customise learning resources for groups and personalise them for individuals, knowledge of a range of behaviour management strategies for responding with difficult people); and industry currency (e.g. demonstrating a technical expertise in their subject area, ability to partner with industry); and budgeting and planning (e.g. understanding the nature of organisation budgets and funding, formulating with others business and marketing plans to support new training initiatives).

Other reports reveal that teachers need additional training in areas such as Training Packages, relationship building with industry, recognition of prior learning, and more flexible and customised approaches to learning (CURVE and the University of Ballarat, 2003; Schofield & McDonald, 2004).

The managers of VET teachers and their required capabilities

Like managers, teachers in VET expect to access a range of strategies to build what was described earlier as their dual identities of industry specialist and pedagogical expert. Corben and Thomson (2001) describe the need to build capability over time and to recognise three stages of development for teaching staff: the development of basic delivery skills, sound teaching practice, and reflection on advanced practice. At these later stages, it is likely that teachers will engage more in the same mix of professional development strategies described earlier for managers.

There is some evidence among teachers of additional support for problem-based approaches such as action learning and communities of practice (Mitchell & Young, 2001). Given their need for capabilities around various forms of flexible delivery (e.g. blended delivery, e-learning, online; see Mitchell, 2003b; Callan, 2005), it can also be argued that professional development activities for teachers and the managers of teachers need to model strongly the use of these tools. There is also some evidence that for teachers, role models play a valuable role in assisting the various career transitions, including the transition to manager of teaching staff (Rice, 2003).

In terms of skills in integration as well as innovation, Mitchell and his associates (2003) provide numerous examples of the creativity of leading VET teachers, and their capabilities around integration, innovation and clever assessment devices. It is being argued that a new focus is required upon capacity building among teachers and their managers that emphasises quality, creativity, professional judgment and growth rather than simply compliance

(Schofield & McDonald, 2004). The VET context requires managers of teaching staff who can promote in their staff :

✧ Improved knowledge sets and therefore choice from a sophisticated pedagogical repertoire (see Chappell et al.,, 2003). The new VET pedagogy needs to support the shift from teaching to learning-directed learning where the teacher is one of a number of resources available to the learner (CURVE and the University of Ballarat, 2003; Dickie et al., 2004)

✧ The ability to work with multiple clients in multiple contexts, and the ability integrate the learning experiences from a variety of contexts

✧ The capacity to see themselves as working in the knowledge and service industries that are characterised by increasingly diverse client bases (Dickie et al., 2004; Guthrie, 2004)

✧ The ability to manage the convergence of new telecommunications, e-business, and online learning to create new opportunities in the variety and delivery of education, training and services to students (Mitchell et al., 2003), and who are creative and innovative (Mitchell et al., 2005)

✧ A range of knowledge sets and skills that allows them to consult with industry about designing appropriate pedagogy and support systems for an increasingly diverse and e-savvy client groups (Callan, 2005; Dickie et al., 2004; Mitchell et al., 2003).

In a recent review, Callan (2005) also identified five required capability areas for VET teaching staff, and again, this typology hints at the role required of the managers of teaching and training staff, and their areas for professional development:

✧ Expertise in teaching and learning (e.g. demonstrating an understanding of a range of learning theories and techniques that inform practice, ability to adapt learning and teaching strategies to suit individual students and learners)

✧ Flexible delivery and assessment (e.g. ability to factor on-site assessment to suit the systems of the workplace, having knowledge and skills in forms of flexible delivery, including distance, blended, online or work-based learning)

✧ Learner support (e.g. being able to customise learning resources for groups and to personalise them for individuals, having knowledge of a range of behaviour management strategies for responding with difficult people)

✧ Industry currency (e.g. demonstrating a technical expertise in their subject area, being able to partner with industry)

✧ Budgeting and planning (e.g. understanding the nature of organisation budgets and funding, formulating with others business and marketing plans to support new training initiatives).

Other reports reveal that teachers need additional training in areas like Training Packages, relationships building with industry, recognition of prior learning and more flexible and customised approaches to learning (CURVE and the University of Ballarat, 2003; Schofield & McDonald, 2004). The key individuals in achieving this, in addition to the individuals themselves, will be the managers of teaching and training staff.

VET support staff and capability

As noted by Dickie and her associates (2004), little attention has been given to the capabilities of non-teaching staff. These professionals include librarians, student support staff, counselling and careers staff, disability support officers, community liaison and curriculum development staff. There is evidence that:

◇ Their role is expanding as students make greater use of e-learning and new technologies for enrolment and student administration

◇ Increasingly support staff perceive themselves to be a major source of corporate knowledge as well as key knowledge workers in the changing VET system (Callan, 2005). They expect to be involved more frequently in roles that require the completion of activities around giving advice, guidance and assistance to learners and staff; managing systems, equipment and resources that assist both groups; and working in ways that further the capacity of their organisations to meet government and industry standards and its corporate objectives

Based upon an interview study of support staff in several public providers, Callan (2005) identified (in addition to a general set of more generic capabilities) two specialist capability areas required for VET support staff:

◇ Learner support, including an ability to manage systems, equipment and resources that assist learners; and the provision of general pastoral care, including access to general advice and broader career advice

◇ Designing business systems, including an ability to learn about and to develop new systems and resources; and knowledge of new VET and industry requirements that will drive further enhancements to existing administrative systems.

Building staff capability

As evidenced by the number of recent reports (e.g. Callan, 2001; Dickie et al., 2004; Mulcahy, 2003), the level of interest and urgency about this issue has increased considerably in recent years. At a national level, there are the successful Reframing the Future and Australian Flexible Learning Framework initiatives. There is also at the State and Territory levels training and development being provided in public sector departments, industry advisory bodies, and professional associations.

In their review, Dickie and her associates (2004) conclude that:

◇ The national strategies have mostly focussed on aspects of the national training system, in particular the implementation of Training Packages, flexible learning and delivery and AQTF. Reframing the Future has broadened out to build strategic and change management skills in managers, leaders and support staff (see also Mitchell & Young, 2001). It is concluded that the national professional development programs have especially driven the opportunities for skilling and up-skilling among staff, with the State level and organisational level initiatives providing less frequent opportunities. At the provider level, training has mostly focused upon compliance, occupational health and safety and new IT systems.

✧ Communities of practice, networks and mentoring programs are growing in popularity both as forms of professional development, as well as tools for building capability around innovation (see also Mitchell, 2002b; Callan, 2004).

✧ Those most involved in professional development programs are full-time, permanent, teaching staff of training providers, as well as the executive, managers and part-time supervisors. Non-teaching staff report less access to professional development opportunities, while staff of public providers are more able to access these opportunities than staff in smaller private training providers. At the local level, increasingly more staff than in the past are paying for their own professional development.

Human resource managers are still actively debating the optimum strategies for the professional development of staff. For senior leaders and managers, the debate focuses upon the best ways to facilitate the transition from more managerial to leadership roles. In particular, there is substantial evidence that deep learning occurs on the job, and that the best approaches to managerial learning involve mixed methods (Centre for Creative Leadership, 2004; Callan & Latemore, 2006).

This mix includes the use of informal support groups to share and discuss leadership experiences; access to in-house or external mentors and coaches; formal internal or external leadership development programs linked into a pool of profiling devices (e.g. 360 degree leadership profiles) and support mechanisms (e.g. mentors, a pool of senior executives); new positions, challenging roles, start-ups, and special projects; and more team-based development activities that require the use of cross-functional teams that apply action learning principles to generate innovative solutions. In the VET context, at the managerial and executive levels, managers can benefit from practical learning in the workplace including problem-based learning, active learning, mentoring programs and communities of practice (Callan, 2001; Mulcahy, 2003).

As with managers, teachers in VET expect to access a range of strategies to build what was described earlier as their dual identities of industry specialist and pedagogical expert. Corben and Thomson (2001) describe the need to build capability over time and recognise three stages of development for teaching staff: the development of basic delivery skills; sound teaching practice; and reflection on advanced practice. At these later stages, it is likely that teachers will engage more in the same mix of professional development strategies described earlier for managers. There is some evidence among teachers of additional support for problem-based approaches such as action learning and communities of practice (Mitchell & Young, 2001). Given their need for capabilities around various forms of flexible delivery (e.g. blended delivery, e-learning, online; see Mitchell, 2003b; Callan, 2005), it can also be argued that professional development activities for teachers need to model strongly the use of these tools. There is also some evidence that for teachers, role models have a valuable function in assisting the various career transitions, including the one to head teacher (Rice, 2003).

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