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## ABSTRACT

Much recent debate has suggested Australia's technical and further education (TAFE) teachers not only need new knowledge and skills but need to perform their professional practices in new ways and in new contexts. What this debate has failed to recognize is that these change discourses are in effect constructing new professional identities for teachers, which interact and compete with the traditional discourses that once provided TAFE teachers with a distinct and separate educational identity. Any explanation concerning the construction of TAFE teachers' identities must look to both the historical and contemporary discourses that all circulate within the institutional life of the organization and must indicate how these discourses work to construct TAFE teachers as particular types of teachers. Three dominant institutional discourses within the institution of TAFE have shaped the formation of TAFE teachers' identities: industrial skill development, liberal education, and public service. The discourses of new vocationalism and economic rationalism have now joined the discourses of industrial skill development, liberal education, and public service in constructing the institutional practices of TAFE and its teachers. The failure of these discourses to make headway in changing TAFE teachers' understanding of who they are in VET can be accounted for because they leave little room for ambiguity and contradiction. (Contains 32 references.) (YLB)

# Issues of teacher identity in a restructuring VET system

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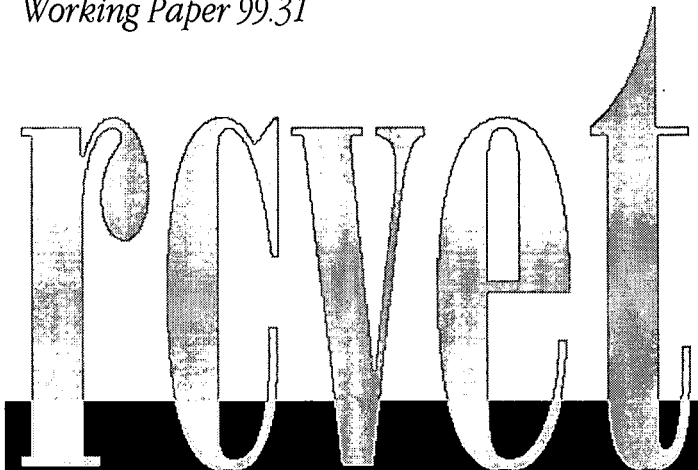
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**UTS RESEARCH CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING**  
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*Abstract*

In this paper I examine the impact of change on the identities of TAFE teachers. I suggest that a great deal of debate, in recent times, has suggested that teachers not only need new knowledge and skills but need to perform their professional practices in new ways and in new contexts. However, what this debate has failed to recognise is that these change discourses are in effect constructing new professional identities for teachers, which interact and compete with the traditional discourses that once provided TAFE teachers with a distinct and separate educational identity.

**CHANGING TAFE AND ITS TEACHERS**

For more than a decade, Vocational Education and Training VET systems, in Australia, have experienced unprecedented change. TAFE the publicly funded educational institution, once viewed as being largely synonymous with VET, is now positioned as only one of many providers. Today, schools, universities, industry and private providers are also constructed as part of VET (Maglen 1996:3). Federal and State governments have legislated to change structural arrangements to support this re-definition and have used their fiscal power to promote an increased focus on VET in all publicly funded educational institutions. They have encouraged the creation of a new competitive education and training market by sanctioning the establishment of private providers in VET. They have promoted a competitive ethos within publicly funded educational institutions and have extended the public accreditation processes of education and training into industry and organisational training programs.

At a more local level the TAFE system has also been the subject of continuing structural reform. In New South Wales, for example, restructuring has been a constant theme for the organisation since 1990. The publication of the government commissioned report TAFE's Commission for the 1990's: Restructuring Vocational, Basic and Adult Education in NSW (Scott 1990) recommended the termination of TAFE as a government Department, replacing it with a TAFE Commission, made up of twenty-four decentralised networks each headed by a senior manager. The report also suggested that an important goal for TAFE should be that it became 50% self-funding within ten years. Since that time the institution has changed from a government Department to an Authority and in 1991 became a Commission, abandoning the network structure in favour of a structure based on eleven Institutes of TAFE. In 1995, the TAFE Commission was absorbed into a new government Department; the Department of Training and Educational Co-ordination DTEC and two of the Institutes of TAFE were re-named Institutes of Technology. In

December 1997 DTEC was abolished and subsumed under an expanded Department of Education and Training with NSW TAFE now part of this new super-Department. The aim of self-funding was pursued with the establishment of TAFE Plus a subsidiary that that now sells TAFE's educational products and expertise in the open training market (Shreeve 1995).

Not surprisingly, TAFE teachers have experienced the impact of these government policies on their everyday pedagogical practices. As Smith (1997) demonstrates the implementation of competency based education and training, a central platform of the new policy framework for VET, is considered, by many teachers, as representing a radical change in the way they conceptualise and undertake their work. New curriculum designs, assessment methods, recognition of prior learning processes, and the establishment of national curricula are all seen as not only making new demands on teachers but altering teachers' conceptions of their role within the educational process and their relationships with students. Teachers are also experiencing the policy driven imperative of governments to insert commercial business practices into the operations of TAFE. These principles are characterised by the establishment of private providers in vocational education and training, increased competitive practices, new tendering arrangements for supplying education and training services and an increased emphasis on fee-for-service courses.

Teachers have also been the focus of policy discourses to do with quality and accountability in education. A number of reports have been commissioned by governments to investigate the quality of teaching and the new skills, knowledge and attributes needed by teachers in the emerging new educational environment (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 1990, Vocational Education Employment and Training Advisory Committee, 1993, Chappell & Melville, 1995). A common conclusion reached by these reports is that teachers in TAFE need to become new teachers in the educational and economic environment of the late nineteen nineties (Diplock J. 1996: 58). TAFE teachers have therefore experienced a set of policies and related discourses that have not only changed their educational institution but have challenged their understanding of their educational roles, privileging new pedagogical practices, new knowledges, new skills and new relationships with students and employers.

To date, the debate over government reforms to VET has commonly revolved around issues to do with their implementation (Sweet, 1993, Curtain 1994) or the professional competence of teachers in the new educational environment. Teachers are described, in these discourses, as requiring new knowledge and skills in order to implement the reforms (NCVER, 1990). They are asked to work in different ways (Diplock, 1996) and to undertake new roles and responsibilities in vocational education and training (VEETAC, 1993). To facilitate this change, calls are also made to reform the initial and continuing education of teachers and to provide increased opportunities for teachers to access professional development programs (VEETAC, 1993, National Board of Employment Education and Training, 1993, Ministerial Advisory Council on Teacher Education and Quality of Teaching, 1994). The rationale being based on the need for teachers to gain the new knowledge and skills required when working in this new VET environment.

However, the argument I pursue here is that this position makes an overly instrumental means-ends connection between teachers' knowledge and skills and the professional practice of teaching. It fails to appreciate that when teachers are asked to 'do things differently' in their everyday teaching practices they are also being called on to become

different teachers. That is, to have different understandings of their role in education, to have different relationships with students, to conceptualise their educational and vocational knowledge differently, to change their understanding of who they are in vocational education and training. In short, to change their identity.

In this paper I examine this re-formation of TAFE teachers' identities and suggest how the new policies and discourses of VET interact with teachers' existing understanding of their educational identity in complex and sometimes contradictory ways. I begin this examination by outlining the conception of identity that grounds this study.

## IDENTITY AT WORK

In the human and social sciences terms such as the 'self', the 'subject' and 'subjectivity' have been the focus of unprecedented critique. The tendency of these categories to represent the self as a unified, originary and integral construct, at the centre of the self-sustaining individual, has been problematised, as have notions of the self that constitute it as the product of social relations. Increasingly, discourses to do with ideas of the self, use terms such as contingency, multiplicity and fragmentation and the term identity, in particular, as come to the fore in contemporary discourses that speak of subjectivity.

The reasons for this discursive shift involve, among other things, the recognition that concepts of the self should not be seen as neutral representations of the subject-person but rather as discursive interventions that do important political and cultural work in constructing, maintaining and transforming both individuals and their social world. Contemporary feminist, post-colonial and cultural studies commentators, for example, point to the way in which conceptions of identity that are based on notions of gender, class, race and national or cultural allegiance, work to obliterate difference through the discursive construction of sameness (Pateman 1989, Butler 1993, hooks 1994). Others highlight the fragility and constructed nature of identity arguing that it has no enduring meaning but is subject to continuing cultural and historical re-formation (Hall & du Gay, 1996). Commentators such as Rosaldo (1993) point to the immanent connection between identity and cultural formation and this, in turn, has led to renewed interest in the relationship between the workplace as a site of cultural formation and a site where identity is constructed (du Gay 1996).

Making connections between the institutional practices of work and identity formation is based on the acknowledgment in social theory that all social practices, including work practices must be meaningful to the people involved. To conduct any social practice social actors must have a conception of it in order to think meaningfully about it. The production of meaning is therefore a necessary condition for the functioning of all social practices. An individual's identification with shared social meanings, constitutes identity formation and can be seen as a process of reality construction through which social actors interpret particular events, actions or situations in distinctive ways. It therefore provides a mechanism by which individuals can make sense of their social practices including those practices conducted at work.

This discursive approach to identity formation has a number of implications. Firstly, it suggests that identities are never unified but are the product of multiple, often intersecting

and antagonistic discursive practices that make particular identities possible. This leads to the idea that the formation of identity is an ambiguous project that owes its existence to particular discursive interventions. This in turn suggests that the construction of identity is both a strategic and positional process. Identities are constructed by the deployment of specific enunciative strategies that circulate in specific institutional sites and at particular historical moments.

In this context, therefore, any explanation concerning the construction of TAFE teachers' identities must look to both the historical and contemporary discourses that all circulate within the institutional life of the organisation. It must also indicate how these discourses work to construct TAFE teachers as particular types of teacher. In the following section three dominant institutional discourses that circulate in the institution of TAFE are examined. I argue here that these discourses have all, in one way or another, worked to construct TAFE teachers' identities as different from other teachers and trainers in the education and training project.

### **INDUSTRIAL SKILL DEVELOPMENT, LIBERAL EDUCATION AND PUBLIC SERVICE.**

Three dominant discourses within the institution of TAFE have shaped the formation of TAFE teachers' identities. The first, referred to here as industrial skill development, provided the rationale for the establishment of technical education in Australia. Government involvement in technical education began in the late eighties. This development reflected increasing concerns that public education was failing to provide an adequate supply of skilled labour to the rapidly expanding primary and secondary industrial base of the economy. Technical education was thus created specifically to service the labour needs of industry and the economy more generally.

Although technical education experienced remarkable growth over the following eighty years, until the nineteen seventies, the dominant discourses of government continued to construct the institution as one involved primarily in industrial skill development. TAFE was constituted as an institution responsible for industrial training, an organisation therefore, quite distinct from the other educational institutions of schools and universities.

The discourses of industrial skill development construct TAFE teachers in particular ways. Firstly, TAFE teachers are constructed, primarily, as having specialised vocational knowledge in a trade or other occupation rather than possessing any specialised educational or pedagogical knowledge. Indeed until relatively recently TAFE teachers had no recognised teaching qualification or educational training of any kind Chappell, Gonczi & Hager, 1994. For the most part, what distinguished TAFE teachers from their colleagues in industry was that they passed on their specialised vocational knowledge and skills in public education institutions away from the workplace.

Industrial skill development constructs TAFE teachers as industry practitioners who happen to teach and this position continues to be reflected in TAFE recruitment policies that continue to require teachers to have industrial expertise. At the same time, the institution does not require part-time teachers to have any educational training of any kind. A number of studies Chappell 1998, Smith 1997 have shown that TAFE teachers continue to construct an identity based on this claim to industrial expertise. It remains an important



discourse that TAFE teachers use to construct their occupational identity, acting as a point of difference that distinguishes TAFE teachers from other teachers working in education and training settings.

By the early nineteen seventies a second discourse emerged in government policies to do with TAFE. The discourse of liberal education constructed a significantly different institution from one responsible for providing industry with a suitably skilled workforce. Using the principles established in the landmark UNESCO report 'Learning to Be: The World of Education Today and Tomorrow, — the right of all people to education and lifelong learning', published in 1972, the Kangan Report ACOTAFE 1974 constructed a new identity for technical education in Australia. For the first time, an educational philosophy was set out for technical education, based on the principles of access, equity, and the primacy of the individual learner in the learning process. This discourse also, for the first time, emphasised the need for continuing and life-long learning and an increased emphasis on adult education. It challenged the narrow technico-instrumental view of training promoted by the discourse of industrial skill development and brought the institution of TAFE much closer to the discourses used to construct the institutional identity of public schools. TAFE, in a similar way to schools, was now constituted as an educational institution concerned as much with individual learning, educational need, personal and social development as it was with industrial skill development.

It was also around this time that the recruitment policies of technical education changed in relation to its teaching staff Kinsman 1992:29. More generalist teachers were recruited to service the increasing number of TAFE students returning to TAFE to continue or repeat general education courses. Specific TAFE teacher-training programs were also introduced and these programs were distinguished from schoolteacher training by their emphasis on the principles of adult education. Thus TAFE teachers were not only constructed as industry practitioners but were also constructed as liberal educators involved in the education and training of adults.

The discourses of industrial skill development, liberal and adult education remain powerful sense making constructions within the institution of TAFE. They provide a persuasive rationale for the existence of TAFE as a particular type of educational institution. Perhaps more importantly in the context of this study, these discourses also provide TAFE teachers with a persuasive rationale used to construct TAFE teachers as particular types of teacher.

The third dominant discourse involved in the construction of TAFE teachers, is the discourse of public service. Although by no means exclusive to the institution of TAFE it does, nevertheless, contribute to the organisational practices found in the institution. This discourse is itself inextricably linked to the rise of liberal democratic governance. The emergence of liberal democracy is characterised by an increasing involvement of the State in the social, cultural and economic life of society, largely, through the construction of various state instrumentalities and bureaucracies including those of public education.

These bureaucracies are in turn constructed by particular discourses that foreground the political and ethical features of liberal democratic governance including a focus on issues such as probity, fairness, consistency in decision making, equity and the adherence to law. Public sector institutions and the staff that work in them are thus characterised by particular institutional practices and particular modes of conduct. They are not only asked

to deliver politically sanctioned public services but are asked to deliver these services in ways that are equitable, impartial, consistent, directed and which adhere to the rules and regulations of public service and political accountability.

The identity of TAFE teachers has therefore been constructed, at least in part, by these three dominant discourses. Each, in different ways, have provided TAFE teachers with a persuasive rationale that has been used to construct them as different from other teachers in the education and training project.

## **NEW VOCATIONALISM AND ECONOMIC RATIONALISM**

One of the more persistent features of government educational policies in recent times has involved highlighting the uncertain economic future facing advanced capitalist economies. The globalisation of national economies, rapidly changing markets, increased international competition for goods and labour, new technological innovations and the movement from mass production to flexible specialisation in the productive process Castells 1993:15-18 are all used to suggest that educational systems must be reformed to ensure that they fully contribute to the economic adaptations required of modern societies. These reforms have usually included the promotion of a much greater involvement of business and industry in the development and implementation of educational curricula. These reforms have resulted in the implementation of competency based training, a greater emphasis on work-based and workplace learning and the emergence of on-site industry training as having equivalent status as vocational education programs conducted in TAFE institutions.

The domination of economic discourses in the educational policy formulation of governments has been labelled the new vocationalism. Pollard 1988, Grubb 1996, Ball 1994. New vocationalism emphasises the need for all educational institutions to contribute to national economic imperatives and, for the most part are embedded within human capital theories of economic performance. They promote the idea that economic development is intimately connected to the level of skill and ability of the workforce and are a common feature of the educational discourses of many OECD governments Papadopolous 1996.

However a second economic discourse has also influenced the contemporary educational policies of many governments. Economic rationalism promotes the view that government should withdraw from many of its traditional social responsibilities and promote market-style environments and commercial business practices within state services, including education Pusey 1991, Marginson 1994. This discourse calls for the installation of a culture of 'enterprise and 'entrepreneurialism' within the public sector OECD/CERI 1989, du Gay 1996:56 and advocates increased financial accountability, quality and competition in public sector services. It is also commonly associated with policies that involve the privatisation of state owned assets, the reining in of public spending and reduced budgetary allocations for public sector services.

The discourses of new vocationalism and economic rationalism have now joined the discourses of industrial skill development, liberal education and public service in constructing the institutional practices of TAFE and its teachers. Moreover, they insert new meaning making practices in the organisation which interact and contradict each other in



complex ways. As a result, these competing discourses have now problematised the persuasive rationale that has supported the construction of TAFE teachers as particular types of teacher.

At one level the focus on business and industry, at the centre of new vocationalism, compliments TAFE teachers' existing understanding of their identity within their educational institution. As was outlined earlier, the discourses of industrial skill development construct TAFE teachers' primarily as industry practitioners and TAFE teachers' identification with their industry is an important feature that they use to construct themselves in the educational project. Consequently, the discourses of new vocationalism that speak of closer links between education and industry have a certain resonance with TAFE teachers, particularly as they use their industrial experience to 'mark' themselves as different from other teachers in education.

Moreover, TAFE teachers see their industrial knowledge and experience as conferring legitimacy on their identity as teachers. In some senses, the discourses of 'industrial expertise' does similar discursive work for TAFE teachers as 'disciplinary' knowledge does for teachers working in schools. The geography teacher in the school and the hospitality teacher in the TAFE college achieve an educational identity partly through their 'mastery' of particular albeit different bodies of knowledge.

However this similarity is only a partial one. In the world of TAFE the ability of teachers to 'keep up-to-date with industry' is given additional importance because many TAFE students are not only learners but are, at the same time, workers. Thus, they are able to make an immediate and on-going evaluation of the industrial expertise of the TAFE teacher. The utility and currency of the vocational knowledge and skills that TAFE teachers share with their students can often be tested immediately by students in their working lives. It is in this sense 'practical' knowledge and is judged not in terms of any claim to generalisable 'truth' as in the case of discipline-based subjects but rather its performativity in the workplace.

Consequently, a TAFE teacher's credibility as 'industry expert' is always open to question and further compounded by her location in an educational institution rather than an industrial workplace. While this location has always created tensions between the TAFE teacher constructed as 'industry practitioner' and TAFE teacher constructed as 'educator' the discourses of new vocationalism have increased these tensions by privileging industry relevance and workplace learning over the other goals, previously ascribed to the institutional work of TAFE.

TAFE teachers' location in an educational site creates a second point of tension with the discourses of new vocationalism. Educational institutions are characterised by different discourses and different sense making constructions than those found in industry. TAFE, for example, is an institution that has also constructed itself using the discourses of liberal education. These discourses construct an educational project for TAFE teachers, which goes beyond industrial training. Teachers in TAFE have taken on the discourses of liberal education in the construction of their identity. They construct themselves as educators who are interested as much in the humanist goals of individual and social development as they are in industrial skill development.

The discourses of new vocationalism also create a third tension in the construction of TAFE teacher identity. Now the numbers of educational participants who look to education to provide them with job relevant skills has increased dramatically. This expectation is particularly acute in school age students and their parents who are well aware of the high rate of youth unemployment in the labour markets of OECD countries such as Australia. One of the consequences of these developments has been a rapid increase in the participation rate of young people in TAFE courses. Increasingly TAFE teachers are confronted with large numbers of school age students in their classes. Thus new vocationalism has changed the profile of TAFE students and consequently undermined TAFE teachers' identification with adult education that has been used as a point of difference that constructs them as particular types of teacher.

The policy discourses of economic rationalism have also made their presence felt in the institution of TAFE. Under these policies the TAFE system is now constructed as merely one player in an emergent 'competitive training market'. The norms, values and educational interests that were once used to differentiate the institution of TAFE as a public sector instrumentality have now been replaced by different discourses. These discourses construct an institution characterised by 'entrepreneurial', market driven and commercially focused vocational education and training activities, effectively countering TAFE's traditional identity as an institution of public service and liberal education.

Governments, justify this policy shift on the grounds that public sector institutions, as constituted, are unable to respond adequately to the rapidly transforming needs and demands of contemporary societies. They are incapable of providing either the quantity or quality of services now required. They are also characterised as inefficient and costly in terms of the taxation requirements needed to support their operations. The bureaucratic culture of these organisations is seen as militating against rapid and differential responses to rapid social and economic change. This culture stultifies organisational innovation, diffuses individual responsibility and is dysfunctional in terms of the emergent conditions of post-industrial society.

These discourses are used to justify governments divesting themselves of many of their traditional functions. Economic rationalism encourages the privatisation of public utilities by promoting the private sector as a better, more efficient system to supply society with the goods and services it requires. Moreover, in public institutions such as TAFE that remain under government control, the State inserts the discourses of the commercial world in these institutions. It also encourages the private sector to compete with these instrumentalities and sets up internal management structures within the public sector that mirror those found in the private sector.

The discursive markers of economic rationalism such as competition, business, efficiency, doing more with less, private providers, accountability, profit, customers and the market are now all common expressions found in the managerial discourses of TAFE. The influence of economic rationalism is also present when TAFE managers speak of TAFE teachers. Teachers need to be more entrepreneurial, quality focused, customer oriented, efficient and flexible in the new institution of TAFE. TAFE must operate as a lean machine. Consequently teachers must focus more on quality and the marketing of their educational products and expertise. Teachers must respond to the needs of industry and identify new commercial opportunities in their colleges Chappell 1998 :23.

In effect what these policy discourses attempt to do is dissolve the discursive boundaries that distinguish private enterprise from public service, particularly those boundaries delineated by the different forms of conduct that govern these particular types of organisation. Furthermore, these policies suggest that it is only through the establishment of an 'ethos of enterprise' that public sector instrumentalities can meet the needs and demands of contemporary society.

However, despite over a decade of economic rationalism TAFE teachers continue to identify with the discourses of public service and perhaps more importantly with the ethos and norms of conduct that are realised by these discourses. When speaking of their work teachers use expressions that sit much more comfortably in an organisation constructed by the discourses of public service and liberal education than the discourses of enterprise and entrepreneurialism. Teachers, overwhelmingly speak of equity, fairness, social justice and public access rather than profit, competition, efficiency and entrepreneurial activity when describing their work Chappell 1998:24.

## COMING TO A CONCLUSION

Some commentators would have us believe that the contemporary moment in organisational life, is characterised by the dissolution of the discursive boundaries or points of difference that once acted to distinguish one form of organisation from another. Osborne & Gaebler, 1992, Kanter, 1993, Peters, 1990. In many ways the related discourses of new vocationalism and economic rationalism can be read as examples of this in action. Some features of new vocationalism attempt to dissolve the discursive boundaries that once distinguished the organisation of work from the organisation of education. While features of economic rationalism attempt to dissolve the discursive distinctions that construct public sector organisations as different from organisations in the private sector.

From this perspective the contemporary policies of VET, influenced by the discourses of new vocationalism, can be seen as playing their part in the dissolution of difference that has constructed work and education as separate spheres of existence. Australian governments have implemented policies that construct the work site as much a legitimate site for vocational learning as a TAFE college. Vocational learning achieved at work can now lead to the award of the same qualification as that awarded by TAFE colleges. Industry through Industry Training Advisory Boards ITAB are now key players involved in not only the content and outcomes of vocational education and training programs but also in their delivery. Workplace competency standards determine vocational education curricula and government reports suggest that employment related competencies are largely interchangeable with the attributes needed for individual well being and citizenship. AEC/MVEET, 1992:55.

In a similar way, the policies of VET constructed by the discourses of economic rationalism can be read as dissolving the boundaries that once distinguished TAFE as a public sector organisation from an organisation of the private sector. These policies insert the language of the commercial world into the operations of TAFE and emphasise the business nature of the institution's activities. These policies call for the establishment of an 'enterprising culture' within the institution of TAFE and a greater focus on TAFE as an entrepreneurial organisation. The 'new' TAFE is thus constructed as an organisation with

norms, values and modes of conduct that are largely indistinguishable from those found in private organisations.

However, the assertions made here present a much more complex and ambiguous explanation of the contemporary changes taking place in the organisation of TAFE than that proposed by organisational theorists such as Kanter 1993 and Peters 1990. For many teachers, the discursive boundaries used to construct TAFE as a particular type of organisation have not dissolved in the face of the contemporary policies and discourses of VET. TAFE teachers continue to identify with an institution constructed by the discourses of industry skill development, liberal education and public service. Furthermore, these discourses remain powerful and sometimes contradictory sense making constructions that teachers use to fashion their occupational identity in the organisation.

This does not imply that the contemporary policies and discourses of VET have had no impact on the organisational life of TAFE and its teachers. The discourses of new vocationalism have, simultaneously, supported and problematised TAFE teachers understanding of themselves in the vocational education and training project. TAFE teachers do identify with the world of work, constructed by the discourses of new vocationalism but, at the same time, also identify with the world of education constructed by the discourses of liberal education. Their identity is thus, in some senses, fashioned across the discursive boundary that constructs work and education as separate spheres of existence. The discourses of industrial skill development and liberal education have both contributed to the meaning making practices of teachers in the institution. Consequently, while the contemporary policies and discourses of new vocationalism work to magnify the ambiguity that TAFE teachers feel as they make meaning across the discursive boundary between work and education, they do not unsettle teachers' identification with TAFE as a particular type of educational organisation.

The same cannot be said of the policies and discourses of economic rationalism. Economic rationalism constructs a radically different organisation, with different purposes, values, and interests than those that have been used to construct public sector institutions. It generalises the enterprise form of conduct to all forms of conduct and constructs 'successful' organisations as those whose people possess particular entrepreneurial attributes and capacities. Implicit in this revision of organisational purposes, values and interests is the re-construction of the organisation's identity and the modes of conduct that are legitimised by this identity.

However, what advocates of this re-construction fail to recognise is that by extending the enterprise form of conduct to all forms of conduct this denies the possibility of an organisation such as TAFE pursuing different, but nonetheless valuable social and educational ends. They seem unable to imagine that the business of TAFE is not identical in every respect to the 'business' of business. It remains an agency of government and is thus constrained by the forms of conduct imposed on it by the political environment in which it finds itself.

The installation of enterprise in the organisation of TAFE undermines any persuasive rationale for its existence as a particular type of organisation able to pursue divergent and sometimes mutually unrealisable goals. Perhaps more importantly, in the context of this study, it also undermines any persuasive rationale for the existence of TAFE teachers as

particular types of teacher. This particularity does not imply that TAFE teachers' identities are free from ambiguity and contradiction. Indeed this study has demonstrated that ambiguity and contradiction are in many ways defining features of the construction of identity.

However, what it does suggest is that the failure of new vocationalism and economic rationalism to make headway in changing TAFE teachers understanding of who they are in VET can be accounted for precisely because these discourses leave little room for ambiguity and contradiction. They provide no discursive space within which teachers are able to construct meaning making practices that are capable of spanning the world of work and education or the world of private enterprise and public service. New vocationalism and economic rationalism merely offer teachers singular conceptions of practice and forms of conduct that are drawn from one world and imposed on another. This position therefore has little meaning for teachers in their working lives, for it denies the complex, ambiguous, and contradictory discursive achievement that is realised by teachers in the construction of their identities.

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