

VET Educator Careers and Job Classifications

**Report Prepared for the
Victorian TAFE Association**

By

Fitzfin Consulting Pty Ltd
and
Professor Gerry Griffin

August 2002

Contents

	<i>Page</i>
1. PREFACE	3
2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
3. RESEARCH METHOD	7
4. THE CHANGING BUSINESS OF TAFE	9
5. THE CHANGING WORKFORCE OF TAFE	13
6. STAFFING DIFFICULTIES, PROBLEMS AND ISSUES ARISING FROM THE CHANGING BUSINESS OF TAFE	17
7. CAREERS AND JOB CLASSIFICATIONS GENERALLY AND IN OTHER JURISDICTIONS	20
8. OPTIONS AND PRINCIPLES FOR JOB CLASSIFICATION IN TAFE	23
9. RECOMMENDED JOB CLASSIFICATION STRUCTURE	28
FIGURE 1: <i>Proposed job classification career structure</i>	34
APPENDIX 1: <i>Key Features of a New Zealand Polytechnic's mechanism for workload analysis/appeals</i>	35
REFERENCES	36

1. Preface

The Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) initiated this VET Educator Classification and Career Structure Research Project following the Future of the TAFE Workforce Search Forum that it conducted in August 2001. The Search Forum Report, *TAFE Workforce: The Continuous Transition*, recommended a framework of options for the renewal of the TAFE workforce. A problem identified in relation to the issue of Careers was that “narrow career pathways make TAFE a less desirable place to work”. A suggested solution was the “development of a compatible career/classification structure for TAFE general and teaching staff”. Other actions that the Forum recommended, which relate to careers/classification structures, include:

- Re-positioning TAFE in the knowledge economy.
- Reviewing entry-level requirements for TAFE teaching.
- Redesigning jobs for improved workplace learning.
- Enabling all teachers to work across multiple delivery modes including workplace and e-learning.

This Classification and Career Structure Project was commissioned to deliver an independently researched, authoritative options paper for consideration by the Chief Executive Officers of Victorian TAFE organisations. The project recognises the value that a contemporary classification framework and associated employment arrangements would provide for TAFE employers, TAFE clients, and importantly, for educators and line supervisors who want fulfilling TAFE careers.

As detailed later, the project drew heavily on the contributions of a range of TAFE institutions, educators and management. Thanks are extended to all stakeholders who contributed to the project.

2. Executive Summary

This review of VET educator careers and job classifications in TAFE was commissioned by the Victorian TAFE Association (VTA) and follows on from the Future of the TAFE Workforce Search Forum conducted by the VTA in August 2001. The Report draws on a wide range of sources of information, including a review of relevant existing literature and websites; interviews with practitioners, academics and bureaucrats knowledgeable about vocational and educational training; and seven focus groups – one with representatives of TAFE-equivalent institutions in four countries, one a cross-Institute reference group; and five focus groups at Victorian TAFE Institutes/University TAFE Divisions.

Over the past decade, and particularly the past five years, the role, the product mix and the market for TAFE Institutes has changed dramatically. Areas of business that have grown in the recent past include non-face-to-face teaching, industry-based training, on-line delivery of material, an increase in international students at Institutes, an increase in off-shore delivered training and the growth of training packages. Servicing the needs of these new markets raises several, significant implications for TAFE Institutes. A key implication centres around the workforce, particularly the job classifications and staff career paths dimensions. If TAFE staff are to service the needs of a diverse range of clients, then the existing staffing arrangements will have to change. In brief, the market-driven demands on staff necessitate change; principal among these changes will be job specifications, classifications and related reward mechanisms, working arrangements and career paths.

The Report notes that, over the past decade, TAFE in Victoria has been in transition. Specifically, a series of major changes in the composition of the TAFE workforce have occurred, including the erosion of the traditionally dominant role of male workers, a very significant growth in part-time work, much of it of a casual nature or of short duration, and a decline in the number of teachers as a proportion of all TAFE staff. Combined, these trends, allied with changes in the business of TAFE, have inevitably caused tensions within the TAFE workforce.

Discussion in the focus groups and in the interviews conducted highlighted a whole series of existing, staff-related problems and issues. Broadly, two key groupings of issues emerged, the

first of which relates to how the system actually is coping with the pressures generated by having a job classification system that is not aligned with the needs of the business. In brief, in many cases, the goodwill, commitment and loyalty of staff underpin continuing operations; the Report notes, however, that many of the resulting human resource management practices are unlawful. The second group of staffing issues also arises from the inflexible nature of the existing agreements and job classification system. While some staff have responded extremely well to the challenges posed by the evolving nature of the TAFE business, others have maintained a rigid and inflexible work schedule, causing significant management and scheduling problems. In general, there is now a significant mismatch between the classification/reward system and the changing needs of TAFE Institutes. Many focus group members and interviewees recognised this mismatch. Further, there was widespread recognition that, as the business of TAFE continued to expand into non-traditional areas, this mismatch was only going to widen.

The Report notes that it is possible to analyse and categorise job classification systems on a number of dimensions. For our present purposes, there are two very broad groupings of such systems that are of interest. The first grouping, into which the present TAFE Teacher classification system fits very comfortably, is a traditional prescriptive, fixed system with fairly tight job specifications and guaranteed outcomes in terms of remuneration. The second grouping focuses around job classification systems that facilitate and indeed encourage a significant degree of job flexibility. In such systems, job content is not rigidly defined, the scope to exercise judgement is broadened and multi-skilling is encouraged. Given the changing nature of the TAFE business, and given the existing range of difficulties and problems being experienced under the present job classification system, this second grouping of systems seems much more appropriate and relevant for TAFE Institutes in Victoria. Looking to the future, arguably the only realistic question is the degree of flexibility to be introduced.

More strategically, the Report identifies three main options available to TAFE Institutes, although some variations to each of the main options are also possible:

1. The “do nothing” option, largely accepting the existing system and allowing it to evolve in an ad hoc way as it has during the 1990s;
2. The “piecemeal” option which would address a particular classification problem such as the lack of formal recognition of a trainer or para-professional category; and

3. The “integrated” option which would attempt to develop a system that structures and links together the various parts of the workforce.

The Report argues very strongly for the adoption of option 3 and proposes and outlines an integrated job classification, career path and working arrangements structure for TAFE Institutes. There are four component parts to this structure: VET Teacher, Professional Educator, Industrial Skills Instructor and VET Trainer. The Report concludes that the adoption of this careers and job classifications system would produce a wide range of benefits for both TAFE Institutes and staff, including flexibility in the range of products and services delivered by Institutes and fulfilling, professional, career progression for staff.

3. Research Method

A number of sources of information were utilised to develop the proposed job classification and career path structure:

- A review of existing literature, both on developments in TAFE and job classification structures generally;
- A series of interviews with practitioners, academics and bureaucrats knowledgeable about vocational and educational training;
- International data, including a focus group discussion with representatives of TAFE-equivalent institutions and an analysis of job classification systems in four countries;
- A cross-Institute reference group; and
- Focus groups at five Victorian TAFE Institutes/University TAFE Divisions.
- Numerous Australian and international websites on job classification systems and career structures.

The literature review highlighted a number of themes, particularly the changing market for TAFE products, the varying sources of funding and workforce-related data, particularly the changing character and culture of TAFE workers. These themes are discussed in sections 4 and 5.

Contact was made with a number of individuals who had relevant knowledge about TAFE and its markets. These included staff at the Victorian Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE), staff in private training institutions, academics and senior staff within TAFE Institutes, including some Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). In total, twelve face-to-face interviews were conducted as well as some shorter telephone discussions.

In late March, 2002, the 2nd World Congress of Colleges and Polytechnics was held in Melbourne. Advantage was taken of this event to organise an international focus group to discuss work-related and job classification matters in a comparative context. As well as a number of senior staff from overseas Colleges, representatives from the Association of Polytechnics in New Zealand and the Association of Canadian Community Collages, also participated in the discussions. With the valuable assistance of the VTA secretariat, data on

job classification systems in a number of TAFE-equivalent institutions in Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the USA were collected and analysed.

A cross-Institute focus group, comprised of CEOs, Associate Directors and Human Resource Managers from 13 VTA members was held in mid-May and again in early July. The first meeting broadly discussed the principles that should be applied to a job classification system, the second meeting provided feedback and comments on a draft classification system. The input from this group was extremely valuable.

The final source of data came from a series of focus groups conducted during May and June, 2002, at five TAFE Institutes: Box Hill, Bendigo Regional, East Gippsland, RMIT and South West. In total, 38 staff, representing a cross-section of positions within TAFE, and including some Australian Education Union (AEU) members, participated in these groups. Discussions at these groups were invaluable in providing insights from the workplace, and we are extremely grateful both to the participants in these groups and also to the organisers in the five Institutes.

Combined, these sources provided a wealth of data on the TAFE sector, particularly the challenges it faces and the appropriate job classification, career structures and working arrangements needed to respond to these challenges.

4. The Changing Business of TAFE

Over the past decade, and particularly the past five years, the role, the product mix and the market for TAFE Institutes has changed dramatically. Indeed one 1999 report claimed that “the Victorian TAFE system is experiencing change that is unprecedented in its scale and pace in the history of the system” (Malley et al 1999, p.7). The rate of growth of government funding has not, however, kept pace with the cost of maintaining a viable TAFE sector in Victoria. The response from TAFE Institutes was both inevitable and predictable – grow non-government sources of income where possible. Areas of business that have grown in the recent past include:

- The growth of non-face-to-face teaching,
- Industry-based training,
- On-line delivery of material,
- An increase in international students at Institutes,
- An increase in off-shore delivered training,
- The growth of training packages.

Commensurate with this growth, there has been an increase in the numbers of private training providers.

Data provided by OTTE highlights the changing sources of income for TAFE Institutes. For example, in the year 2000, recurrent government funding increased by 9 per cent while non-government revenue increased by 16 per cent. Table 1 details the increasing importance of fee-for-service payments from industry and business. Over the five-year period 1997-2001, and despite increased government funding over the past two years of this time period, “fees for service – industry/commercial business”, as a proportion of total operating income, increased from 12 per cent in 1997 to 17 per cent in 2001. In addition, and not detailed in the table, the government provides income as a fee for service client of TAFE. In 2001, this “government fee for service” work provided TAFE with \$40 million, resulting in, overall, total income from fees for 2001 of \$195 million.

Table 1: TAFE Fee-for-service Revenue from Business, 1997-2001 (\$ millions)

<i>Year</i>	<i>Total Operating Revenue (TOR) \$ million</i>	<i>Fee for Service Revenue, (industry commercial business)</i>	
		<i>\$ million</i>	<i>% of TOR</i>
1997	743	91	12.2%
1998	737	101	13.7%
1999	744	119	16%
2000	824	141	17.1%
2001	904	155	17.1%

Source: Office of Tertiary and Technical Education

The recent Victorian Ministerial Statement, entitled *Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy*, clearly encouraged this multiplicity of sources of incomes: “For TAFEs to be successful in the future they need to further develop their relationships and partnerships with communities, industries, businesses and other educational institutions” (Kosky 2002, p.4). These partnerships must be developed in an increasingly global economic environment due to “information and communication technologies changing the way in which many companies do business and create value” (Kosky 2002, p.1). Further, despite some funding initiatives announced in this Statement, the necessary “lift in investment in knowledge and skills development” is envisaged to be the “primary responsibility” of industry.

These “new” markets and sources of incomes build on the traditionally wide range of programs offered by TAFE. Shah (2002) summarises this range as follows:

- recreational non-award courses for personal interest, leisure or general enrichment,
- pre-vocational training and basic education in areas such as literacy, numeracy and adult education,
- initial VET such as apprenticeships and technician training, and

- post-initial training such as advanced certificates and associated diplomas in a variety of areas.

Complementing these increasingly disparate markets is the growing diversity between institutions. Besides the obvious size, geography and university-linked differences, a host of other differentiators are now emerging. In brief, these include:

- some Institutes regard industry as a key client, others view industry as just another minor market,
- many Institutes are currently “dipping the toe” in the international water while some few are well established in this market,
- levels of income from non-government sources range across Victorian TAFE Institutes from 10 per cent to 50 per cent,
- some Institutes have strong links with universities, including some that are not part of a TAFE/University conglomerate, others have no ambitions for such links,
- the key target for some Institutes is on-site students while for others it is off-site training,
- staffing arrangements vary from traditional full-time employment remaining dominant to extensive use of fixed-term and casual/sessional employment.

Not surprisingly then, the Noonan Report (2002) details what it terms the “diverse relationships in which TAFE Institutes are involved both internally and externally”.

Finally, from 1992-1999, the Victorian Government actively increased competition between Institutes. While a number of metropolitan Institutes have always competed for business, this competition seems to have escalated with the need to increase non-government funding. As Institutes follow their individual strategies; as they follow industry clients to serve their needs outside of their home markets; as non-metropolitan Institutes attempt to gain a foothold in city markets; and as societal expectations, as evidenced in the Noonan report, of TAFE multiple missions - ranging from providing training for the whole community to individual businesses - continues to grow; increased competition is inevitable.

Servicing the needs of these new markets raises several, significant implications for TAFE Institutes. A key implication centres around the workforce, particularly the job classifications and staff career paths dimensions. If TAFE staff are to service the needs of a diverse range of clients, including industry and mature students; deliver courses on campus, off-campus in industry and perhaps overseas; and use a variety of teaching technologies; then the existing staffing arrangements will have to change. In brief, the market-driven demands on staff necessitate change; principal among these changes will be job specifications, classifications and related reward mechanisms, working arrangements and career paths.

Recent changes in the TAFE workforce will now be discussed briefly.

5. The Changing Workforce of TAFE

Over the past decade TAFE in Victoria has been in transition. In many ways, the 1990s was a pivotal decade of change. At the national level, the National Training Reform Agenda, the Australian Qualifications Framework, New Apprenticeships and Traineeships and the influence of the National Training Packages have not only changed what TAFE delivers but where and how it is delivered. A submission in 2000 to the New South Wales Review of Teacher Education stated that there is a need “to address the needs of practitioners in all sites where education or training is being delivered”, and “that schools are not the only sites where teachers work”. (NSW Government 2000, p.2). At the state level, it is important to note that, in 1993, the Victorian Government relinquished the Crown employment of the TAFE workforce to each TAFE Institute and University with a TAFE Division. Overall, there have been a series of major changes in the composition of the TAFE workforce. A range of studies have outlined the extent of this change. This section of the Report briefly summarises three such changes identified by Shah (2002) and then focuses on the implications of change for career paths and job classifications.

Gender Trends

There has been an erosion of the traditionally dominant role of male workers, and particularly male teachers, in the TAFE workforce. During the 1990s, male employment remained static while female employment grew at around 6 per cent per annum. By 1998, in terms of equivalent full-time employees, parity of numbers had been reached. It has been argued that a significant proportion of this change is explained by a swing in the demand for training in traditional “male” industries, such as manufacturing, to the new growing services sector. Regardless of the validity of this argument, there clearly has been a growing feminisation of the TAFE sector.

Growth in Part-time and Casual Work

Concurrent with, and no doubt related to, the feminisation process, there has been a very significant growth in part-time work. Much of this part-time work is of a casual nature or of short duration. Many Institutes now actively rely on such workers to achieve flexibility and economic savings. Between 1994 and 1999, the proportion of all teachers who were sessionals increased from 25 per cent to 36 per cent while that of tenured teachers dropped from 47 per cent to 38 per cent. By 2001, however, this trend had reversed, with sessional staff dropping

back to 31 per cent and tenured staff climbing to 43 per cent. Over the same period of time there has been a steady decline of fixed-term contract staff from 28 per cent in 1994 to 24 per cent in 2001.

Diminishing proportion of teachers

Shah (2002) has traced a decline in the number of teachers as a proportion of all TAFE staff. He acknowledges that this could be caused by a number of factors, including increased class sizes, increase in workloads or a reduction in hours actually taught. Regardless of the validity of the differing explanations, it is highly likely that, given the discussion above on the changing nature of the business of TAFE, this trend will continue.

Other Trends

- Despite their relative decline, there still remain a significant number of middle-aged male teachers employed on a permanent basis in traditional fields.
- There is relatively little staff turnover and staff are getting older; in her survey of TAFE staff, Kronemann (2001) found that 30.4 per cent of respondents had worked in TAFE for 20 years or more and that the average age for men was 49.6 years.
- The TAFE culture largely remains public sector.
- Formal teacher training, especially in vocational competencies, is minimal.

Overall, then, there has been both continuities and change among the TAFE workforce. Combined, these trends, allied with changes in the business of TAFE, have inevitably caused tensions within the TAFE workforce. Chappell (2001, p.21) argues that these trends 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”.

So what are the implications of these changes for the career paths and job classifications of the TAFE workforce for the future? A VTA-sponsored *Future of the TAFE Workforce Search Forum* addressed this issue in August 2001. The Forum argued for a renewal of the TAFE workforce and envisaged that, in the future, TAFE employees would need to be:

- Staff with the technical and professional skills needed to lift the quality of TAFE teaching and learning and who are empowered to be innovative and respond flexibly to community, enterprise and individual demand.
- Staff with the ability to work positively with diversity and continuous change, to innovate, solve problems as they arise and achieve tangible results along the way.
- Staff capable of working together in cross-functional, cross-hierarchical groups for open exchange of information and development of solutions (VTA 2001).

In many ways, interviewees and focus group participants largely accepted this vision for future TAFE staff. What is far from settled, however, is the structure and content of the appropriate industrial mechanism through which these changes are to be regulated. In practice, individual TAFE Institutes have already had to respond to the changes in their markets by varying the profile and usage of their workforces.

The Ministerial Statement indicates that the workforce of the future would need a range of skills including the ability to:

- further develop and manage new relationships and partnerships with communities, industries, businesses and other educational institutions
- trial new initiatives in innovation, emerging skills and industries
- design training services to small to medium sized enterprises
- create, adjust to and innovate change
- increase investment from the private sector in TAFE
- promote safe, healthy community environments and active and inclusive networks at regional, state, national and international levels
- respond in a flexible way to clients' needs
- provide high quality training products and quality assurance systems
- develop new and better articulated TAFE products and qualifications
- work as teams
- lead knowledge creation and innovation

- apply existing knowledge in new ways
- make lifelong learning a reality
- make successful submissions for government funding
- be recognised as education and training leaders
- have a positive attitude towards learning and the ability to learn
- shift between modes of employment
- operate via flexible accountability mechanisms

Clearly, the skill sets required by Institutes in the future will necessitate changes to their staff recruitment and retention strategies as well as to their classification structures.

The next section of this Report briefly outlines the difficulties, problems and issues currently being experienced in the staffing arena and the inevitable tensions arising from the process of change. The remaining sections then explore future options and recommend a job classification and career path structure appropriate to both changing market needs and changing workforce profiles.

6. Staffing Difficulties, Problems and Issues Arising from the Changing Business of TAFE

Discussion in the focus groups and in the interviews conducted highlighted a whole series of existing, staff-related problems and issues. Broadly, two key groupings of issues emerged, the first of which relates to how the system actually is coping with the pressures generated by having a job classification system that is not aligned with the needs of the business. In brief, in many cases, the goodwill, commitment and loyalty of staff underpin continuing operations. Examples of staff working during “holidays” or out-of-hours or beyond agreed teaching loads were readily offered. Such altruism is not, however, the basis for an on-going relationship and, inevitably, a range of informal agreements, usually individual, less frequently collective, have developed at the local level.

A range of locally customised payments are made to specific staff, including payments for off-shore activities, for discipline leadership, and in some cases, purely for market-related reasons. As well as financial arrangements there are a host of other arrangements such as time-off-in-lieu and acquiescing to sessional staff forming their own companies. Overall, one focus group member commented that his department was “trying desperately to get around the limitations of the 42 by 30 system (42 weeks attendance per year, 30 hours attendance per week limitation)”. Another used a more anodyne phrase when she pointed to what she termed “discontinuities” between what the enterprise agreement and award specified, and what actually happens “on the ground”. In general, there was widespread agreement that position descriptions reflect the award rather than what is actually being done in the workplace.

The classification structure and associated working conditions in the Institutes’ certified agreements remain largely based on the award structure. There are limited and piecemeal examples of Institutes negotiating classification-based flexibilities in their certified agreements. One organisation has a new classification called Program Manager, which is exempt from the restrictive working arrangements of the Award. Another has a certified agreement for its new classifications of Industrial Instructors and Instructor Managers who can devote more hours to delivery than is provided for in the award. In general, however, there

was widespread agreement that the award does not reflect what is actually required to be done nor what is being done in the workplace.

Thus there exists an expressed need and necessity for these various arrangements. However, a significant number are probably unlawful. If such arrangements have been put in place because of the needs of the business, and these business needs are continuing to evolve, then varying relevant industrial instruments to ensure that these practices are lawful is necessary.

The second group of staffing issues also arises from the inflexible nature of the existing agreements and job classification system. While, as outlined above, some staff have responded extremely well to the challenges posed by the evolving nature of the TAFE business, others have maintained a rigid and inflexible work schedule. A constant refrain in discussions and interviews was the theme of staff who “want to and will only do their 21 hours of teaching per week”. Consequently, numerous opportunities were being lost or postponed, and the role and example of such staff, many of them relatively long-standing teachers, frequently had a dampening effect on their colleagues. As one HR manager pointed out, neither a stick nor a carrot exists to deal with such staff. Again, as a matter of good human resource practice, a legal mechanism must be sought to address these difficulties. Clearly, a number of TAFE employers acknowledge the need to provide certain staff with additional incentives but the restrictions and inadequacies of the existing classification structure and working arrangements prevent them from doing so without deviating from the award.

In general, there is now a significant mismatch between the classification/reward system and the changing needs of TAFE Institutes. Many focus group members and interviewees recognised this mismatch. Further, there was widespread recognition that, as the business of TAFE continued to expand into non-traditional areas such as delivering courses on-line, off-shore and in-industry, this mismatch was only going to widen. Their views were strongly complementary to the findings of the VTA Search Forum Report (p. 12) that it would be “hard for TAFE to remain competitive and an employer of choice in some but not all locations or functional areas”. The rationale for that finding was the:

- Lack of rewards and incentives for TAFE staff, perceptions that pay levels are uncompetitive, the absence of robust succession planning, and flat career structures, combined with limited career and professional development opportunities; and

- A view that the industrial framework imposes constraints on the ability to achieve organisational excellence through workforce renewal (VTA Search Forum Report 2001, p.12).

Overall, a number of focus group members and interviewees offered specific examples of what might be termed the current non-competitiveness of TAFE. To date, the resulting issues, problems and difficulties have largely been resolved either by “bending” the existing rules to suit accommodative staff or by ignoring the rigidities imposed by non-accommodative staff. A number of examples were, however, offered of cases where staff with skills in high-demand areas simply could not be accommodated and were lost to the Institute. These “solutions” are not viable in the medium to longer term. Rather, a new career path and job classification system is needed.

7. Careers and Job Classifications Generally and in other Jurisdictions

It is possible to analyse and categorise job classification systems on a number of dimensions. For our present purposes, there are two very broad groupings of such systems that are of interest. The first grouping, into which the present TAFE Teacher classification system fits very comfortably, is a traditional prescriptive, fixed system with fairly tight job specifications and guaranteed outcomes in terms of remuneration. The Teachers' award contains detailed position descriptions, an approach that severely inhibits job redesign or re-evaluation at the Institute level. This structured approach does have a number of advantages including protection of rights, clear job outlines, specified promotion criteria and a general certainty about the dimensions of the job. Not surprisingly, such systems are better suited to larger, particularly public sector organisations operating within non-competitive markets. Given recent developments in industry generally, but also in the public sector, the traditional advantages of this system are increasingly being questioned. Among other responses, the introduction of what is now termed New Public Management (see, for example, Hughes 1998) into the federal and state public service in Australia has highlighted the negative aspects of this system. More specifically, the traditionally highly structured approach is now regarded as introducing a significant degree of rigidity in virtually all aspects of job classifications. In short, its traditional strengths are now regarded as potential weaknesses, particularly in an increasingly competitive and client driven environment.

The second grouping focuses around job classification systems that facilitate and indeed encourage a significant degree of job flexibility. In such systems, job content is not rigidly defined, the scope to exercise judgement is broadened and multi-skilling is encouraged. Such systems, of course, are not new - professional workers, for example, have long exhibited this broader range of job characteristics. Frequently, these systems are linked to salary benchmarks via points-factors, classification descriptors or market rates surveys. They operate in conjunction with contemporary human resource policies such as job evaluation and re-design, staff training, performance review and appeal/issues resolution mechanisms. They are linked to, and usually driven by, the environment and markets within which the business operates. Given the changing nature of the TAFE business discussed earlier, and given the existing range of difficulties and problems being experienced under the present job classification

system, also discussed earlier, this second grouping of systems seems much more appropriate and relevant for TAFE Institutes in Victoria. Looking to the future, arguably the only realistic question is the degree of flexibility to be introduced. Market forces have already varied significantly many dimensions of the existing system. The real challenge is to structure the new system to facilitate both the needs of Institutes as well as those of employees.

In exploring the shape of a new career path and job classification system, lessons can be drawn from experience in other jurisdictions.

Turning first to systems found in other States, significant similarities exist among the various formal systems, particularly incremental salary scales linked with a qualification barriers, capped maximum hours per week, capped teaching weeks and capped total number of annual hours, and penalty rates. However, interviews with personnel involved in some of these systems indicate that a degree of flexibility has also found its way into these systems. In New South Wales, for example, the higher salaries are linked to a much more extensive use of sessional staff, to the extent that the significant majority of staff is now comprised of sessionals with many full-time staff assuming the mantle of *de facto* managers. In addition, some jurisdictions, such as the Northern Territory and Queensland, have introduced a para-professional category of workers. In broad, however, there would not appear to be a flexible, formally-integrated, innovative job classification system in operation in other TAFE Australian jurisdictions.

Enterprise agreements for a number of private sector training providers were examined and one interview was conducted with the Managing Director of one such provider. In many ways private providers, although competitors to TAFE, operate quite differently. Little unionisation exists and there are few restrictions on how management operate in this sector. Agreements were silent on teaching hours and attendance. Further, in terms of the educational qualifications of the staff of private providers, it has been reported that “non-degree workplace trainer qualifications have become the qualification of choice for many of TAFE’s competitors” (NSW Government 2000, p.1).

Job classification and career path systems in TAFE equivalent institutions in four other English-speaking countries, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and the USA were examined. Before briefly discussing those systems, the point needs to be made that, in many ways,

TAFE, with its wide range of activities, is relatively unique and that there are no direct equivalents in any of the countries we examined. The range of job classification systems within these countries varied from extremely prescriptive systems with lengthy salary progression scales to systems that were very light on detail. Not surprisingly, the degree of rigidity seemed to vary with the market for each institution, particularly the extent to which competition was a factor. Based on “closeness of fit” and likelihood of implementation, the most interesting system found was in New Zealand. In effect, an institution-based enterprise agreement provided the broad framework within which the local manager and the employee agree on the dimensions of the job. There is provision for a workload analysis and appeals mechanism where agreement cannot be reached at this level. The major lesson from the examination of other overseas institutional arrangements and from discussions with senior managers attending the 2nd World Congress of Colleges and Polytechnics is that the search for flexible classification systems is being actively pursued by all and is becoming more urgent.

8. Options and Principles for Job Classifications in TAFE

Prior to examining options for future job classifications and career paths, a brief reminder of the key points made so far in this Report is appropriate:

- The business of TAFE has changed very significantly over the past decade and is highly likely to continue to evolve rapidly.
- Significant diversity exists between Institutes, such as their sources of income, markets and clients, staff skills and profiles, and future strategies.
- Existing job classifications and associated working arrangements have not, to put it mildly, facilitated this changing role of TAFE Institutes. Currently, many staff reward systems are, at best, *ad hoc* or, at worst, unlawful.
- A key determinant of the future success of TAFE Institutes, as observed in the preparation of this report and reinforced in the Ministerial Statement (Kosky 2002) is the development of a skilled, professional, innovative, adaptable and committed workforce.

To achieve the future goals and targets of TAFE Institutes what is the most appropriate system of job classification? This section of the Report outlines three broad options, nominates one of these options as the preferred option, and outlines the principles upon which this system should be based.

In essence, there are three main options available to TAFE Institutes, although some variations to each of the main options are also possible:

1. The “do nothing” option, largely accepting the existing system and allowing it to evolve in an ad hoc way as it has during the 1990s;
2. The “piecemeal” option which would address a particular classification problem such as the lack of formal recognition of a trainer or para-professional category; and
3. The “integrated” option which would attempt to develop a system that structures and links together the various parts of the workforce.

We briefly consider these options.

1. The Do Nothing Option

This may be an attractive option to some Institutes. Basically, it allows such Institutes to continue with a business-as-usual framework, a framework within which a number of Institutes are coping. Further advantages of this option include the fact that a number of core staff are happy with the present situation and, based on recent experience, the AEU would likely continue to be ambivalent to any additional, minor deviations from the existing job classification system. Relatedly, opposition from some staff, and possibly the AEU, could be anticipated to any significant change.

More than countervailing these attractions, however, is the range of forces driving change broadly within the TAFE industry. In particular, the changing business of TAFE, funding arrangements, market forces and the changing nature of work and workers are all drivers of change. Complementing these drivers are the patent illegalities and the amounts of management time devoted to resolving the inflexibilities within the present system, and the need to attract a quality workforce to meet future business needs. In brief, while it is likely that the existing system would survive in the short-term, serious labour market and industrial relations issues are likely to emerge in the medium term. Finally, the point should be made that there seems to exist a climate for change under the present state government regime. For these reasons we disregard the “do nothing” option other than in the form of immediate, short-term needs.

2. The Piecemeal Option

There exists a number of what might be termed pressure points within the TAFE staffing framework. The piecemeal option would identify one or more of these problems and attempt to rectify/vary/change some aspects of these problems. Thus, for example, individual Institutes may grapple with the issue of skills shortages in specific areas or, collectively, Institutes may wish to seek a flow-on of the classification of Industrial Skills Instructor/Trainer achieved in a few Institutes. By-and-large, most TAFE Institutes are currently following this piecemeal option.

The obvious advantage of the piecemeal option is that it does address specific problem areas, areas identified by the Institutes themselves, in a pro-active way. It may well resolve these

issues and is, accordingly, a significant improvement on the do nothing option. The equally obvious disadvantage is the lack of the big picture/strategy and the possibility that solving an immediate issue or problem may, in fact, create other issues later on. For example, it should be recalled that precedent is a powerful argument in law, including industrial law, and the resolution of that small issue of compensation for industry-based or overseas assignments for the few may create major financial costs when that aspect of the business expands. Equally, many of the piecemeal solutions in the staffing area depend on the goodwill, commitment and, in some cases, connivance of existing staff. Such factors should not be relied on for future developments.

Overall, a piecemeal approach, on its own, has both advantages and disadvantages. As part of a longer-term vision, such a step-by-step approach has much to commend it. Given the proximity of the termination of the current enterprise agreements in the TAFE industry, such an approach, as part of an integrated classification system, bears exploration.

3. Integrated Classification System

An integrated classification system would draw together the various components of the TAFE staffing requirements, develop linkages and integrations between these components, provide career paths and professional development, and, overall, facilitate flexibility, change and achieve organisational business objectives. Given the existing issues identified earlier in the TAFE classification system, this integrated approach is very attractive. It offers a range of advantages including a vision for staff of the TAFE of the future; a flexible, multi-skilled professional workforce; the ability to respond to market forces; the opportunity to lead change; and, very importantly, an attractive career path for staff in the industry, particularly when supported by a commitment to a culture of meaningful professional development.

The potential disadvantage of this integrated system is that the change process could, potentially, be lengthy and/or arduous. It is worth noting in this context, however, that there was a high degree of recognition of the necessity for change within all of the five TAFE cross-sectional focus groups, groups that included a number of employees as well as management representatives. In addition, the present political and industrial climate is, arguably, supportive of change. Perhaps even more important, the increasingly client driven nature of the vocational education and training system in Australia demands change.

Overall, while the difficulties of transferring to an integrated system should not be minimised, the prize for successfully making the move is more than worth the effort, or indeed the battle should that eventuate. An integrated job classification and career path system should be an essential part of the TAFE sector. Not all sections of the system discussed below may be relevant for all individual Institutes. Also, the timeframe for achieving an integrated system may be variable. However, to achieve its business goals, an integrated classification framework, to be drawn upon in a manner that meets that Institutes' particular needs, is vital for each TAFE Institute.

Given this strong recommendation to move toward an integrated classification system, what should be the underlying principles of such a system? Drawing on the extensive consultations carried out for this Report and on the discussions and readings about both the changing business and changing workforce, the following guidelines would appear appropriate:

Guidelines for an integrated system:

1. General

- A central, core tenet in the move to any new job classification system is that existing employees should not be financially disadvantaged.
- Where possible, the new system should draw upon and complement the existing teacher system.
- Recognise that some staff simply will not want to change.
- Career paths, preferably through professional development, should exist between the various components of the system.
- Link demonstrated competencies and outputs to an equitable reward system
- TAFE staff need to become professional educators, rather than teachers.
- The system should both facilitate and encourage flexibility, adaptability and innovation.
- The job classification system must suit the needs of the business.
- Lateral as well as vertical integration is necessary.
- Annualised hours/getting the job done, rather than teaching hours and attendance requirements, forms the basis of a professional education system.

2. Specific

- There is a need to formally recognise, by industrial instrument, the long term practice of employing Industrial Skills Instructors.
- There is a demonstrated need for a new trainer/para-professional/staff category where traditional teaching qualifications are not required.
- Sessional/casual employees should be fully integrated within the job classification system.
- A new classification to reward staff who perform managerial duties and to recognise market value is necessary
- There should be provision in the new structure for the outstanding teacher.
- Flexibility is needed in the timing and method of course delivery.

9. Recommended Job Classification/Career Path Structure

Based on the guidelines and principles discussed in the previous section, Figure 1 proposes an integrated job classification and career path structure for TAFE Institutes. There are four component parts to this structure:

- VET Teacher
- Professional Educator
- Industrial Skills Instructor
- VET Trainer

The proposal would facilitate lateral as well as vertical career development. As a general comment, the skills, responsibilities and roles - and thus the salary levels and associated rates – would be subject to further analysis. At this stage, the focus is on discussing the underlying rationale for each classification/stream and the linkage between these classifications/streams. Having discussed the four component parts of the proposed job classification system, this section of the Report then outlines some related administrative issues.

1. VET Teacher

The position of teacher is the traditional core, backbone position within TAFE. It is proposed that, for pragmatic reasons, this stream should, in essence, remain available to all existing teaching staff. All such staff, however, should be offered the option of converting to the new Professional Educator classification. That classification would allow staff to broaden and continue their career, and attract increased remuneration; however, as discussed below, the inflexibilities associated with the existing Teacher classifications would not be incorporated into the PE stream, so, to encourage this conversion, a small incentive could be built into the PE salary scales. Those staff who chose not to convert would be regarded as VET Teachers and would largely remain on their present wages and conditions, so ensuring that they are not financially disadvantaged. For a small minority who are excellent classroom teachers and who do not take up the option of moving to the PE stream, recognition of their specific skills would be available through Institutes offering a limited number of appointments to a new point on the scale, T 7. In addition to performing their own teaching duties, the role of T 7 position

holders would also include mentoring and professional development of other Teachers, and sharing their extensive teaching knowledge and expertise.

Importantly, all new external appointments and all promotions within the VET Teacher classification would be made into the Professional Educator classification.

2. *Professional Educator*

The proposal envisages the establishment of a stream for employees, that of Professional Educator (PE). Combined within this stream would be a number of existing, disparate positions, such as head of department/school, program directors, project workers, on-line managers, industry liaison managers, support service workers and coordinators of many shapes, sizes and varieties. A classification used by some Institutes of “education manager” – covering positions titles such as heads of departments and campus managers - would be incorporated into the Professional Educator scale. In effect, the classification would pick up all those positions that are paid an Award/Certified Agreement rate more than the existing T6 teachers because of their managerial and/or professional responsibilities.

In addition, however, the classification would also potentially include the majority of teaching staff. To encourage existing employees to enter this classification, an immediate financial incentive could be built into the PE scale. This amount could be in the order of around \$1,000 - \$1,500 at the T 3 – PE 1 interface, rising to around \$1,500 - \$2,000 at the T 6 – PE 4 interface. Over time, this PE category would replace the VET Teacher scale as the core backbone of staffing in TAFE.

The PE incremental range would thus extend from PE 1, the equivalent of T 3 plus some incentive payment, to PE 5, with promotional, co-ordination and managerial positions comprising PE 6 and upwards.

Importantly, the professional concept of “doing the job” rather than an hours-based approach would be the dominant criterion for all levels of the Professional Educator classification. In this context we note again our earlier comment that “teaching loads and attendance” do not appear to be codified in industrial instruments covering staff in the private sector VET industry. The key component of this PE classification would be flexibility, including flexibility to teach, to manage, to innovate and to interact with industry. The PE classification

stream would thus encourage enhancement of employees' vocational skills and capabilities to facilitate the transfer of knowledge in new and emerging industries, and to create opportunities for enhanced service delivery.

3. *Industrial Skills Instructor*

This is a classification that has emerged in some Institutes and in interstate jurisdictions to facilitate the delivery of on-the-job specific skills. In practice, minimal teaching qualifications are associated with this particular classification; rather, emphasis is on the possession of vocational skills. ISIs perform limited, specific functions, and are not found in all Institutes. There is, however, widespread interest in the availability of an assessing, on-the-job specific training, para-professional job category and, given the existence of this ISI classification, we have utilised it to meet this need. It may be desirable to re-badge this position title to link with descriptors used interstate, such as tutor in the Queensland TAFE system.

Based on actual, existing practice, we have linked the ISI classification with the lower reaches of the Teacher scale. This facilitates the integration of the ISI category into the PE classification, where appropriate, with, for example, possible promotion of an ISI 4 to a PE 1. However, some current ISIs perform higher duties including supervisory roles, so Figure 1 proposes two promotional higher levels of ISI 4 and 5.

4. *VET Trainer*

Trainers are currently found in a limited number of TAFE Institutes. They are required to possess and to exercise a range of skills: conceive of courses, negotiate their introduction and plan and deliver these courses, usually at the clients' workplace and without any disruption to production. Some are required to manage other staff and resources. Others are involved in the delivery of training packages but are not involved in curriculum development or the design of learning resources, although they may make a contribution to this function. As industry links develop, the demand for such staff will likely grow.

Figure 1 proposes that VET Trainers 1 and 2 classifications are for employees who facilitate skills acquisition by learners from pre-structured training packages. The VET Trainer 3 and 4 classifications are promotional classifications for consultants and co-ordinators who liaise

with industry and develop tailored training solutions. In terms of careers, it is suggested that some Trainers may undertake appropriate professional development and seek to apply for Professional Educator positions. This would provide them with the opportunity to broaden their roles and access an alternative career path.

Other issues

A. Sessional/casual staff

The original rationale for introducing sessional staff into the TAFE sector was to facilitate the transfer/teaching of industry skills not readily possessed by the teaching staff. This rationale no longer applies in the significant majority of sessional staff cases: currently, sessional rates of pay are simply not competitive with industry rates. Additionally, sessional work is a mode of entry to full-time teaching and the roles of sessionals now vary widely, both between individuals and Institutes. After extensive discussion with focus groups, we propose that the classification of “sessional” be abolished and that all such casual workers be paid the appropriate hourly rate, plus a loading, that reflects the actual job that they perform. Thus, one casual worker with a particular level of skills would be paid at the appropriate point of the ISI classification while another casual worker with advanced skills would be paid at the appropriate PE rate. In practice, the concept of 320 maximum teaching hours per annum for sessional staff would then become irrelevant.

B. Determining workloads and roles

Of the proposed four Educator classifications only one, that of VET Teacher, would have a specified workload – continuing the existing practice of, say, 800 class contact hours per annum (including time allowances). Because of the flexibility required of the other educators, the appropriate workload would be agreed between the educator and their manager. To resolve any workload disputes an analysis/appeal mechanism would be available; such a mechanism has worked well in the New Zealand Polytechnic surveyed. Appendix 1 outlines the key features of the New Zealand Polytechnic’s workload analysis/appeals mechanism. As a matter of good workforce development practice, performance appraisal and staff development should also link into this process.

We envisage that the job responsibilities of ISIs and of VET Teachers would normally be tied to specific role description. Because of the wider range of skills necessary for the Trainer Educator and Professional Educator categories at the more senior level - conceptual, planning, negotiating, delivery and so on – job responsibilities could be based on a combination of role description and a points-based job evaluation.

C. Part-time work

Part-time appointments at any classification would be possible. These could range from, say, 0.1 to 0.9 appointments. A related issue to be considered would be the remuneration arrangement. The possibility of a loading to cover issues of leave accruals or public holidays, in lieu of proportionate entitlements, could be considered.

D. Teaching qualifications

It is proposed to retain the status quo with teaching qualification requirements: all ISIs, VET Trainers and staff in categories up to and including T 4 or T 5 and PE 2 or PE 3, would require, at least, Certificate IV qualifications.

E. Links to PACCT salary scales

It may be desirable to build in some linkage with PACCT staff. Currently, ISIs and Trainers are largely paid under PACCT agreements, and other such staff may, with development and training, provide a potential source of professional educators. In addition, given the generic nature of skill envisaged in the recent Ministerial Statement, there is a need to be able to clearly identify compatibilities between the descriptors in the PACCT classification scale and the proposed Educator streams.

F. Incremental progression

Currently, incremental progression occurs in the Teacher scale. Accordingly, it may be advisable to introduce similar incremental progression at the lower reaches of both the ISI scale, say ISI 1 to ISI 3 and the PE scale, say PE 1 to PE 3. To progress by increments above PE3 could require the PE to hold appropriate teaching qualifications similar to what is currently required to progress from T5 to T6. Progression through PE 4 or PE5 could provide pay equity with interstate and intrastate professional comparators.

Summary of benefits

The benefits of the proposal can be summarised as:

- Gives staff a vision for the future and facilitates their growth and development
- Allows those staff who regard themselves as teachers to remain teachers but offers incentives to accept the multi-dimensional tasks
- Looks to the future – new teachers to be professional educators
- Facilitates a career progression both into and out of the classroom
- Provides a mechanism to prevent, and where needed to resolve, workload issues
- Allows the identification of key competencies and rewards service delivery
- Allows greater flexibility in the range of products and services delivered, linked with the reward system
- Provides an equitable framework and then allows development
- Encourage learning and skills acquisition, and professionalism, innovation and flexibility
- Allows multi-site and multi-modal delivery
- Links most classification with accountability
- Provides a realistic framework from which to address internal and external pay equity issues

FIGURE 1

PROPOSED JOB CLASSIFICATION/CAREER STRUCTURE

TAFE Executive Officers		
Managerial Staff		
VET Trainer & ISI Stream	VET Teacher Stream	Professional Educator Stream
		PE 8 (HOD2 & SS2)
		PE 7 (HOD1)
		PE 6 (PRCO & SS1)
Trainer 4		PE 5
	T 7 (AST)	
Trainer 3	T 6	PE 4
Trainer 2	----- Note	PE 3
	T 5	
Trainer 1		PE 2
	T 4	
ISI 5		PE 1
	T 3	
ISI 4		
	T 2	
ISI 3		
	T 1	
ISI 2		
	T 1	
ISI 1		

Notes:

- Teacher Qualifications required for progression beyond T5 and PE3 respectively.
- Promotion from T6 to T7 to a limited number of positions that are allocated to “Leading Teacher”.
- Existing VET Teacher Stream above T7 transfers to the PE Stream.

Appendix 1

Key features of the a New Zealand Polytechnic's mechanism for workload analysis/appeals

1. It is based on a process developed by a national workload working party.
2. It has the following 5 operating principles:
 - (i) the process should have the following 3 aspects:
 - workload principles
 - workload assessment/analysis
 - workload negotiation
 - (ii) the process can be applied at any time, ie during the annual performance appraisal or separate from it
 - (iii) the staff member may use a support person at any stage during the process
 - (iv) the workload principles can apply to work allocations, re-allocations and new developments
 - (v) the process is formative and has no implications for promotion and discipline procedures
3. It has the following 7 workload principles:
 - total workload must be equitable
 - total workload must be reasonable
 - total workload must be safe
 - take all aspects of workload into account
 - workload must be such that it allows the individual to continue to develop
 - individual circumstances should be considered
 - duties should be allocated in such a way to avoid duplication and eliminate unnecessary tasks
4. The first stage of the process involves the staff member and the manager identifying and resolving workload issues through completing a comprehensive workload assessment/analysis checklist; and discussion.
5. If necessary, the subsequent stages of the process involve negotiation and the implementation of a solution with the assistance of a Workload Intervention Team

References

Chappell, C. (2001) "Issues of Teacher Identity in a Restructuring Australian Vocational Education and Training (VET) System", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Vocational Education Research*, 9 (1): 21-39.

Hughes, O. (1998) *Public Management and Administration*, Melbourne: Macmillan Education.

Kosky, L. (2002) *Knowledge and Skills for the Innovation Economy, A statement by the Minister for Education and Training on the future directions for the Victorian vocational education and training system*, Melbourne.

Kronemann, M. (2001) *TAFE Teachers: Facing the Challenge*, AEU Research Report.

Malley, J. et al (1999) Trends in the TAFE Institute Workforce and Their Implications for the Training and Development of TAFE Staff 1998-2008, Report to the Office of Training and Further Education, Victoria.

New South Wales Government (2000) *Issues of significance canvassed in submissions to the NSW review of teacher education*, Sydney.

Noonan, P. (2002) *The Role of TAFE: Report*, Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission.

Shah, C. (2002) "Employment Shifts in the TAFE Workforce", *Economics of Education* (forthcoming)

Victorian TAFE Association (2001) *TAFE Workforce: The Continuous Transition*, VTA Discussion Paper, November.

Further Reading

Chappell, C (2001) "The New VET professional: Culture, roles and competence", Working Paper 00.41 RCVET University of Technology, Sydney

Keating J, Medrich E, Volkoff V, and Perry J, (1999) "A comparative study of VET systems" NCVER (focuses on international VET).

HR-Guide.Com Job Evaluation, www.shrm.org (examines different aspects of job evaluation)

Schofield, K. (2000) *Delivering quality; review of the quality of training in Victoria's apprenticeship and traineeship system*, Office of Post-compulsory Education, Training and Employment, Melbourne.