Organisational Culture in TAFE Colleges: Power, Gender and Identity Politics

This thesis is presented for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy from Murdoch University

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October 2006
I declare that this thesis presents my own account of my research, acknowledges all sources contributing to this account and contains as its main content work that has not been previously submitted for a degree at any tertiary education institution.

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Jane Lorrimar
Abstract

This study explores the human face of workplace change in two Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges in Western Australia. It analyses the impact of neoliberalism on organisational culture by examining the way vocational education and training (VET) reforms influenced the restructuring and orientation of these colleges, and changed their power dynamics and work practices. It presents the accounts of 100 women and men who were interviewed between 2000-2002 about their working lives. Their stories of passion and angst represent a ‘vertical slice’ of life in TAFE and include responses from administrative staff, lecturers, academic managers, corporate services managers and executives.

This study explores perceptions of power and the mechanisms of control that were exerted upon and within the colleges with a focus on the factors that impact on career satisfaction. In addition, it examines perceptions of fairness in relation to employment, remuneration and promotion issues. Specifically, it reveals a variety of points of view on the attributes of success and outlines the strategies individuals use to get ahead. Furthermore, it seeks to understand the way values and norms guide and justify conduct and how they influence organisational culture. It evaluates whether a climate of sacrifice operates in the colleges and whether individuals will sacrifice personal or professional values to get ahead.

Although much has been written on the impact of neoliberalism on the changing nature of work and organisational culture, there has been little investigation of the TAFE ‘experience’ at the individual, group and institutional level. It is also less common to find analyses of workplace restructuring that conceptualises the changes from a feminist and sociocultural perspective. By investigating the colleges as sites of gender and identity politics, this study explores the way individuals and groups do gender and describes how gender asymmetry is reproduced through social, cultural and institutional practices. It highlights how individuals construct their professional and worker identity and perceive themselves in relations to others in the social and organisational hierarchy of the colleges.
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Glossary of Acronyms

ACIRRT  Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training
ACTU   Australian Council of Trade Unions
AEU    Australian Education Union
AIRC   Australian Industrial Relations Commission
ANTA   Australian National Training Authority
ANTA MINCO  Australian National Training Authority Ministerial Council
AQF    Australian Qualifications Framework
AQTF   Australian Quality Training Framework
ARC    Australian Research Council
ARF    Australian Recognition Framework
ASL    Advanced Skilled Lecturer
AVETMISS Australian Vocational Education and Training Management Information Statistical Standard
BVET   Board of Vocational Education and Training (NSW, Australia)
CAT    Competitively-Allocated Training
CBA    Competency-Based Assessment
CBT    Competency-Based Training
CEET   Centre for the Economics of Education and Training
CSA    Civil Service Association
DEET   Department of Employment, Education and Training
DETYA  Department of Education and Training and Youth Affairs
DEVET  Department of Employment, Vocational Education and Training
EOI    Expression of Interest
EO     Equal Opportunity
EEO    Equal Employment Opportunity
ILO    International Labour Organisation
IMF    International Monetary Fund
ITAB   Industry Training Advisory Board (national)
ITCs   Industry Training Councils
JDF    Job Description and Function
KPI    Key Performance Indicator
MD     Managing Director
MINCO  Ministerial Conference
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<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>NEAT</td>
<td>National Employment and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>NBEET</td>
<td>National Board of Employment, Education and Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>NCVER</td>
<td>National Centre for Vocational Education and Research</td>
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<td>NSDC</td>
<td>National Staff Development Committee</td>
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<td>NTRA</td>
<td>National Training Reform Agenda</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.</td>
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<td>OEO</td>
<td>Office of Equal Opportunity</td>
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<tr>
<td>QETO</td>
<td>Quality Endorsed Training Organisation</td>
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<td>RTOs</td>
<td>Registered Training Organisations</td>
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<td>SCH</td>
<td>Student Contact Hours</td>
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<tr>
<td>SEA</td>
<td>Secondary Education Authority</td>
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<td>SES</td>
<td>Senior Executives Service (public sector)</td>
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<td>SESDA</td>
<td>State Employment and Skills Development Authority</td>
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<td>SPIRT</td>
<td>Strategic Partnership with Industry - Research and Training</td>
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<td>SSTU</td>
<td>State School Teachers Union</td>
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<td>STB</td>
<td>State Training Board</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Training Accreditation Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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<td>TAFEWA</td>
<td>TAFE college network of Western Australia</td>
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<tr>
<td>TEE</td>
<td>Tertiary Entrance Examinations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<tr>
<td>VET</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VETiS</td>
<td>Vocational Education and Training-in-Schools</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VOTEC</td>
<td>Vocational and technical education and training (France)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WADOT</td>
<td>Western Australian Department of Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WASSTU</td>
<td>Western Australian State School Teachers Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAWA</td>
<td>Western Australian Workplace Agreement</td>
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Chapter 1
Introduction

Like many parts of the public sector in Australia, VET has undergone substantial reforms. Driven by an ideology of neoliberalism, the scope and complexity of these changes have been substantial. As the public provider of VET, TAFE colleges have undergone a process of restructuring and have been shaped by policies and practices designed to expose them to the discipline of the market. This study examines the way neoliberal ideology has changed the organisational culture of two TAFE colleges in Western Australia. It explores the impact on individuals and suggests that most changes have been achieved at great personal cost. For many staff working in TAFE these include limited employment choices and less job security, reduced career opportunities and satisfaction, and an imbalance between effort and material reward.

While there is no agreed definition of neoliberalism, it is used in this thesis to mean the ideology of the ‘New Right’, which is “anti-statist, anti-union and either asocial or anti-social in its basic orientations” (Pusey, 1991, p. 6). It is a philosophy that places ‘fast capitalism’, rationality and economic individualism at the centre of all activity in an attempt to create a global megacorporation (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996). It advocates minimal government intervention or provision of goods and services (Giddens, 1994). Based on a belief in the powers of economics, science and technology, it tries to create a ‘new work order’ that glosses over the complexities of the real world. It creates a new discourse which focuses exclusively on economic theories and business practices, artificially separating them from other bodies of knowledge and theories, thereby isolating it from the ethical, social, political, psychological and cultural ways of knowing the world. By ‘colonising the lifeworld’ neoliberal discourse seeks to take over practices and social identities that were the terrain of educational and public sector institutions (Habermas, 1986) and ignores individual difference and the role of sociocultural connections in relating to the world (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996).
The neoliberal era of the 1980s and 1990s broke the compact between labour and capital, and changed the nature of work. Within a context of high unemployment, governments and employers introduced enterprise bargaining, workplace agreements and longer working days. They provided less job security and career pathways. These changes increased costs of childcare, widened inequalities in earnings, reduced award conditions and failed to protect vulnerable workers. In directing the ‘Middle Australia Project’, Pusey (2003) examined middle-class people’s experiences of economic reform and found that they were more insecure now than some 20 years ago. He asserts:

Instead of making the people work for the market, Australia should be making the market work for the people. Big corporations were the only winners from economic rationalism. For the rest of society it is creating mass insecurity, division and resentment as well as undermining quality of life (p. 11).

As a vehicle of reform for the VET sector, neoliberalism is characterised by three tenets: economic rationalism, managerialism and globalisation practices. First, economic rationalism is a key tool of neoliberal hegemony, exercised by politicians, governments and public sector organisations as the means of domination and control (Marginson, 1997). Economic rationalists, whether they are neoliberal economists or conservative governments, promote a market-based approach to training and adhere to the maximisation of efficiency, productivity and profit. In the VET context, neoliberalism operates from an assumption that training organisations are bloated and need to be rationalised and that public services can be cut because the private sector can provide the benefits more efficiently. Economic rationalism is used to promote the ‘do more with less’ rhetoric in TAFE colleges.

Second, the all-pervasive language of neoliberal managerialism is used to embed a particular form of governance in the public sector and is the way organisations, including TAFE colleges, now define themselves (Davies, 2005). TAFE colleges are corporatised by management and the organisational values, quality systems and business practices of the corporate world are implemented into all facets of the organisation. Employment and work practices that are allegedly good for the conduct of Australian businesses are adopted, with little regard for any equity and social consequences. The managerial prerogative is that managers know best and that values, policies and practices appropriated from the corporate world will be highly beneficial (Handy, 2000). Publicised as a value-free, neutral, technical operation, the adoption of managerialism operates to alter substantially the balance of power in the workplace at the expense of professional’s autonomy (Kell, 1993).
The third tenet of neoliberalism is globalisation. Although, the relationship between globalisation and neoliberalism is not straightforward, it can be interpreted as the way "neoliberal doctrine is globalised" (Yokoyama, 2005, p. 117) and becomes a "dominant mode of ruling that involves a continual transcription of the local and particular activities of our lives into abstracted and generalised forms" (Smith, 1987, p.3). There is ample evidence to suggest that VET systems in Britain, Canada, New Zealand and some Western European countries have become more corporatised and standardised, with cultural changes that involve trends toward a universal 'training culture' and the erosion of the nation-state (Avis, 1999; Hobart, 1999; McCoy, 1998). The interdependence of nations brings with it VET programs and ideas that are more closely aligned, which may not necessarily be a positive outcome in the longer term.

During the 1990s a wave of researchers and social commentators condemned neoliberal ideology, claiming its dogma was largely responsible for adverse changes to the nature of work and other socio-economic and cultural changes. They critiqued the way the language of the 'new capitalism' was formulated, reproduced and reinforced both on actual experience and intellectual thought (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996) and exposed the human costs of managerialism (Rees & Rodley, 1995). Across the globe, critics condemned the dominance of the 'economic imperative' (Handy, 1998). Some blamed the “locust strike of economic rationalism” (Pusey, 1991, p. 1) for a range of problems, such as social austerity and corporate extravagance. They highlighted inequalities created by ‘econocrats’ (Strange, 1996) and damage to cultural norms by the ‘transnational capitalist class’ (Sklair, 2001). They examined the politics of social policy under Reagan in America and Thatcher in Britain to explain how 'New Right' ideologies were able to divide and conquer supporters of the ‘welfare state’ to achieve significant cutbacks to social and education programs (Pierson, 1994). Some Australian researchers blamed neoliberalism for the erosion of public education, the marketisation of education and the narrowing of vocational training (Kenway, 1995; Marginson, 1997, 2001; Schofield, 2003). They criticised the destruction of traditional institutions and public infrastructure and the social division that arose from neoliberal practices in the workplace (Anderson, 2004; Borland, Gregory & Sheehan, 2001; Marginson, 2000; Watson & Buchanan, 2001).
Impetus for the Research

Although much has been written about the relationship between neoliberalism and work, there is not much that examines the TAFE experience. Despite research on the eastern seaboard of Australia into its impact (Anderson, 2000, 2001; Kell, 1993; Seddon & Angus, 2000), there has been little in evaluating the experience in Western Australian colleges (McRae, 2001; Mitchell, 2003; Saggers et al, 2002). At the system level, research on the outcomes of neoliberalism in TAFE is “patchy, tentative and inconclusive” (Anderson, 2004, p. 3). It suggests that the tenets of neoliberalism triggered complex chains of interactive effects that were difficult to interpret. Some of the purported benefits of the changes remain unproven and some of the evidence suggests that the waves of market reforms have the potential to destroy the social goals that underpinned the sector (Ryan, 2002).

The impetus for this research grew from previous studies on neoliberalism and gendered organisational culture within universities. These studies were undertaken in Western Australia between 1995-1996 and 1997-1998 and led directly to a grant application to support the present study. This research project was conducted within the framework of a Strategic Partnership with Industry - Research and Training (SPIRT) grant. The partners were Murdoch University and two metropolitan Western Australian TAFE colleges, with the university responsible for maintaining the collaborative framework with the industry partners. They also outlined the aims, expected outcomes, research plan and significance of the project. It was part of the SPIRT application that the researcher would adopt similar methods to those of the previous studies, but would adapt the interview schedules to suit the TAFE context and the aims of the researcher.

Part of the SPIRT agreement included appointing the research role to one of the staff members in the participating TAFE colleges. This researcher would conduct the investigation under the conditions of a SPIRT PhD scholarship, with Murdoch University supervising the candidate and administering the grant. Staff in the industry partners’ institutions (the two TAFE colleges) were invited to nominate for the scholarship. I was the successful applicant.

Aims and Objectives of the Research

This study explores the human face of workplace change in two metropolitan TAFE colleges. In attempting to understand organisational culture in TAFE, it puts the
cumulative impact of neoliberal ideology and discourse on the VET system as the context for the study, and places power, gender and identity politics at the centre of the inquiry. The aims of the study are twofold. Firstly, it aims to trace the impact of the discourse of neoliberalism, through political, policy and accountability mechanisms at the institutional level. As a result I hope to strengthen an understanding of the macro and micropolitics of ‘relations of ruling’ that operate behind neoliberal discourse, the VET system and their associated rationalisations (Smith, 1987). Secondly, the study aims to illustrate the complexity of workplace restructuring by focussing on individuals and groups that are differently located in relations of power, gender and occupational identity. It is my intention that this study will add to existing knowledge regarding the connections between these elements and the processes of organisational culture and individual change. To achieve the aims of the research, the following objectives will identify:

- The factors facilitating or inhibiting career satisfaction.
- The attributes for success and the barriers faced in getting ahead.
- The nexus between change and power.
- Perceptions of fairness and equality.
- The nature and extent of sacrifice.

One hundred people, representative of the organisational structure and diversity within the two colleges, were interviewed in the study, some individually and most in small focus groups. My research is not seeking to generalise beyond the participants in the study, rather it offers an insiders perspective on career advancement, job satisfaction, equality and the nature of power and gender in organisational culture. As neoliberalism subordinates social policy to the needs of labour market flexibility, I suspected that women would find the neoliberal era much more difficult than men.

**Profile of Researcher**

My teaching and research background influenced my research approach, which was primarily in communication studies, access and equity programs, women’s studies, and professional development. I was familiar with feminist and sociocultural perspectives of organisational culture and identity politics, which suggest our gender, identity and perspective of the world is constantly being constructed and deconstructed (Brooks, 1997; Delamont, 2001; Lather, 1991; Weedon, 1987). I had previous research experience in analysing organisational culture and relevant
knowledge of gender analysis. I had an interest in people’s careers and had observed the career progressions of many of the staff interviewed in the study. My own career journey, personal reflections, observations and knowledge of colleagues’ career fortunes and misfortunes informed this research.

As I was part of the TAFE college structure, I was closely involved with the changes to the training system and immersed in the tensions and employment issues underpinning this research in my own career. During the course of completing this thesis, I moved from the position of principal lecturer to a series of contract, short-term or ‘acting’ middle management positions, and was experiencing many of the critical tensions, job insecurities, professional vulnerabilities and paradoxes my colleagues expressed.

Theoretical Perspectives

With its roots solidly based in identity politics and activism, feminism offers a theoretical framework to underpin the objectives of this research (Stanley & Wise, 1990). According to Caine and Pringle (1995) Australian feminist studies are characterised by each generation redefining its key principles and rethinking ideas. These studies pose gender as a fundamental category and are concerned with an analysis of difference and local context. They use data on the lived experiences of women (and men) and aim to influence change. Feminist theorising of gendered organisational culture is directed at creating knowledge that can change women’s and men’s working lives (Scutt, 1992). In particular, it emphasises the importance of multiple voices, localised contexts, micropolitical tensions, identity struggles and different forms of resistance (Morley, 2003; Thomas & Davies, 2005).

Gendered Organisational Culture

This thesis begins with a personal understanding of gender and gendered organisational culture as a theoretical starting point for the study. Rather than considering TAFE colleges as gender-neutral, they are analysed as ‘sites of gender politics’ (Acker & Van Houten, 1974) within the broader context of society and the ‘sociopolitical processes of the state’ (Burton, 1991). As we move into the qualitative data, the research looks through a ‘lens of gender’ (Acker, 1990) to describe how gender asymmetry in TAFE is produced and reproduced through cultural practices. According to Gheradi and Poggio (2001), organisation studies should not ignore gender and related issues of power, resistance and identity:
Gender is not a simple property of people, a given, but an activity and a social dynamic, something that we do in everyday reality, and something that we make accountable to others, that is we explain, justify and give meaning to by discourses and narratives (p. 247).

In this definition gender is a mindset and a social construction. It is a cultural interpretation, constantly being negotiated and changed within society (Acker, 1992). It is with this definition, that this study explores how TAFE colleges ‘do gender’. This is achieved by analysing how the historical, structural, cultural and procedural arrangements are used to perpetuate unequal gender relations. It is also used to explore the way men and women construct their identities though difference.

Similarly, TAFE colleges can be studied through a ‘lens of culture’ (Alvesson, 2002; Schein, 1985, 1991). The organisational culture of TAFE colleges can be viewed as a sociocultural construction, which is a “powerful, latent and often unconscious set of forces that determine both our individual and collective behaviour” (Schein, 1999, p. 14). Studying organisational culture means examining perceptions and the “symbols, beliefs and patterns of behaviour learned, produced and created by the people who devote their energy and labour to the life of an organisation” (Stratti, 1992, p. 2). It includes analysing the ‘subtext’ of culture by focussing on language, jargon, rhetoric, ideology, philosophy and mythology (Benschop & Doorewaard, 1998). It also means reflecting on the structure of organisations and division of labour (Franzway, 2001) and how values are replicated in symbols, architecture and artefacts (Hatch, 1993). Recently, some writers have focussed on the dynamics of change rather than trying to define and control organisational culture (Hatch, 2004; Lewis, 2001; Schein, 2004). Therefore, studying gendered organisational culture in TAFE means focussing attention on the dynamics of change and issues of power to determine how the members of the colleges acquired and then reproduced assumptions, beliefs and behaviours connected with gender, identity and work. The sociocultural approach enables us to see how organisations tend to reflect masculine identities, values and life situations (Fletcher, 1999, 2001).

**Sociocultural Theory and Identity Politics**

Sociocultural researchers are interested in theories of identity formation, organisational culture and socialisation in the workplace. This study focuses on the politics of professional and worker identity in TAFE colleges as it is a key issue in understanding how people define themselves and how they react to the social, cultural and economic demands placed upon them.
Identity politics is usually reserved for the politics of activism where the oppressed caste a hard boundary between themselves and others. Within organisation studies, knowledge of identity politics has been derived, in the main, from studies on blue-collar and pink-collar workers. Consequently, there is a tendency to associate resistance with activities amongst these categories of workers. In general, white collar workers, particularly public sector managers and TAFE lecturers would not conventionally be considered within the studies of identity politics given they fall outside traditional categorization of the oppressed (Thomas and Davies, 2005). However, in *Identity Politics at Work* (2004), the contributors use identity politics in organisational contexts to explore the way individuals and groups oppose discourses, policies and practices that attempt to adversely change their status and role. Other researchers use identity politics in organisations to draw attention to the different motivations within, as well as between, groups to identify with or resist the organisational culture (Bernstein, 2000; du Gay, 1996; Young, 2002).

Theorising and exploring identity politics in TAFE colleges provides a frame to understand the way individuals and groups perceive themselves in relation to others in a social hierarchy and the way they articulate their workplace opposition and enact forms of resistance. One of the obvious signs of a politics of identity in TAFE is the way neoliberal discourse attempts to construct new identities, roles and competencies for VET professionals in competition with the traditional discourses of liberal education and vocational training (Chappell, 1998, 2001). One way individuals attempt to protect their interests and professional standing is through the use of occupational categories and job titles. In TAFE there is debate and contestation in the way people's professional identity, role and job functions are portrayed. For example, key concepts such as teacher, lecturer and trainer are used inconsistently across the Australian VET system, depending on who is using the term and for what purpose of ‘symbolic control’ (Bernstein, 2000). For this thesis, the terms ‘teacher’ and ‘lecturer’ are used interchangeably. Similarly, there are no consistent titles for those involved in academic leadership, management or administration. Heads of TAFE colleges are variously referred to as the managing director or CEO and it is rare for them to be called principals. Heads of study areas are commonly referred to as ‘managers of training services’, ‘program managers’, ‘team leaders’ and ‘principal lecturers’. They are responsible for planning and coordinating courses and managing academic staff. At a national level, there is a tendency to use the term ‘VET practitioner’ to reflect the broader roles expected of those involved in direct activities, such as delivery, development, review and
assessment of courses, and indirect activities, such as marketing and industry liaison (NCVER, 2004, p. 27). This term is used in this thesis where role overlap between the occupational groups makes it appropriate.

Moreover, theories of identity formation draw attention to the demands being placed on contemporary workers to construct new worker identities and change behaviours. Researchers investigate socialisation in occupational and work groups and examine the role of socially shared cognition in forming worker identity (Levine & Moreland, 1993). They analyse how people impose expectations on others and how unwritten rules mediate how people work with one another (Goodnow, 1996). Furthermore, they make connections between the public and private spheres of life, revealing the interrelationships between cognition, language and action:

Studying what is behind behaviours - values, attitudes, deeply held assumptions and everyday thoughts - allows for key connections to be made between individuals and their organisations. Shifting our assumptions or mental modes and actions can shift an organisation (Bethanis, 1995, p. 187).

It suggests that knowledge embodies a subjectivity of language that is hidden from conscious view, but nevertheless exerts a powerful influence on behaviour. It highlights that gender and identity are interrelated with women’s and men’s cognitive, social and cultural development (Labouvie-Vief, 1996). It is clear that men and women are so sensitive to gender, identity and cultural context that it actively shapes their perceptions, ‘mental modes’ and reasoning processes (Resnick, 1993). It points to the importance of ‘situated learning’ where individuals progressively develop an identity as a member of a group or organisation, using language to construct identity, generate knowledge and sustain gendered practices in organisational life (Lave & Wenger, 1991). The relationship between gender and identity stresses that conflicts about agency and power are always related and embodied (Baltes & Staudinger, 1996). The dimensions of power and its relationship to gender and identity are explored explicitly in Chapter 6.

Feminist theory, like sociocultural theory, also highlights that gender and identity are situated and contingent (Thomas & Davies, 2005). It assumes that organisations are sites of identity politics (Thomas, Mills & Helms Mills, 2004). While there is no broad agreement on the definition of identity politics, it is best understood as a fluid, complex and gendered process of individual identity construction and stages of being (Weedon, 1987). It is used as a social construct to represent others as different (Bradley, 1999) and to legitimise one’s position and actions within
organisations (Linstead & Thomas, 2002). A broad view of identity politics encompasses occupational categories, relationships of control and exploitation. It also includes symbolic aspects in terms of how we identify ourselves or are identified by others as members of the social whole or certain group. Therefore, *identity politics* is the simultaneous struggle to classify and struggle against being classified. In the approach suggested by Thomas and Davies (2005), a focus on gendered identities and micropolitical conflicts helps analyse how certain values and cultural practices are suppressed, and how some social relations are exploited.

While men’s and women’s experiences may be similar and the experiences of managers, lecturers and administrative staff may converge in TAFE, feminist theory has emphasised that the differences between groups and the fractures within individuals are significant. This means it is important to recognise that identity construction is complex and both contradictory and complementary. The multifaceted ways in which individuals wrestle with or negotiate their professional and personal identities is central to studying the nature of change, culture and career satisfaction. This approach leads to a richer concept of organisational culture in which to analyse the findings from this study.

**Significance of Research**

This thesis will contribute to the emerging fields of gendered organisations (Martin & Collinson, 2002; Mills, 2002) and gendered managerialism of vocational education (Blackmore & Sachs, 2003; Exworthy & Halford, 1999; Kerfoot & Whitehead, 2000; Leonard, 1998). It will also contribute to the literature on public sector restructuring and vocational education reform and to the practical work of policy analysis within the VET sector. The objectives of this research offer a practical framework for helping organisations focus attention on the nature of organisational culture. The framework provides a way of examining the organisational assumptions about good work, good workers, career success and the deep structures that support these ideas. It is particularly useful in thinking about gender and organisational culture because it offers a way to look at beliefs and values in order to understand how power and privilege is being exercised. Thus the focus for organisational change and gender equity lies in making visible the systemic and common, every day assumptions that underlie organisational behaviour and the way employees make sense of their world. This framework also makes it clear that since people at all levels in a TAFE college are active agents, the responsibility for change must be widely shared across the organisation.
Overview of Thesis

This introductory chapter has provided general background information on the project and the researcher, and has outlined the aim and objectives of the research. It has also placed this in the context of neoliberalism and the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory and feminism, which informed the approach taken.

Chapter 2 describes how national VET policy was shaped to reflect the hegemony of neoliberalism and its tenets were used as tools of reform, particularly in restructuring TAFE colleges. It describes the influence of international organisations on national policy makers and provides a glimpse of the value systems, layers of influence and contested terrain that formed the backdrop to the study.

Chapter 3 provides the context for the study from a state perspective. It traces significant changes to the Western Australian training system. It examines issues that have impacted on individuals and the organisational culture of TAFE and describes the shortcomings in the training system, identified in ministerial reviews.

Chapter 4 describes the feminist epistemology that informed this inquiry and influenced the way I conducted the research. It outlines the qualitative research approach, the data collection methods and the analytical framework used in the study. It describes the profile of the participants in the two TAFE colleges and the sampling techniques that were used to try to obtain an ideal ‘organisational slice’. It explains some of the difficulties in recruiting individuals to participate.

Chapter 5 focuses on analysing the impact of change in TAFE colleges. It presents executives’ reflections on the types of changes that have occurred in TAFE colleges over the last decade and describes how such changes affected their managerial style. Such responses are then juxtaposed against staff views. The contrasts in perceptions revealed that the restructuring of colleges changed the orientation and governance of colleges, and resulted in a dramatic reduction of organisational democracy. The business orientation, climate of competition and funding restraints favoured the more aggressive, entrepreneurial staff. New forms of accountability created a culture of compliance and extended technologies of control.

Chapter 6 presents men’s and women’s experiences of the ways that power is perceived, created, exercised and annexed. It analyses the positional power base of
the participants and explores the location and types of informal power displayed. The study found that definitions and perceptions of power and fairness were largely contingent on staff gender, employment mode, status and experience in the TAFE system. The analysis of power highlighted competing interests, but hid the differences in the types of power that people used. It revealed the invisible structures, relations and processes of control.

Chapter 7 investigates the factors contributing to career satisfaction and reveals that external factors, such as economic rationalism and labour relation factors (such as job insecurity), influenced satisfaction. However, it was organisational factors (such as the exercise of formal and informal power) that had the greatest impact. Individuals with access to power were in the best position to shape their working lives and had the greatest career satisfaction. It was not surprising to find that women had less career satisfaction than men.

Chapter 8 examines the concepts of equality and perceptions of fairness in relation to employment practices. It draws on women’s and men’s experiences of recruitment, promotion and reclassification to argue that the structures of power and hierarchy within TAFE colleges and the division of labour in the workplace reinforce the gender inequalities in the private sphere. The disconnection between economic and social policy has resulted in a masquerade of equality in recruitment, remuneration, promotion and reclassification practices and a façade of fairness in the distribution of workloads, benefits and rewards.

Chapter 9 reveals the attributes for success. Participant accounts depict the organisational micropolitics of the college where individuals use personal strategies for survival, exercise impression management to curry favour and exploit alliances, and form networks to get ahead. A micropolitical analysis exposes the subtleties of organisational culture as a key factor of career success. This chapter also reveals a gendered picture of success. The organisational culture of TAFE is masculine. To get ahead, men and women needed to display stereotypical attributes and work practices associated with macho men. This included being highly visible, aggressive, ambitious, competitive, politically astute, think-skinned, well connected and entrepreneurial.

Chapter 10 explores the nature of sacrifice and found a general climate of sacrifice existed just to get work done. Values and interests were compromised as individuals
made strategic choices from limited options and juggled competing goals. It is clear from the accounts that gender constructs patterns of success and sacrifice. Women, more than men, are faced with competing demands from the greedy institutions of work and family, and struggle to reconcile opposing expectations.

Chapter 11 focuses on the explanations for why there are so few women in senior positions in TAFE colleges. Historical explanations suggest that the male culture is a given, which in time will become less macho and women will fit into it more easily. A tone of blame overarches some of the explanations as if women are responsible for the disruptions to their careers. Women’s divided and multiple commitments to work and family were phrased as choice, and the rhetoric of choice was used to offset the advantage men gained from having partners who took the prime responsibility for children. The majority of males downplayed, dismissed or denied that a macho male culture persists in TAFE. Consequently, they were unconvinced that systemic barriers exist that prevent women from getting ahead. Women, on the other hand, were convinced that they were disadvantaged by deeply embedded cultural and structural practices.

In conclusion, Chapter 12 weaves together the key themes that emerged from the study to reveal the complexity of organisational culture. It makes visible the rules, power plays and rituals that operate in the colleges and the juggling acts that individuals engage in when they attempt to reconcile the competing demands of the workplace with their professional values and personal interests. The chapter closes with some options for change.

End Notes

1 VET is the current mode of expression to refer to the totality of training (as distinct from further education) offered by TAFE colleges, private providers, schools and universities. The term TAFE is employed specifically to mean the public VET sector.

2 In Australia, TAFE colleges provide most VET. They are government funded, statutory bodies with operational independence, reporting to state ministers. Estimates of the TAFE workforce range from 39,000 to 90,000 (National Centre for Vocational Education and Research [NCVER], 2004, p. 6). Colleges offer technical training at certificate, diploma and postgraduate levels with approximately 10% of delivery reserved for apprentices and trainees in employment. They offer limited ‘further education’ for adults of an academic nature and a small component of ‘community education’, which is more recreational.

3 Two of the authors of Gendered Universities in Globalised Economies (Currie, Thiele & Harris, 2002) were my PhD supervisors. They shared with me the process of using their own research to build a picture of organisational culture in their own workplaces, and helped me to understand how feminist research contributes to sociological theory.
Chapter 2

Neoliberalism: Shaping Australian VET Policy

The impact of neoliberalism on VET has been substantial in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom (Ainley, 2004; McCoy, 1998; Ozga & Walker, 1999). These countries traditionally placed the ‘state’ as the key public service provider of technical training and further education. The shift from public service to neoliberalism spurred many Western governments to organise all features of their nation’s VET policies through the mechanisms of the ‘open market’. Most of these countries implemented various versions of neoliberalism to develop a ‘market-state’ (Bobbitt, 2002; Botsman & Latham, 2001). They embraced market reform and skill formation as the means to address problems as diverse as “high youth unemployment, international competitiveness, social inequality and poverty” (New South Wales Board of VET, 2001, p. 11).

Similarly, international and national business groups lead the discussion about national competitiveness and skills formation. Australian industry, represented by peak industry bodies, greatly influences VET policy, especially in “specifying vocational outcomes and advising on future training needs” (Chappell, 2003, p. 7). The Business Council of Australia lobbies the government to stress the utilitarian value of VET and provides reports that advocate the need for ‘job-ready’ competencies (Allen Consulting Group, 1999; Curtis & McKenzie, 2001). Australia, more than any other nation, adopted neoliberalism to shape national VET policy and realigned the training system to meet the needs of industry (Anderson, 2001, 2004; Fitzgerald, 2001). It developed an industry-led VET system and competitive training market with policy priorities and implementation strategies quite distinct from the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand (Considine, Marginson & Sheehan, 2001; Noonan, Burke & White, 2004).

This chapter outlines the layers of influence that have shaped Australian VET policy and focuses on the way neoliberal discourse came to dominate the process. In taking a discursive approach to policy analysis, Ball (1994) cautions to be mindful of the initial points of influence, the politics of legislative formation and parliamentary process and
the micropolitics of interest groups. He claims that while powerful voices assist in the
discursive construction of policy, the outcomes are “typically the cannibalised products
of multiple (but circumscribed) influences and agendas” (Ball, 1994, p.17). Therefore,
changes to VET policy were not solely the result of the domination of neoliberalism, but
were also influenced by transnational interests, political agendas, science and
 technological change and other socio-economic factors.

An historical overview shows that transnational interests influenced national VET
policies and illustrates that national interests shaped state and institutional practices.
It reveals that Australia’s national training system was developed through a contentious
process of national VET policy formation, which was substantially achieved though the
generation of “text and action, words and deeds” (Gale, 1999, p. 401). ‘Text’ refers to
written documentation, oral communication and nonverbal communication. Understanding that text also includes action advances policy analysis beyond a narrow
conception of policy as documentation (Gale, 1999). An analysis of policy as text,
discourse and ideology reveals the interaction between the politics of policy production
and interpretation. This chapter shows that Australian VET policy came to be both a
product and tool of neoliberal ideology, which was used to define national objectives
and control governance, funding and accountability arrangements. As ‘sites of action’
(Smith, 1987), Australian VET policy ‘texts’ made visible the way neoliberalism shifted
power and authority away from meeting state and local educational needs to aligning
practices with transnational and national economic agendas.

**International Influences on Australian VET Policy**

International organisations influence VET policy as a solution to the needs of
globalisation. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),
the World Bank, the United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural
Organisation (UNESCO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International
Labour Organisation (ILO) are five examples of supranational institutions that influence
VET policy. For example, recent ILO reports advocate work-based learning as a tool to
enhance competitiveness, skill formation and knowledge renewal (ILO, 2001, 2002).
Similarly, the OECD contributes to the concept of VET as a macro reform tool of
economic policy rather than a form of education or social justice. The economic
imperatives of globalisation have seen VET policy designed foremost to ‘win the skills
race’ of the ‘new knowledge economy’ rather than the social imperative of preserving a
just, equitable and cohesive society (Kearns, 2000).
Of the supranational organisations, the OECD is perhaps the most influential body. In the late 1980s, it prepared a “renovated discourse” and its advice became a “benchmark" that signalled “the transition from investment in education as social welfare to investment in the self” (Marginson, 1997, p. 111). The OECD promotes the neoliberal idea of demand-driven and industry-led approaches to VET policy (OECD, 1987, 1998a, 2000, 2001b, 2003). However, it recognises that the concept of an industry-led VET system is understood differently by countries and stakeholders (Kearns & Papadopoulos, 2000). It argues that the role of vocational education is “to operate as a screening system for labour markets” and it proposes that the “standardisation of credentials” is critical in making this function more efficient (OECD, 1987, p. 69). The role of agencies, such as the OECD, was not to impose extra-national rules on member states but to “prepare common governmental strategies, designed to enhance national competitiveness in the face of global change, for nations such as Australia to implement voluntarily on their own behalf” (Marginson, 1997, p. 59).

Drawing on human capital theory, the OECD suggests that a country’s economic performance is intimately connected to raising the skill level of its workforce (Papadopolous, 1996). It argues that the high-skill, high-performance ‘knowledge work’ route is the best way for countries to compete in globalised new economies (OECD, 2000). Market forces intensified OECD nations’ intentions to reform VET operations. VET organisations became a priority focus of OECD governments, which popularised the conception of economic rationalism and a hierarchy of human capital. The purported economic benefits of investment in vocational education largely influenced the reforms of the VET sector in OECD nations, particularly Australia (Anderson, 2001; Chappell, 2003). As a result, the Australian government provided training only where industry demand warranted it or market provision fell short, as in programmes for the unemployed. The “input-output conception of vocational education and training fitted the positivist and linear conceptions of organisational design that dominated reform thinking in the 1980s” (Marginson, 1997, p. 120). A focus on skill formation and work-related competence brought the “economic vision of portable human capital a step closer to realisation” (Marginson, 1997, p. 213).

The OECD advocates models of economic reform allied with managerial reform. It recommends corporate managerialism for the administration of VET and the public sector generally. Corporate reform facilitated the creation of a VET market or ‘marketisation’ of vocational training (Marginson, 1997). In turn, marketisation offered governments the opportunity to reduce funding in VET without the need to debate
funding cuts. Corporate management made program managers accountable for the achievement of objectives and targets. Under these conditions “devolution and local autonomy could be increased, often on the basis of negotiated output contracts, without forgoing centralised control of an organisation’s activities” (Marginson, 1997, p. 86). As the OECD (1990) noted, “Devolution has been made possible by a new emphasis on aggregate financial controls and the limits in which departments operate” (p. 11).

The OECD is also a significant conduit of policies, ideas, data collection and analysis. Its research reports are viewed as key instruments in measuring and recording countries success rates in providing VET policies that result in better qualified and employable workers. The OECD uses a range of performance indicators to measure and compare one country’s education and training activity with another. According to the OECD (1999), Australia needs to increase its ‘knowledge’ expenditure on education and training as a proportion of the GDP (including research and development, and information technology capacity). While an increased investment does not guarantee the development of a knowledge economy, expenditure on training is a key determinant of economic development and competitiveness (Considine, Marginson & Sheehan, 2001; OECD, 2001b). In 1995, total Australian investment in knowledge was at 8% of the GDP, lower than Sweden (11.5%), the United States of America (9.8%), Canada (9.5%) and the United Kingdom (9.5%). Australian investment in knowledge is comparatively low, while its investments in buildings and fixed assets as a percentage of the GDP is high, making Australia’s investment activities heavily skewed in favour of the creation of fixed assets rather then the creation of knowledge capacity. This marks Australia as an ‘old economy’ (Marginson, 2001). However, some researchers argue that OECD indicators and classifications are misleading and do not adequately reflect the different ways that VET activity in Australia is conducted (Lamb et al, 2003).

Australia lacks VET policies to build a learning culture and forge partnerships between stakeholders (employers, unions, communities and individuals) particularly at the local level in comparison to other OECD countries (Kearns & Papadopoulos, 2000). Due to this, connections between VET and economic and social policy are fragmented. There is also a tendency for education and training systems in Australia to be restricted by their own institutional structures and state demarcations (Keating et al, 2002). Cutting across federal/state and ministerial/departmental boundaries presents a major challenge in developing national objectives. Furthermore, Australia provides insufficient incentives to induce stakeholders to invest in training, skill formation and lifelong learning strategies (Considine, Marginson & Sheehan, 2001). As the following section
illustrates, the development of Australia’s VET policy focused heavily on federal/state politics and supply-side reforms rather than stimulating the demand-side of policy.

The Development of National VET Policy

While Australia has been influenced by OECD economic, political and ideological agendas, its VET policies owe more to the economic ideologies of its political parties. Therefore, Australia’s national VET system is in reality a composite of the political ideology of eight state and territory systems, each developing vocational educational policy to suit its own political agendas and economic context. ‘National’ policy, therefore, is contested terrain between the states and the Commonwealth (Ryan, 2002). While each state insists on its right to develop training policy to suit its need, it is clear that Australia’s reforms mirror the move of other OECD countries towards a ‘post-welfarist’ society or new ‘market-state’. State and Commonwealth governments have moved away from societal obligations and free services to operate increasingly through individual choice, privatisation, competition and user-pay systems (Ainley, 2004; Anderson, 2004). The development of national VET policy illustrates how changing values and key assumptions underpinned the process, and in turn, dramatically changed the role of TAFE in Australia. It is important to note that changes in the VET system coincided with key episodes of political intervention, technological change and economic growth (Ryan, 2002).

The Kangan Period

The 1970s heralded a golden age for social reforms, including changes in higher education and technical and adult education. The policies of Prime Minister Gough Whitlam placed a premium on the social goals of education and represented a significant change in community perceptions regarding the scope and role of the Commonwealth in education policy (Goozee, 2001). During the early 1970s, Australia witnessed new economic problems, such as rising oil prices, rising inflation and demand for higher wages. A significant consequence of the emergence of these problems was increased unemployment, particularly youth unemployment. In the run-up to the 1972 election, the Labor opposition focussed on VET to solve economic problems. For the first time in Australia’s history, VET was regarded as a tool of social and macroeconomic reform (Marginson, 1997).

During the 1970s, VET gained acceptance as a field of tertiary education, responsible for both adult education and increasing labour force skills (Smith & Keating, 2003).
TAFE gained an identity, purpose, funding model and national institutional structure. Two government-commissioned reports were published in 1974, making it a seminal year in the development of the Australian training system. The first report, *Australian Labour Market Training: Report of the Committee of Inquiry Into Labour Market Training* (known as the ‘Cochrane Report’), suggested introducing significant labour market program reforms to replace other employment training schemes. The new programs aimed to alleviate unemployment, increase the overall skill level of the labour force and assist the disadvantaged.

The second report, *TAFE in Australia* (known as the ‘Kangan Report’) paved the way for the development of TAFE in Australia (Noonan, 2002), and marked the start of twenty years of dramatic change (Goozee, 2001). The Kangan Report “attempted to break the unholy alliance between TAFE and industry by prioritising educational and social over economic needs” (Anderson, 2003, p. 3). The adoption by the Commonwealth of most of the recommendations in the Kangan Report initiated substantial federal funding for VET and for the first time Australia saw a degree of national consistency develop regarding the concept of TAFE and its role in the tertiary system (Noonan, 2002). The OECD (1998a) acknowledged that the Kangan Report gave a new impetus to the formation of a national institutional structure, a national research centre and the recognition of TAFE as a sector of education. To accommodate the increase in participation, the government embarked on a substantial capital works program, “In 1974 there were 836 institutions providing TAFE in six states. Of these, 167 were principal institutions, while 669 were branches, annexes or centres” (p. 33).

The Kangan Report signalled that the Commonwealth had a role to play in all sectors of education, which was consistent with the approach of the Labor government. During 1974-1975, TAFE enjoyed a rise in expenditure, owing to its direct involvement with industrial development. TAFE was seen as the means of increasing labour force skills and picking up the casualties of the growing number of unemployed. As TAFE was regarded as an important arm of economic policy, it avoided the cuts, rationalisation, amalgamations and funding ceilings that were experienced by schools and universities. The increased attention to TAFE was a reflection of the government’s confidence in its ability to simultaneously meet economic and social justice objectives.

The Kangan decade from 1974-1983 was in many ways the defining period for TAFE. It continued to grow and was held in high esteem by governments. It acquired an
identifiable role in the education spectrum (Goozee, 2001; Ryan, 2002). Each state formed separate departments to define a role for TAFE and administer the system. Commonwealth grants assisted colleges to become more financially independent and operationally viable. However, it was also a period of increased Commonwealth intervention, with the federal government using TAFE as a vehicle for implementing radical change. It expected the states to administer federal labour market and community training programs through the TAFE system. Commonwealth expectations and interventions caused an on-going critical tension between the states and the Commonwealth for the next quarter of a century, and which continues to the present day (Goozee, 2001; Ryan, 2002).

The Kangan period was also significant because it signalled a shift in power from industry to the professional educators who were teaching in TAFE colleges (Schofield, 1994). Kangan’s liberal education philosophy encouraged TAFE educators to design programs that developed technical skills in concert with the liberal principles of lifelong learning. Teachers gained significant control in areas such as pedagogy, curriculum development and assessment, and industry played a support role in advising in the curriculum process, course monitoring and needs analysis. During this time, TAFE teachers had a clear mandate to meet the needs of the individual person over the needs of industry, and were encouraged to assist students to fulfil their potential (Goozee, 2001). This philosophy of education was congruent with the schools and university sector, and stressed social and educational goals that complemented vocational training.

The Kangan philosophy of vocational education was widely accepted throughout three successive changes of government, and thus the social justice dimension of TAFE became one of the cornerstones of its operations (Goozee, 2001; Noonan, 2002). The TAFE institutions of the Kangan decade gathered increasing responsibilities in second-chance and remedial education, particularly for socially disadvantaged groups such as women, migrants and Aboriginals. General education and the arts flourished alongside technical and trade education.

The end of the Kangan decade was marked by the Hawke Labor government, which came to power in 1983 with a platform of economic recovery and social equity. Within two months of taking office, Prime Minister Hawke convened a national economic summit, where business and union delegates endorsed an ‘Accord’ (a prices-and-income agreement) that included the restoration of wage indexation linked to the
consumer price index. As part of the Accord, the Australian Council of Trade Unions (ACTU) agreed to wage restraint, decreases in tariff protection and promised industrial harmony in return for policies promoting full employment, welfare services and industrial revitalisation (Goozee, 2001). By 1986, pressures on the Accord were mounting and the Labor government abandoned full wage indexation and broke the nexus between economic reform and social protection (Evatt Research Centre, 1989; Seddon, 1995).

The Emergence of Corporatism

The next major period of change in VET developed in a climate of economic downturn, characterised by oil shocks, a rise in global excess capacity of primary goods, increased competitiveness of South-East Asian nations and the globalisation of financial markets. In 1986, Treasurer Paul Keating used the analogy of a ‘banana republic’ to predict that Australia would become more like a third world nation if it continued to rely on its export of primary products (both agricultural and mineral) and protect its domestic oriented manufacturing industries. He used this analogy to convince the Australian population that Australia’s future prosperity lay in ‘opening up’ the economy to global competition.

The resulting recession highlighted the structural problem of youth unemployment, the inadequacies of labour market programs and the cyclical problem of skill shortages. The crisis signalled that Australia was not insulated from the international economy. The federal government progressively dismantled left-of-centre policies (such as the Accord), decreased the public sector, attacked the welfare state and challenged the social foundations of technical education.

The introduction of globalisation policies would see Australia become one of the most ‘open’ economies in the world (Botsman, 2001a). They redefined industrial relations and labour market policy in terms of productivity, efficiency and enterprise bargaining. This approach aimed to “promote a high-skill, high-wage economy, but this concern was quickly displaced by a preoccupation with increasing labour market flexibility through deregulation to enhance international competitiveness” (New South Wales Board of VET, 2000, p. 2). Flexibility and productivity were emphasised and the primary concern was to create efficient business practices and nurture free markets. The assumption was that the “structures of business and corporate Australia delivered greater flexibility in the use of resources and thereby maximised the efficiency in their use” (New South Wales Board of VET, 2001, p. 14). Whereas an earlier generation of
liberal economic theorists thought in terms of human capital theory, the neoliberal
generation thought “in terms of marketising all aspects of work and training” (New

In 1987, John Dawkins, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training, published
Skills for Australia, a framework for government intervention in addressing the skill
formation needs of Australia. It reflected many of the post-Fordist strategies advocated
by the ACTU (1987) in its report Australia Reconstructed, such as emphasising worker
employability through multi-skilling and enterprise bargaining. Dawkins outlined a
corporatised vision for VET and suggested radical reforms to broaden the skills base of
the Australian workforce. He advocated economic reforms, characterised by
deregulation and increased competition.

Dawkins, in taking responsibility for combining the employment, education and training
portfolio, used the ‘power of the purse’ to set about radically restructuring VET policy,
governance, structures and institutions. He created the mega Department of
Employment, Education and Training (DEET) and indicated that training would be firmly
placed in the hands of business and industry to drive the new reforms. Dawkins
signalled that economics and the power of the Commonwealth would dominate the
reform agenda. He abolished education commissions and replaced them with a
National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET). The Board’s interests
and expertise lay, not with education perspectives, but with business and trade unions.

The Board, a policy-influencing elite, had access to the minister and the department
and could fast track the traditional consultative processes of policy formulation. As a
result, decisions and policy were made quickly. Such ‘streamlined’ decision-making
practices reflected a key feature of the corporate managerial style of administration.
The introduction of corporate managerialism, as a philosophy of administration, to
reform the machinery of government and TAFE institutions was deliberate (Anderson,
2000). Dawkins believed that effective management at the institutional level was the
key to achieving a unified national training system and marketisation of VET
(Marginson, 1997). The federal government called on state training agencies and TAFE
colleges to review their training systems to achieve strong managerial modes of
operation and to shorten the lag between executive decision-making and
implementation (Ryan, 2002).

Dawkins saw the emerging role of government as ‘market regulator’ and proposed
corporate styles of governance to separate supply of training services from demand.
The government, as a ‘purchaser of services’, adopted the role of major client and would ‘negotiate’ and ‘buy’ training services from private training providers and TAFE colleges. The government now provides training by purchasing services from private and public providers. TAFE organisations became more like corporations, focussed on cost-effectiveness, with flatter structures and core management. The rise of corporate managerialism in government bureaucracies and TAFE colleges and the dominance of corporate models of policy formulation ensured reforms were introduced quickly and with minimal debate.

The National Training Reform Agenda

The economic and corporate managerial ideas of the Dawkins era dominated the reform agenda and brought about sweeping changes to TAFE institutions and their organisational cultures over the next decade. The first ‘critical’ year of the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) was 1989, when federal and state ministers agreed to the fundamentals of reform at two ministerial conferences (MINCO). The reforms were geared to maximise the ascendancy of ‘market forces’ in the belief that a market-driven economy and an industry-led VET policy would push Australia towards a high-skill, high-wage economy. The key features of the NTRA were:

- Increased skills acquisition through the introduction of competency-based training (CBT) and competency-based assessment (CBA).
- Introduction of national curriculum, defined in terms of national standards underpinning industry.
- Development of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) for the implementation of national qualifications, skills recognition and portability.
- Emphasis on flexible delivery, workplace training and on-the-job assessment.
- Industry-driven demand rather than supply-driven approaches.
- Increased competition through the development of a ‘training market’ of registered training organisations (TAFE colleges and private VET providers), underpinned by a quality framework and a principle of mutual recognition.
- Development and expansion of post-compulsory pathways, youth transition programs and greater participation of youth in VET-in-School programs (VETiS).
- Significant expansion of apprenticeships and traineeships in numbers and in industry coverage.
- Introduction of ‘User Choice’ to maximise employers’ choice of training provider and the packaging of training requirements.
The reforms aimed to increase skill formation and to achieve greater industry efficiency and, in turn, increase the nation’s international competitiveness. They were supported by Deveson (1990) who drew on neoliberal economics to argue that traditional nation-state policies were inefficient and that a market-based approach to vocational training would increase client choice and that provider competition would increase efficiency, quality, responsiveness and private investment in training. The in-principle adoption of Deveson’s proposals signalled a concerted approach to training market development (Anderson, 2004). Within three years of implementing the reforms the government commissioned two further major reviews of the education and training system. The Finn Committee Report (1991) found that there was widespread support for most of the national training reforms, particularly CBT. It recommended that unmet demand for education and training should be accommodated by TAFE and called for the near-universal participation of youth (aged 15-19) in education and training. The Carmichael Report (1992) prepared the outline for a comprehensive system of entry level vocational training to meet the needs of industry. It recommended that such training should be established by enterprise bargaining within industry awards. The Hilmer Report (1993) also influenced the government and it adopted competition as a key instrument of training reform.

The reform agenda had ACTU support and far-reaching implications for industrial relations. It aimed to reduce industrial conflict over wages as they would mostly be fixed on recognition of prior learning and measures of competency, and linked through productivity to skill levels. However, employers did not support unimpeded upward movement of skilled workers. Like all human capital policies, the CBT reforms assumed that an improved supply of credentialed labour would result in upward mobility and better remuneration. Marginson (1993) predicted correctly that most employers, universities and conservative parties would not accept the egalitarian aspects of the training reforms. He warned that in the absence of a strategy that addressed the traditional centres of power, the egalitarian claims of the training reform agenda were pretentious and would coopt the labour movement into industrial relation reforms without appropriate reward.

While there was tripartite endorsement of the training reform agenda by government, unions and industry, its implementation fuelled dissentions between the federal and state levels of government and bureaucracy in terms of funding and accountability. Although state governments were suspicious of the premises underpinning the NTRA, they opted to support implementation due to the lure of the large sums of additional
Commonwealth funds provided (Goozee, 2001). By 1999, Australia’s VET system had undergone a decade of transformation. Yet a process of public consultation and debate had not accompanied it. No policy statement, such as a White Paper, was ever released. The result was a restructured and reoriented VET system about which there was little consensus and little understanding by many stakeholders and clients:

There has been an ostrich-like reaction to signs that there may be problems and deficiencies in the new arrangements, and dogged resistance to the idea that further change may be needed to remedy those problems and deficiencies (OECD, 1998a, p. 5).

The VET reforms, framed from a supply-side approach to education and training policy, were accompanied by a framework of structural reforms in wages policy and workplace relations, and augmented by national competition policy. The government made arrangements to provide essential infrastructure to private training providers to ensure competition in the VET sector. The training reforms and competition policy transformed the orientation, management and work practices of TAFE colleges.

**The Role of the Australian National Training Authority**

To enable the Commonwealth to establish its neoliberal values in a national training system, implement the NTRA and totally transform the VET landscape, the federal government established ANTA in 1992. ANTA’s aims were to establish cooperation between the federal and state governments in providing an educated, skilled workforce that would enable Australian industry to be competitive in domestic and international markets. ANTA assumed a leadership role in reforming the VET sector. It became the powerful coordinating mechanism or ‘broker’ in the distribution of national funding to the states and territories, “The formation of ANTA represented a watershed both in the development of national education policy and in the conduct of federal-state relationships” (Ryan, 2002, p. 18).

The structures of ANTA included a Board, a Ministerial Council (known as ANTA MINCO), the ANTA office and a network of committees, sub-committees and working groups. The ANTA Board comprised seven high-profile industry members who supported MINCO in all of its functions and oversaw the development of an industry-led national training system. The membership of the ANTA Board has been a matter of debate since its establishment, particularly regarding the absence of any TAFE representation, practising teachers or professional educators. The Board does not seek or receive teaching advice and educational expertise. The Senate Committee (2000) into the Quality of VET in Australia stated that:
The exclusion of teachers and professional educators from the policy development and decision-making processes weakens the partnership and consultative basis on which the national VET system is founded (p. xvii).

In 1994, ANTA released its first national strategy paper, *Towards a Skilled Australia*, which aimed to address the ideological basis of the VET system itself and improve the business practices within organisations in Australia. Underpinning the strategy was a set of priorities for creating and promoting opportunities for lifelong learning and the building of a client-focussed culture. A national plan for skill formation was the policy answer to unemployment and ‘new apprenticeships’ were the solution to youth job creation.

**Federal-State Rivalry: the Contest for Control of VET**

The relationship between the states and the Commonwealth in agreeing to national strategic directions in the VET sector had a history of antagonism. Prior to the 1990s, the states and the Commonwealth continually failed to reach agreement on several key platforms: the framework for a national VET system, funding arrangements between the states and the Commonwealth, accountability for funding and consultative mechanisms. This lack of agreement resulted in each state having very different VET structures and systems (Ryan, 2002). Industry was antagonistic to the model, as it overlooked them in the decision-making process.

The first five year (1991-1995) ANTA Agreement between the states and the Commonwealth included ‘growth funds’ for a period of three years, provided the states maintained their traditional funding in the sector. Part of the Agreement stipulated a ‘Maintenance of Effort’ to ensure that the states did not use the ANTA funds to support their current VET activity. One of the main issues was unsophisticated recording and reporting mechanisms, making it difficult for each state to measure maintenance of effort or to assess growth. As a result, the Australian VET Management Information Statistical Standard (AVETMISS) was established in 1994 as a national reporting system. For the first time data could be collected from each state and analysed using one set of key performance indicators. Consequently, 1995 became the base year for the ‘Maintenance of Effort’ part of the Agreement to be measured against. The national data also enabled policy research to be conducted, such as graduate destination and satisfaction analysis. In the same year, the AQF was established to bring all post compulsory education and training qualifications into one national system.
The last two years of the first ANTA agreement provided no ‘growth funds’. The states were expected to grow the system out of ‘efficiencies’. The Commonwealth introduced several policies to stimulate the growth of a ‘training market’ (such as User Choice and New Apprenticeships). These policies were intended to induce public and private VET providers to strive for greater efficiency in the delivery of publicly funded VET. State training agencies and VET organisations were expected to develop policy initiatives to benchmark their ‘growth through efficiencies’. These policies increased the competition between the states and between VET providers. They resulted in major structural reforms in state agencies and in TAFE colleges, including a stronger adoption of corporate managerialism and a business focus on delivery.

**Corporatisation and Ministerialisation**

The speed of reforms during the late 1980s and early 1990s was due to the corporatisation and ministerialisation of VET. With Labor governments in power in the majority of states and at the Commonwealth level (Hawke government from 1983-1991 and Keating government from 1991-1996) the ideology of corporate managerialism was largely accepted and the features of ministerial power appeared simultaneously across the country. The integration of VET into national productivity objectives enabled a “policy entrepreneur like Minister Dawkins to promote a range of policy initiatives that made use of the rhetoric of microeconomic reform” (Ryan, 2002, p. 138). ‘Ministerialisation’ was characterised by ‘reforming ministers’ seizing control of vocational education and establishing policy-influencing boards or restructuring the department responsible for VET (Marginson, 1997). Ministers used boards or committees to bypass government departments and senior public servants and to circumvent consultative and review processes (Ryan, 2002).

Ministerialisation focussed on enforcing whole-of-government national strategies and solutions over the preferences of individual states. This was achieved through the ANTA MINCO, the peak national decision-making body for VET. It was responsible for implementing the national agenda and facilitating the negotiation process between the states and the Commonwealth. MINCO was accountable to Parliament and responsible for the operation of ANTA and for resolving any disputes between ANTA and a state training agency. MINCO was also responsible for endorsing the ANTA Agreements and the framework of funding for growth.

Corporatisation led to managerial cultures in TAFE (Anderson, 2001). TAFE institutes became ‘autonomous VET enterprises’ with increased opportunity to choose their
course of action and adopt ‘marketising strategies and brands’ within a regulatory framework. These trends stimulated the quasi-privatisation of vocational training:

These trends are confirmed as governments demand accountability on financial and managerial grounds but downplay accountability on social justice, equity and democratic participatory grounds. And politics fracture around issues of private versus public goods, responsible economic management versus social justice, and neoliberal views versus new social democratic forms of government (Seddon, 2002, p. 62).

The leaders of the new autonomous TAFE colleges adopted the titles and behaviours of the corporate world. Rather than being principals of colleges, they were the CEOs or managing directors of a training organisation. They used the language of neoliberalism to stress the instrumental values of training and downplayed the educational values of vocational education. The economic values of training associated with national ‘productivity’ were stressed and the educational values of lifelong learning and social critique were diminished (Ferrier & Anderson, 1998). The language of business, economic management and the market also attempted to construct and promote new identities. Students and employers were referred to as ‘clients’ or ‘customers’. TAFE teachers were labelled ‘workplace trainers’. Industry became ‘the key stakeholder’ and ‘meeting industry needs’ rather than ‘meeting students’ needs’ became the new mantra. The ‘public good’ of education and the needs of communities were ignored. TAFE colleges became known as ‘training providers’ and study areas became ‘business units’. Workplace training, ‘just-in-time’ short courses and CBT packages gained superior status over institutionalised-based accredited programs. The emphasis on ‘choice’, particularly in the ‘User Choice’ strategy, was very one-sided, resting almost entirely with employers. Too often, employers packaged training to suit their business needs without taking into account the longer-term needs of employees, apprentices or trainees. These changes, labelled the ‘new vocationalism’ transformed VET (Ball, 1994; Chappell & Johnston, 2003).

Within TAFE organisations, the emphasis on new vocationalism changed the educational landscape, creating new organisational norms, values and modes of conduct (Chappell, 2001; Seddon, 2002). Neoliberal, corporate, top-down decision-making by corporate executive elite became the operating framework, and social democratic forms, consensus and involvement of TAFE lecturers was minimal. The emphasis was on corporate visions, mission statements, key performance indicators, measurable goals and evaluation of outcomes. Key words in the policy discourse were accountability, quality, efficiency, effectiveness, training market segmentation, user pay, the bottom line and competitive edge. During this period, the ability of educationalists to...
set the policy agenda or influence the discourse was marginal. No practising TAFE teacher or other professional VET educator gained membership to peak committees and boards at the state and national levels.

TAFE, on the whole, was set aside in the debate about how Australia’s ‘industry-led’ national training system was to be reshaped. The exclusion of TAFE teachers from the policy development and decision-making processes weakened the effort to construct a national VET system capable of meeting the needs of all clients. Their exclusion resulted in a lack of commitment and poor understanding, inconsistency and disengagement with the objectives of the national policy. The ascendancy of industry and the instrumental views accorded to VET completely nullified the liberal philosophy that had been developed in the Kangan era (Kell, 1993).

VET Policy in the New Millennium

The ANTA National Strategy for VET (1998-2003) was the strategic planning framework for leading the Australian VET sector into the twenty-first century. Entitled *A Bridge to the Future*, it outlined the goals, priorities and key performance indicators that would measure the training system’s achievement. The four objectives that underpinned the National Strategy were:

- To achieve equitable outcomes in VET.
- To enhance mobility in the labour market.
- To equip Australians for the world of work.
- To maximise the value of public VET expenditure.

In early 1998, a fifth objective, ‘to increase investment in training’ was added in recognition of the need to increase industry contribution and commitment to training. These objectives were measured by a set of efficiency and effectiveness performance indicators. For example, the participation by target groups was a measure of access to and diversity in VET. Employer satisfaction with VET was a measure of the job-readiness of graduates. Compliance to a set of standards was a measure of the quality of training in Australia. Training packages were a measure of ‘equipping Australians for work’ and compulsory mutual recognition of national qualifications across states was a measure of interstate mobility.

The Introduction of Standards
ANTA introduced the Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) in 1997 as a set of standards to monitor the quality of accredited courses, registered training organisations and providers. These standards required each state accreditation council and its agencies to have a quality framework and management system in place and to ensure providers were registered as a Quality Endorsed Training Organisation (QETO). However, the ARF did not clearly distinguish between the quality of management processes and the quality of training. There was a common view that the scope of the standards and evidence requirements for training and assessment needed to be lifted and broadened.

As a result, a new set of standards replaced the ARF in 2002 and was collectively called the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). These standards introduced greater regulatory rigour into the national VET system and required more external auditing of providers. According to Noonan (2002), most colleges welcomed the introduction of the AQTF as a more comprehensive set of standards than its predecessor, but feared that quality assurance would focus excessively on processes and not sufficiently on the quality of teaching and learning.

At the same time that quality standards for training organisations were being imposed on states and colleges, they were also grappling with the introduction of 'Training Packages'. These were written sets of competency standards, qualifications and assessment guidelines that had been written by industry training advisory boards (ITABs). The competency standards in most packages were narrow and concentrated on specific work processes and tasks. By 2002, ANTA accepted that there was mounting concern that training packages were not flexible enough to meet the different needs of stakeholders, particularly at the local and regional level. It was clear that a decade of training reform had been sub-optimal in addressing skill formation (Anderson, 2004). It had adversely affected the wider social and economic infrastructure of communities, particularly those in regional areas. Market-induced fragmentation had resulted in reduced economies of scale, uncoordinated provision and high transaction costs (Senate Committee, 2000).

**Funding the VET Sector**

In the early 2000s, the provision of adequate Commonwealth and state funding for VET, particularly TAFE, became the major policy issue for the sector (Marginson, 2001). While the states demonstrated an upsurge in demand for VET and TAFE places, the Commonwealth continued to deny the need for additional funding and refused to
accept it had any responsibility for meeting its share of growth funding. Researchers argue that “cash-starved education institutions, with short-term revenues, had distorted the balance between fields of study” and were suffering from a “collapse in resources” (Considine, Marginson & Sheehan, 2001, p. iv). They warn that if funding trends continue, TAFE colleges will be unable to play an appropriate role in the economy.

When the 1998-2000 ANTA Agreement was negotiated, the Commonwealth declined to continue providing the $70 million annually in growth funding that had been provided since 1992. Instead, the states and territories were again required to achieve ‘growth through efficiencies’. The state governments insisted that while they had achieved ‘growth through efficiencies’ over the past five years, this had reached its limit.

The growth in new apprenticeships and increased enrolments made the existing arrangements unsustainable. The states argued that the demand for VET would grow over the ANTA Agreement period and that additional funding had to be provided. They argued that there were few opportunities to achieve further gains and that any attempt to continue to fund system growth from ‘efficiency’ measures would have serious and irreversible consequences for the quality of VET. Eventually, the states buckled under the sustained pressure from the Commonwealth and accepted its offer “to guarantee funding stability for the following three years” (Senate Committee, 2000, p. 80).

The relationship between the states and the Commonwealth was strained again during 2000 and the first half of 2001, with state Labor ministers refusing to sign the new 2001-2003 ANTA Agreement. Negotiations between the Liberal federal Minister, Dr David Kemp, and the states stalled when the minister put forward to MINCO that capital funding would be used to further growth. The states claimed that this strategy was outside the ‘ANTA Scope and Boundary’. Capital works, non-profile delivery and commercial activities were some of the areas considered to be outside the scope and boundary of the agreement. MINCO vigorously campaigned during these periods for a much-needed federal funding increase to reflect the enormous increase in enrolments and growth in demand for apprenticeships and traineeships. The Australian Education Union (AEU) (2001, Winter) was bemused at the states’ capitulation to the funding issue when a federal election was imminent:

Questions remain for many in TAFE about why state ministers chose to buckle to a jubilant Kemp at this particular point in time. Desperate for funds? …The Kemp offer was an insulting offer and its attached conditions could serve to further damage a precariously balanced system…it is a puzzle to all of us why the federal Labor party would have encouraged the state Labor ministers to settle and yet equally puzzling that ministers would have gone quietly with an election around the corner (p. 6).
While ministers clearly believed the ‘growth through efficiencies’ policy had greatly compromised the states’ ability to provide a quality training system, they again capitulated and acquiesced to the Commonwealth offer. In October 2001, ‘TAFE Directors Australia’ (the association representing managing directors of Australia’s TAFE colleges) called on whichever government was to be in power after the federal election to dramatically increase funding and support for its 72 TAFE institutions. They claimed that at least $345 million a year in additional recurrent expenditure was needed to help fund expected growth in student demand and improve curriculum development and student learning.8

After the re-election of the federal Liberal government in 2001, Brendan Nelson became the minister responsible for VET, and the contested terrain of funding for unmet demand for TAFE places continued unabated. Negotiations reached a stalemate at the end of 2003 when the Commonwealth and the states could not agree on TAFE funding and state ministers refused to sign the 2004-2006 ANTA Agreement. The Australian TAFE Teacher (2003) reported that TAFE colleges faced less funding in real terms in 2004, than in 2003. It estimated that 50,000 students would miss out on a place in TAFE in 2004 and that colleges would lack money for equipment and resources.

The contested terrain between the states and the federal government reached a climax after the federal election in October 2004 when Prime Minister John Howard announced that ANTA would be abolished from July 2005 and its responsibilities taken into the Department of Science and Training:

A Ministerial Council on Vocational Education will be established to ensure continued harmonisation of a national system of standards, assessment and accreditation, with goals agreed in a Commonwealth-State Funding Agreement (Press Release).

The suddenness of the closure of ANTA caught the states’ training agencies, teachers’ unions and policy analysts by surprise. The abolition of ANTA brought to a close a co-operative federalism that had begun in 1992, which, while fraught with criticism, rivalry, obstacles and convoluted decision-making, was marked by intense negotiation and eventual agreement. Without ANTA, some argue that the Commonwealth would bypass state-federal government negotiations, union and industry consultations and set up their own VET system, with technical colleges and an accreditation system that excludes the states (Moodie, 2004; Wheelahan, 2005).
In Summary

This chapter has provided a chronological glimpse of the value systems and layers of influence that have fashioned VET policies over the last quarter of a century. The training reforms implemented in the corporatist decade challenged the Kangan philosophy and reversed the mandate established for the TAFE sector. Influenced by neoliberal economics, national VET policy placed the needs of industry over the needs of individuals. Inadequate funding mechanisms, ineffective implementation and insufficient change management strategies accompanied the pace and extent of reforms. Some claim that “despite many implementation problems, the reforms have resulted in a better sector and in a more flexible, more relevant and more efficient TAFE system” (Veenker & Cummins, 2001, p. 7). Others claim that this achievement came at a great cost to the integrity and quality of the overall VET system (Chappell, 2001; Noonan, 2001):

The current state of vocational education and training in Australia is indicative of the failure of policymakers to come to grips with global integration in a way that ensures that all Australians are able to realise their full potential within a strong and healthy national community (Senate Committee, 2000, p. 3).

Others claim the changes have undermined the professional identity of TAFE teachers (Seddon, 2002) and given too much power to ministers and managers (Marginson, 2000; Ryan, 2002). At the beginning of the new century, TAFE colleges are confronted with even greater competition in the training market, no indication of funding increases and heightened tensions between the states and the Commonwealth. In all, this chapter has illustrated the critical tensions between international policy analysts, national and state policy makers, and VET practitioners in conceptualising the ‘problems’ to be solved in the VET sector, by whom and by what methods. This highly contested terrain forms the backdrop to the study of organisational culture in TAFE.

End Notes

1 The ILO of the United Nations is the only recognised international body to set core labour standards. However, there is no international mechanism to enforce the ILO conventions. ILO Reports, such as Learning and training for work in the knowledge society (2002), raise issues about the growth of non-standard work practices and their impact on training and education.

2 A review of the OECD indicators reveals that an alternative approach is needed to measure, define and classify Australia’s VET activity in the international context. Research shows that a significant amount of activity in VET is being under-reported or classified or grouped in ways that limit comparisons of the effectiveness of the VET system (Lamb et al, 2003).

3 Ryan (2002) remarks that the beginnings of vocational education were closely interwoven with the foundation of Australia. In colonial times, the “investment in technical education was for many years patchy and inadequate and management was left largely in the hands of voluntary and
community bodies” (p. 128). The boom years of the 1880s spurred the creation of technical education institutions in each colony, and with trade union support, working-class men gained an education. After federation each state developed technical institutions, not only for the economic value of skilling tradesmen, but for the purposes of general education and social improvement. These were built on egalitarian notions of education for all, and were the equivalent of the “poor man’s grammar school” (Ryan, 2002, p. 129). However, after the initial flush of enthusiasm for the broad scope of technical education, by the 1930s, state governments had lost their commitment to social agendas as the economic downturn deepened, and technical education returned to narrow vocationalism and withdrew from the public policy arena. During and after World War II, the states maintained control of technical education. It was restricted to supplying the skills required for war and the reconstruction effort afterwards, mostly through apprenticeships. The Commonwealth had little appetite to intervene in each state’s jurisdiction and there existed no policy community to develop or promote a national role. Technical education, therefore, lurched forward in the 1950s and 1960s, largely neglected, with no real sense of direction, need for expansion and little Commonwealth intervention. By the late 1960s, Australia took a new interest in technical education (prompted by events such as Sputnik) and it responded to economic and social pressures to lift iskills in science and technology.

4 Enterprise bargaining was introduced into Australia in the early 1990s by state Labor governments. The ‘enterprise bargaining principle’, introduced in 1991, enabled the possibility of specific collective agreements in return for guaranteed improvements to workplace productivity, changes to skill levels and acceptance of performance targets (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training [ACIRRT], 1999).

5 Representatives of the Trade Development Council and the ACTU (1987) released a report, Australia Reconstructed, which influenced the shaping of VET policy. Bill Kelly, the ACTU Secretary, argued:

> Structural change and the promotion of a productive culture are necessary to enhance our international competitiveness, while employers need to accept that structural change and new work organisation are not simply opportunities to shed labour and that workers need to be party to any change (p. 5).

Although the report recommendations did not become a blueprint for the Labor government’s economic policy, they certainly contained many of the recognisable concepts of the national training reform agenda (Ryan, 2002; Seddon, 2002). The report advocated a post-Fordist approach, which is characterised by a common vision of a high-skills, high-trust, more flexible, less hierarchical and highly networked economy. In the post-Fordist vision, workers are multi-skilled and participate in regular on-the-job training and have greater scope for choice and initiative. Work is organised in small, mobile organisations that are readily combined and realigned if needed (Marginson, 2000).

6 The VET Ministerial Council agreed to implement ‘User Choice’ and ‘New Apprenticeships’ policies in May 1997. The policies enabled a third party to participate in the selection of a training program and the training provider of their choice. In the past, TAFE colleges would determine the content of the training program and were the key provider of apprentice training.

7 At the ANTA MINCO meeting of June 8 2001, the Council agreed to endorse the ANTA Agreement 2001-2003. In June 2003, the state ministers refused to sign the 2004-2006 Agreement and after seven months of negotiations rejected ANTA’s offer of the federal government’s $3.6 billion. The states claimed there was a Commonwealth shortfall of $230 million and that the agreement undermined state industrial relations arrangements (Campus Review, January, p. 2).

8 TAFE managing directors, in the Position Statement (2001) claimed that public and private funding per student and per course hour had fallen by 11% in the two years 1997 to 1999. The principal cause of the downward trend, as is the case in higher education, had been the partial withdrawal of Commonwealth financial support.

The association, TAFE Directors Australia, also claimed that public investment in vocational
education and training, as a proportion of GDP, had been falling, rather than rising. TAFE was seriously under funded in recent years due to the failure to provide growth funding despite a substantial increase in enrolments. With funding effectively frozen at levels applied three to four years ago, TAFE colleges were still expected to ‘grow the system’ and respond to new demands. The demand for TAFE places resulted in 40,000 students missing out on a place in 2000 (compared with 18,800 missing out on university places). Government funding for each TAFE student is less than one-third the funding provided for each university student. Taking into account the funds available from all sources, funding levels per VET student are about one-sixth that for university students (Allen Consulting Group, 2001).
Chapter 3
The Western Australian Terrain

To put this study into its local context, it is important to examine the evolution of the Western Australian training system and to consider the structures it used to develop, administer and implement national and state policy. It is also critical to analyse the state’s response to neoliberalism and to explore its relationship with TAFE colleges.

The Western Australian training sector reaches into every region of the state, yet it has struggled to shake off its Cinderella status to the school and university sector. Although it plays a significant role in state, regional, social and economic development, it has been removed from employment and labour portfolios several times. The sector has been reshaped many times as the state moved between periods of recession and high unemployment to resource booms and skill shortages.

This chapter traces the changes to the Western Australian training system from mid 1990s-2003. It begins with an overview of the five elements of the system, and points to the political tensions and power shifts between key stakeholders. It summarises the way Western Australia implemented neoliberalism and national reforms. An appreciation of the historical background and political context of the Western Australian training sector assists in assessing the present structure of TAFE and understanding its culture. It also aids in understanding the numerous viewpoints that are presented in this thesis.

The Evolution of the Western Australian Training System
Technical education was a division of the Education Department from 1954 until December 1988 when it was separated from the education portfolio through the creation of the Office of TAFE. This signalled the government’s recognition of the key role of VET in microeconomic reform and devolved managerial responsibility to colleges, with “central office retaining a policy development, strategic planning, resource allocation and monitoring role” (Goozee, 2001, p. 75). In the early 1980s, the state government had established three independent colleges in the mining
regions of Karratha, Hedland and Kalgoorlie in response to substantial industry and regional pressure. The success of these colleges in meeting the economic and social imperatives of the region was to strongly influence future TAFE developments. In 1990, the state government established the State Employment and Skills Development Authority (SESDA), which brought the TAFE system into a skills development and planning framework based on the identified skill needs of industry. Two years later, it merged the Department of TAFE with the Department of Employment and Training to form the Department of Employment, Vocational Education and Training (DEVET).¹

During 1993, Education Minister Norman Moore ordered two major reviews of his portfolio to reduce inefficiencies and overlap.² He commissioned an analysis of the VET system, which resulted in the McCarrey Commission Report (1993), and recommendations that a ‘top heavy’ and ‘excessive’ central office should be reduced in size through devolution to colleges.³ It suggested developing better communication channels to enable a new, looser 'autonomous college model' to operate effectively. DEVET, as the state training agency, was to build structures that would enable it to comply with the reporting and funding requirements as stipulated in the first ANTA Agreement.

Former Western Australian Director-General of education, Robert Vickery, headed the second, larger review of the training system. The Committee made 54 recommendations, including amalgamating agencies with DEVET to form a new department of training. It also recommended that TAFE colleges become autonomous. The advisory role of the SESDA would be taken over by a new State Training Board (STB) that would advise the Minister on the state training profile. It recommended that a new Training Accreditation Council (TAC) be formed to register training providers and issue certificates to students. In line with the recommendations, the government established a new training system during the 1990s that radically shifted the powers, functions and roles of the stakeholders. The system was comprised of five key elements:

- The Western Australian Department of Training (WADOT).
- The State Training Board.
- The Training Accreditation Council.
- Industry Training Councils (ITCs) and Community Advisory Bodies.
- Training and Employment Organisations.
The VET Act 1996, proclaimed on 1 January 1997, provided the legislative framework for the state training system. Figure 3.1 illustrates the key role and relationship between each element in the system.

Figure 3.1 The Elements of the Western Australian Training System

Western Australian Department of Training
The first element, WADOT was established on 1 January 1994. WADOT, as the ‘State Training Agency’ under the ANTA Agreement, received federal funding for approximately 28-40% of the state’s training system. In turn, the state was responsible for funding at least 60% of training and for meeting the ANTA national goals and state priorities. This funding model resulted in tensions between conflicting state and federal priorities and goals. According to senior executives, state goals and priorities took precedence over national objectives, and state rights versus national directives strained the relationship between WADOT, the federal government and other elements in the training system.4

A key objective of the state government in establishing WADOT was to create a diverse and competitive training market by clearly separating the functions of supply and demand. Its main function was to ‘purchase’ training services from ‘providers’. It was to be no longer a supplier of training services itself. WADOT decentralised control and all aspects of TAFE delivery, but continued to fund bureaus established
to support the system. These included a Women’s Bureau, Technical Extension Service, Adult Literacy Service, Adult Migrant Education, and Professional and Career Development, and were responsible for providing additional services to TAFE colleges, private providers and the community. These support agencies were abolished by the end of the 1990s and their functions substantially reduced and subsumed within WADOT.

To achieve the ideology of ‘separation of purchaser from supplier’, WADOT established a policy framework that outlined its new relationship with training providers. The policy statement, released in 1994, included seven strategic goals that signified corporatisation of the sector:

- a ‘visible’ customer focus strategy;
- development of a ‘quality’ system;
- cost effectiveness (development of performance indicators);
- development of a competitive training market;
- access and participation;
- national training reform;
- employment initiatives (particularly to small business).

On the one hand, this framework presented WADOT as an impartial, ‘distant’ purchaser of training services from the public and private training and employment organisations. On the other hand, it provided services to the TAFE network, but demanded adherence to regulatory policy directives. By the end of the 1990s, this framework, supported legislatively by the VET Act 1996, caused “some concern that the balance of power and influence under the Act is weighted too heavily in favour of the Department” (Tomlinson, 2000, p. 4). In commenting on the submissions by TAFE colleges and ITCs to the review of the VET Act, Tomlinson suggested that functions related to managing the training system and the colleges were ill-defined. Such ambiguity led to heated debate and argument between WADOT senior officers and managing directors of TAFE colleges:

Colleges have viewed the Department not as a resource that can assist them to do their job better, but a funding source and regulator where interaction should be kept to a minimum (TAFE Managing Directors, 2000, p. 5).

In addition, the ambiguities of WADOT’s role set the scene for strained relationships between colleges, private training providers, TAC, STB and ITCs.
Training Accreditation Council
TAC is responsible for assuring the quality of VET in Western Australia. Its role is to provide for the registration of training providers, skills recognition and the accreditation of training courses. The Council reports directly to the Minister and provides support to the government and other elements in the state training system. The Council is also part of the national training system, with each state and territory having a similar organisation. In the government review of the VET Act, conducted by MLC Derek Tomlinson (2000), he recommended that the role and functions of the Council be more clearly stated. Like the STB, TAC provides advice to the Minister on operational policy matters. This has led to some debate about the importance of TAC relative to the STB.

The State Training Board
The STB comprises nine leading figures from industry and also includes a union and student representative, but none from TAFE. The composition of the Board, like its national counterpart ANTA, is an on-going area of dispute. The role of the Board is to prepare a ‘State Training Profile’, a key output of the ‘State Training Strategy’, in close collaboration with WADOT. The State Training Profile defines the state’s training needs, the targets to be achieved and consequently the allocation of funding. In addition, the Board provides advice to the minister on strategic directions, policies and priorities for the system. In providing such ministerial advice, the Board at times found itself in conflict with WADOT (Tomlinson, 2000). Few staff in TAFE would understand the role of the board or be involved in its functions.

Unlike Victoria or New South Wales, which has reformed and strengthened their boards, the Western Australian STB has a much less prominent position in policy formation. In a paper to the STB of Victoria, Marginson (2000) argues for the reassertion of the role of government in complex policy judgements. In response to the Kirby review in Victoria (2000), the Victorian government reformed its STB to become a high-level Victorian Learning and Employment Skills Commission with expanded membership and a broad policy advice role in post-compulsory education and training. The New South Wales Board of VET sponsors significant research projects in education, training and employment. It brings together key stakeholders to advise on and monitor benchmarks for the performance of the system.

Over the years the Western Australian STB has been a fairly token structure in the governance of the sector. WADOT has kept the board at arms length. Board chairs
were high-profile business people, who had a limited understanding of the complexities of the system and had to rely on the CEO of WADOT for direction. However, in May 2002, a new chairperson was appointed who was formerly a senior executive of WADOT and had a very strong background in the VET and university sector. Upon appointment, the chair made it clear that the Board would play a more strategic role and be an active player in steering the training system. The chair presented the Board’s position at national forums, which were sometimes at odds with the WADOT position.  

Industry Training Councils and Community Advisory Bodies

ITCs and community advisory bodies provide strategic intelligence and advice on industry and community skill requirements to the STB, WADOT and training providers. They play a leadership role in VET system linkages, and facilitate industry and community input on quality assurance and recognition arrangements. However, these bodies have no legislative standing under the VET Act, but have administrative standing in that they are funded through ANTA as part of the consultative framework of the National Training Strategy. However, in 2002, ANTA decided not to fund state ITCs and reduced the funding of their national counterparts, the Industry Training Advisory Boards (ITABs). As a result, the states continued to fund the councils, but their efficacy and role is under review.

The relationship between ITCs, community advisory bodies and the Department was somewhat strained in the late 1990s and early 2000s. Some ITCs claimed that they made recommendations on training priorities to the STB, but that WADOT often ignored this advice in the profile planning. ITCs also claimed that the state’s emphasis on increasing the numbers of apprenticeships was driven by the federal government’s agenda rather than industry demand at a state level. The relationship between the ITCs and the TAFE network was also strained (Tomlinson, 2000). Some ITCs claimed that regional colleges interacted well with their councils and were better engaged with their local industries. Some ITCs found it difficult to work with metropolitan colleges and felt that the gap between institution-based training and workplace training had not been bridged. Some TAFE managers also claimed that ITCs were too focussed on supplying knee jerk, just-in-time training solutions that disadvantaged students' lifelong learning requirements. They also claimed that ITCs favoured private training providers and that there were many conflicts of interest between some providers and industry.
Training and Employment Organisations

The state funds and supports a range of private and public training organisations and employment service providers. Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) include TAFE colleges, industry and community providers and, in some instances, group training companies. In 2001, there were 536 registered private training providers with increasing numbers of VET programs being delivered by schools and universities (WADOT, 2002). There were also ten public providers (four metropolitan and six regional TAFE colleges), delivering across 120 campuses and centres as part of the autonomous college network. In 2004, the four metropolitan colleges were Challenger, Central, West Coast and Swan TAFE. Each college is aligned to a broad geographical area with Central TAFE based in Perth and the other three colleges servicing the north, south and south-east metropolitan corridors. Each college has several campuses and centres. For example, Challenger TAFE has 17 sites and its Peel campus is about 70 kilometres away from its other sites.

The six regional colleges are CY O’Connor, Central West, South West, Great Southern, Pilbara and Kimberley TAFE. In addition, public funding for VET delivery is provided to the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (now part of Edith Cowan University) and Kalgoorlie Vocational Training and Education Centre (part of Curtin University of Technology). In comparison to other states, Western Australia spreads its infrastructure and delivery costs across a vast geographic region and delivers training to a widely dispersed population. For example, Kimberley TAFE has a network of five campuses spread across 421,000 square kilometres servicing a population of 28,000 people. Some of its campuses are over 1,000 kilometres apart. In many regional and remote communities, TAFE is the only training provider and the only state agency with a permanent local presence. This places additional expectations upon TAFE colleges to play a significant social and regional development role.

The Western Australian Response to Neoliberalism

This chapter will now explore the extent to which Western Australia adopted national VET policy and implemented neoliberal practices. The analysis reflects the tensions and strained relationships that exist between the state and the Commonwealth. The differences in political agendas, policy settings, executive powers and legislative frameworks in Western Australia, compared to other states, resulted in this state
producing different outcomes to the NTRA than other states and to those desired by the Commonwealth (Goozee, 2001).

**Corporatisation of TAFE**

Restructuring the VET sector continued throughout the 1990s, with TAFE moving through models of devolution to decentralisation. With the introduction of the VET Act 1996, a fundamental change to the training system was introduced. The VET Act replaced four other state Acts that had previously regulated the VET sector’s operations. The Act enabled dramatic reforms to be implemented at departmental, college and private provider level. The new training system aimed to free TAFE colleges from the controls of a centralised bureaucracy and encouraged the adoption of corporate models of management.

The concept of autonomous colleges radically changed the training landscape. TAFE colleges became self-governing and were expected to be more flexible, adaptive and responsive to local industry and regional needs. While statutory authority status provided TAFE colleges with a large amount of flexibility to set strategic directions, manage and organise their affairs, it also dramatically increased the cost of compliance overheads. It is ironic that the model aimed to provide more flexibility in a less regulatory environment, yet the overhead costs of administrative and ministerial accountability subsequently increased to unmanageable levels (McRae, 2001).

The VET Act enabled the delegation of ministerial powers to college governing councils, which in turn, delegated authority to managing directors. Under the Act, TAFE colleges became autonomous statutory authorities with managing directors reporting directly to the state minister rather than to the chief executive of the state training agency. However, in practice, the managing directors reported to the CEO of WADOT as the minister’s delegated authority. Under the delegation of authority clause, the separation of supplier from purchaser was, therefore, more rhetoric than practice. The autonomous college model heralded the birth of the Western Australian ‘training market’, corporatisation and competition practices within TAFE colleges and a fundamental shift in relationship with the newly created Department of Training.
Development of a Competitive Training Market

With the introduction of the NTRA in the early 1990s, the Western Australian training system began to forge strong links with industry. It implemented major reforms to TAFE colleges, transforming them into suppliers of services, competing with other training providers for contracts with the state training agency and their share of the State Training Profile.

Since 1993, the development of a competitive training market within the publicly funded VET system has been a key strategy of ANTA national policy (Anderson, 2001). One of the differences in Western Australia was that it introduced a 'managed competition' policy in 1994 to ensure state and community development priorities were met (Mitchell, 2003). It protected 'thin markets' in small industry sectors and sparsely populated areas that were identified as not capable of supporting an increased number of providers. It also ensured that the state system had the capacity to deliver 'access and participation' equity programs and meet its community service obligations (McRae, 2001). The managed competition policy protected the Western Australian VET system from the unbridled growth in low-cost, easy to deliver industry areas and from subsidy-driven apprenticeships common in other states (Schofield, 2000).

The introduction of autonomous colleges and private training providers, negotiating for delivery contracts and creating niche markets, led to an aggressive training culture. On a positive note, Tomlinson (2000) states:

> Engagement in the competitive training market has been an important factor in increasing a college’s responsiveness to enterprise training needs as well as providing the stimulus for innovations in service delivery (p. 15).

Competitively-allocated funding enabled colleges to enter into new areas of training and revenue. These activities were an important source of income for investing in new initiatives and facilities. However, on a negative note, high transaction costs and greater complexity cancelled out most efficiency gains (Anderson, 2004). There was also growing concern about the impact of competition within and between TAFE colleges. Constant calls for 'efficiencies' and aggressive competition practices injected a high degree of unpredictability and stress into the operating framework of TAFE colleges (Saggers et al, 2002).
In 2000, the state government earmarked 22% of the total training delivery across the state for competitive tendering of programs. Of that amount, “63% was allocated to ‘User Choice’ programs for apprenticeships and traineeships” (McRae, 2001, p. 20). Skilled professionals became increasingly disenchanted as competitive mindsets and practices overtook the main considerations of education development and training delivery, and “there was a general consensus that the current system did not reflect the importance of teaching, learning and assessment as the fundamental mechanism for delivering quality training” (McRae, 2001, p. vi). Private training providers competed with TAFE colleges for scarce training dollars, with 125 organisations receiving public funding through the competitively-allocated training (CAT) program. The competitive allocation of scarce state government funding dollars resulted in excessive tender writing and lengthy submissions. Artful means of ‘winning’ extra funds built up defensive and secretive organisational cultures and questionable auditing practices. Much effort was spent negotiating contracts, writing tenders and submissions and meeting the administrative and reporting regimes required from CAT.

Competition policy resulted in considerable expenditure on advertising and marketing by individual colleges (McRae, 2001). Each college employed marketing specialists to develop a corporate image and utilised ways to differentiate itself in the training market. The competition policy also fragmented service delivery across the state and reduced resource and information sharing among colleges. The policy had a dramatic impact in shifting resources away from teaching and learning and professional development. McRae questioned whether the strategy of competition and the level of competitive funding was appropriate for the state training system. It found that competition stifled collegial networking, reduced collaborative ventures and restrained the sharing of professional knowledge.

**Developing a Business Orientation**

The federal government’s edict to ‘do more with less’ as part of the ANTA Agreement was a calculated strategy to grow the training system in each state (Anderson, 2001). The states required each TAFE college to adopt business practices and a competitive orientation. It resulted in colleges changing from ‘service’ cultures to ‘selling’ cultures, and becoming preoccupied with the bottom line and profit margins. The imperative to meet training profile targets resulted in a ‘bums on seats at any cost’ mentality. The corporatisation of TAFE colleges transformed their organisational structures and operating frameworks. Each college restructured
its organisation into a business model, turning departments into ‘business units’ to
compete internally against each other for funding and resource allocation. Such
transformations shifted the power of the organisation from the hands of academics
to financial managers. The short-term focus on efficiency, unit costs and bottom line
targets took precedent over the broader public interest and state economic
development.

Winning tenders and commercial contracts was essential under an arrangement that
only provided 80% of funding for college operations. TAFE colleges were expected
to meet other costs and ‘grow the business’ through selling products and services.
Commercial arms of colleges had to gain ‘fee-for-service’ and commercial contracts
to meet the bottom line. Within five years, several high-profile TAFE directors were
charged with fraud and at least two colleges were questioned about their business
practices by the Office of the Auditor General.\textsuperscript{12}

Many TAFE colleges were ill-equipped to cope with the constant financial pressures
of a business model and competition policy. Budget blowouts or shortfalls were
commonplace (McRae, 2001). The competitive policy allowed market forces to
undermine the viability of some colleges. In fact, some became so competitive and
entrepreneurial that they urged their staff to invade the traditional geographical
territories and markets of other colleges. As a result, two colleges came close to
insolvency in late 1999.\textsuperscript{13}

\textbf{Growth through Efficiencies}

Growth and efficiency, two fundamental elements of neoliberalism, were critical
features of the national VET policy. In 1996, the Western Australian government
introduced a number of policy initiatives to stimulate the training market and induce
TAFE colleges to strive for greater efficiency in the delivery of publicly funded VET.
These included capping recurrent funding, allocating contestable funding, increasing
competitive tendering, capping delivery in certain fields and offering incentives to
increase work-based delivery.

By 2001, the Western Australian system had secured a 10% growth in training
delivery since the introduction of the VET Act. It increased course enrolments by
8,335 and student curriculum hours (SCH) reached over the 2 million mark. It
increased training provision in regional colleges by over 20%. In 1993, there were
74,502 VET students, and by 2001 there were well over 126,000 (McRae, 2001).
However, state participation rates were still well below the national average of 12.1% (NCVER, 2001). There was some concern that with the state having the fastest growing population in Australia, participation numbers should have been higher. Explanations for lower participation rates were blamed on hard ceilings on student places in some fields of study and the state’s inability to fund unmet demand for TAFE places (McRae, 2001).

Growth through efficiency was achieved in the context of an increasingly competitive, regulatory and complex training environment. However, the system could not sustain such practices. Many of the platforms of the reform agenda and ‘growth through efficiency’ policies resulted in adverse working conditions for TAFE teachers. They did not reflect the importance of quality teaching, learning and assessment, collegial networking and professional development. The reforms left them vulnerable to deprofessionalisation and marginalisation (McRae, 2001).

Following the McRae Report recommendation, WADOT established a peak Teaching, Learning and Assessment Group in 2002 to develop a strategy to improve the quality of teaching and learning and increase professional development of VET practitioners. It commissioned a consultant to analyse the future role, knowledge and skill requirements of VET practitioners as the first stage of developing a professional development strategy. Based on his recommendations, WADOT developed a professional development framework and secured funding from treasury to implement its strategies over a three year period. However, the additional $4 million over three years was totally inadequate to redress a decade of deprofessionalising practices.

**Industrial Tension and Action**

The corporatist era and business orientation of TAFE dramatically challenged the work practices and conditions of college staff. The changes met intensive resistance from the state and federal education unions. Award restructuring and enterprise bargaining intensified the disparities between TAFE academic staff, management and administration. In Western Australia, the State School Teachers Union (WASSTU), in alliance with the federal union, the AEU, supports lecturers’ interests. The Civil Service Association (CSA) represents TAFE administrators’ interests.

The 1990s industrial relations environment was largely characterised by the state and federal government’s fierce marginalisation of academic voices and attempts to
dilute the WASSTU and AEU power. As suggested in the previous chapter, the OECD discourse and ANTA policy were pivotal in reforming the practices of Australian VET organisations. These practices increased the critical tensions between TAFE lecturers’ needs for professional autonomy and the view that VET is a strategy to improve national economic competitiveness. Thus, while TAFE teachers paid attention to the individual needs of their students, they had to do this in ways that were commercially viable. Economic rationalism and globalisation were used to justify the demands placed on TAFE teachers to change the VET system to meet ‘international standards’, ‘industry standards’, and improve the ‘efficiencies’ and ‘marketability’ of vocational education in a global market. These major changes in orientation caused critical tensions between administrators and TAFE teachers, and dramatically changed the way each worked (Chappell, 2001; Seddon, 2002).

The mid 1990s and early 2000s saw the TAFE sector embroiled in industrial turmoil across the nation, particularly in Western Australia from 1993-1996 and 1999-2001, as the federal and state teachers' unions questioned the assumptions that underscored state government VET policy. The state and national education unions waged campaigns against the government's industrial relations policies in an attempt to halt the tide of changes that threatened TAFE teachers’ professional practice and working conditions. The conflict between an academic, educative focus on providing quality vocational education and a business orientation focussed on ‘growing the system through efficiencies’ came to a head in the mid 1990s and spilled out openly in state and federal industrial courts in 1995-1996 and 1999-2001. During these two periods, the Western Australian TAFE sector was heavily involved in industrial disputes and action. These two periods marked an ideological crisis in VET. Never before had the educational orientation of TAFE teachers been so challenged.

In Western Australia, the government attempted to remove TAFE teachers from the Education Act and thus out of the influence of the WASSTU. It aimed to change the teaching conditions and work practices of TAFE teachers and academic leaders. It promoted the concept of TAFE workplace trainers and assessors so that it could align training work closer to industry. It advocated putting TAFE teachers into the Public Service Act and aligning their working conditions and pay to that of industry trainers, which would remove them from the industrial relations arena of education. The government wanted to extend the number of hours TAFE teachers worked in a
week, the number of hours of face-to-face teaching and the number of weeks teachers taught in a year.

From 1993-1996, TAFE teachers took strike action at many campuses across the state, culminating in two rallies at Parliament House against the proposed changes to their professional status, identity, interests and working conditions. The industrial disputes exposed the critical tensions between opposing orientations. The Western Australian government insisted it had the mandate to transform TAFE colleges and TAFE lecturers’ working conditions and roles. The Minister for Training and Employment asserted that autonomous colleges needed to restructure, adopt business practices and develop enterprise cultures. The Western Australian government’s interest lay in controlling how national and state policy could be implemented in practice. TAFE lecturers’ interests, on the other hand, lay in preserving their pedagogical ideals and academic identities.

The industrial turmoil led the WASSTU, through the AEU, to take the TAFE lecturers’ dispute to the federal court. The Liberal government was appalled that the state’s case had entered the federal arena. A union convenor, explaining the case to a group of lecturers, stated that the state government hated federal intervention in state issues more than interference from the state union. Eventually, in August 1996, the first federal Certified Agreement for TAFE Lecturers (valid for two years) was ratified, outlining in detail the conditions of work, responsibilities and role expectations. The Certified Agreement was binding on union and non-union members alike. For an immediate pay increase of 8%, TAFE teachers traded an array of conditions. They included an increase in the face-to-face teaching load by three hours, an increase in the academic year to 40 weeks and increased restrictions on overtime. They also included no ‘time-and-a-half’ for evening or weekend classes, a loss of four weeks professional leave and decreased autonomy in defining professional duties and attendance times. The Western Australian government had succeeded in changing the orientation of TAFE colleges and the working conditions of lecturers.

The next major wave of industrial turmoil resulted from WADOT offering TAFE lecturers state workplace agreements (WAWA) in August 1999 as part of the new Certified Agreement in accordance with the Federal Workplace Relations Act of 1996. A standard WAWA was delivered to all TAFE lecturers without the union’s knowledge. Both the WASSTU and AEU were outraged at the secretive nature of
the WAWA development and the ‘collectivity’ and ‘scope’ clause of these agreements. The union claimed that they were unconstitutional and that WADOT was not bargaining in good faith. The workplace agreement for TAFE lecturers was subsequently challenged by the AEU in the Federal Court of Australia and a decision was handed down in favour of the union on Christmas Eve in 1999. The court stated that workplace agreements could not be imposed on TAFE lecturers while they were part of a Certified Agreement that covered all TAFE lecturers, even though it had expired.

During 2000-2001, the Minister for Training and Employment, Graham Kierath, made it clear he intended to push ahead with workplace agreements and industrial reforms. He stated that all new TAFE employees would not be offered a choice between employment under the certified award or under a WAWA. It was now government policy for new employees to be offered only workplace agreements. Contract and casual staff, upon expiry of their current contracts, would only be offered WAWAs. The union claimed that working conditions would be progressively eroded as each new WAWA stripped away more conditions than previous ones. Throughout 2000 and into 2001, Kierath promoted his industrial reform agenda and the union urged TAFE lecturers not to enter into WAWAs. It also urged them not to break union rules in regard to overtime and not to undertake administrative duties without a time or monetary allowance. To combat rising industrial unrest, the government offered TAFE teachers a 3% pay rise in the form of an administrative payment. It was the first time they received a pay increase without having to trade off conditions.

In April 2001, the Liberal government was voted out in favour of a Labor government. One of the first things the Gallop Labor government did was to dismantle the Kierath workplace agreement agenda and pledge a review of the training sector. It also promised to reinstate permanency for lecturers and increase contracts from one to five year terms. While the WASSTU welcomed these initiatives, it was still concerned about excessive casualisation and high workloads. In 2002, while negotiating the new 2003 Certified Agreement, the union ran a ‘Work Overload - it’s time to get serious’ campaign recommending TAFE lecturers document time spent in all aspects of their work, and again asking them not to participate in administrative work. Like colleagues in other states, TAFE lecturers were looking for a new agreement that decreased their face-to-face teaching and
recognised the need for parity with school teachers in terms of qualifications, professional development and registration.

In Summary

This chapter has described the way the Western Australian government developed its training system and policy framework, largely based on neoliberal assumptions that competition and major structural reforms of bureaucracy would create efficiencies and transform supply and demand. The government fiddled with the bureaucratic and institutional structures and shuffled resources between private providers and the public sector as its policy response to the needs of the VET system.

After two decades of reform, WADOT and TAFE colleges have begun to address the issues identified in the McRae review of the training sector. However, before they can make real headway, they must face new structural reforms. The Gallop government announced on January 3 2003 that WADOT would be amalgamated with the Department of Education. In a media statement, Premier Gallop stated:

A new Department of Education and Training will focus on turning around WA’s unacceptably low year 12 retention rates and boosting traineeships and apprenticeships. For too long, our education and training services have been operating under separate bureaucracies which hindered the progress of our 15-19 year olds... The move would help target youth unemployment, improve school retention rates, and encourage more young people into training and apprenticeship programs (Press Release).

The amalgamation was expected to “see about 200 head office jobs shed to free up more than $100 million over four years”. The merged departments were expected to share research, curriculum and course development, and TAFE and school facilities. There would be an emphasis on VET for Year 11 and 12 students. Lecturers and academic managers feared that the overemphasis on youth, particularly ‘youth at educational risk’ (alienated from the education sector and disenfranchised from the community) clouded TAFE’s role in serving the needs of its main client groups: adults, career changers and industry. At the ANTA ‘Sharing our Future’ forum, held in Perth in March 2003, several participants complained that the TAFE sector was once again expected to meet government priorities without additional funding.

It remains to be seen whether a new round of structural reforms and changes to training policy and TAFE work practices will meet the short and long term objectives
for the social and economic development of the state. It is clear that it will be necessary to strike a better balance between the market and state to promote the public interest more effectively. Reform still needs to resolve four perennial VET issues: adequate funding and resourcing of the TAFE system to meet the state’s training needs, raising the status and profile of the VET sector, clarifying its social and economic development role, and improving access and outcomes for the educationally and socio-economically disadvantaged.

End Notes

1 According to State Records Office of WA, DEVET operated from 1 January 1992 to 31 December 1993 and preceding agencies were:
   - Department of Technical and Further Education (28 Nov 1989 - 28 Dec 1993)
   - Technical Education Division (1 Jan 1954 - 1 Jan 1988)
   - Technical Education Branch (1 Jan 1950 - 1 Jan 1953)

2 In 1993, the Education Minister was overseeing eight agencies: the Education Ministry, DEVET, the Secondary Education Authority (SEA), SESDA, the Western Australian Office of Higher Education, the Office of Education and Training, the Academy of Performing Arts and the Country High Schools Hostel Authority. Much of the structure and operation of the VET sector prior to 1998 was outlined in a WADOT publication (1998) entitled Vocational Education and Training, Understanding the Environment.

3 The new departmental structure and the minister’s vision for the autonomous college network for Western Australia was conveyed in a Ministerial Statement in 1994.

4 Personal communication with the Chair of the State Training Board, February 2003.

5 The policy framework was outlined in 1993 in the WADOT TAFE Plan and then reproduced in A Quality System for Vocational Education and Training in Western Australia (1995).

6 Personal communication with the Chair of the State Training Board, February 2002. It is important to note that I had been seconded to work for the Office of STB in 2001 and had insider knowledge of the strained relationships between the Board and the Department of Training executive.

7 Personal communication with executive officers of Light Manufacturing ITC, February 2003.

8 Personal communication with executive officers of Light Manufacturing ITC, February 2003.

9 Focus group discussion at the ANTA Forum held in Perth, March 2003.

10 Information about each TAFE college profile is published by the STB and the Department of Training in the State Training Profile, available to stakeholders through their websites.

11 This opinion was expressed by the CEO in WADOT’s submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee.

12 Personal communication with two managing directors in 2001.

13 Midland College was one of the state’s TAFE colleges facing financial difficulties and as a result was administered by WADOT from 2001 onwards.
David Rumsey, a consultant, conducted consultations and focus groups to explore strategic issues and directions for addressing skills gaps.

The Rumsey Report (2002) was entitled *Discussion paper on the future role and skill requirements of the VET practitioner*. In late 2002, I analysed the report and helped devise the state’s Teaching and Learning Strategy.

This view was expressed by the Union Convenor at staff meetings held at one college.

First, the unions claimed that the ‘collective’ nature within the WAWA would trap individuals who wanted to get out of the agreement as they would have to get all other parties to also agree to leave, but this would be impossible due to privacy provisions. Second, the unions claimed that once people signed a WAWA they would have left the protection of the Certified Award for life and would be unable to access union protection. If a signatory to a WAWA had a grievance, they had no rights to union representation in court and would have to pay for representation at the industrial commission. If they lost the case, they would be liable for the Department of Training’s costs.

Union officials circulated memos to members expressing these views and gave presentations at college campuses where I was both an observer and participant.

The state Minister for Education had universities as part of his portfolio, but had very little power to influence their policy agenda. As universities are funded by the federal government, they report to the federal minister and respond to national priorities ahead of state priorities.

Announced in a circular for all Department of Education and Training staff, February 2003.

Focus Group Discussion at the ‘Sharing Our Future’ ANTA Forum held in Perth, March 2003.
Chapter 4
Research Methodology

The credibility of qualitative inquiry depends very much on the ability of the participants and the reader to form a judgement about the rigour of the research (Patton, 1990). One way to assist in this judgement is to map the process as transparently and thoroughly as possible. In practical terms, it requires researchers to be clear about their agenda, explain why they adopt qualitative methodology and to be open about personal partisanship. I aim to achieve this by outlining four distinct but related inquiry elements (Naples, 2003; Patton, 1990). The first is to outline the epistemology (theoretical perspectives, traditions and bodies of knowledge) that influenced how I conducted and interpreted my research. The second is to foreground the relationship between the researcher and the researched to establish the integrity of the study. This includes describing the ethical considerations faced in each phase of the research process. The third is to describe the techniques used to gather the data, and the fourth is to outline the focus, framework and layers of analysis.

Feminist Inquiry

Feminist epistemology and research has been both informed and transformed by postmodernist and poststructuralist debate (Brooks, 1997). It highlights some of the limitations of these perspectives, particularly the lack of specific attention to gender relations as an organising principle of society and institutions. Feminist inquiry puts the interests of women at the centre of research and directs it towards interrogating the way they are positioned in society and in the workplace. It aims to challenge the status quo and advance women’s position in life (Neuman, 1997; Stanley & Wise, 1990). As such, feminist epistemology and research may be generated by both women and men (Caine & Pringle, 1995).

Some of the feminist epistemology I draw upon for this study may be defined as postmodern (such as conceptions of subjectivity, identity and agency being shaped by sociocultural environments and political movements), while other feminist epistemology is more poststructuralist (such as feminist appropriation of Foucauldian discourse
analysis). I use both perspectives to inform my research as it opens up opportunities to delve into concepts used in cultural and social theory, and address issues such as power and resistance. The intersection of feminism with postmodernism and poststructuralism enables inquiry to explore equality and difference or subjectivity and identity in new ways. It provides different possibilities rather than impose a set change agenda (Fletcher, 1998).

The standpoint for my feminist inquiry is to view the politics of identity and knowledge as highly gendered and to accept gender as fundamental in a discourse about what it means to do qualitative research (Lather, 1991; Thomas & Davies, 2005). Feminist research analyses patterns of interaction through the lens of gender to explain the ways that ‘rituals, rules and recipes’ are structured to limit the potential of both men and women (Labouvie-Vief, 1996). I intend to analyse the social, cultural and institutional practices operating in TAFE colleges, which may be reproducing a dichotomous order of gender where maleness and femaleness are perceived as opposites and attributed different forms of behaviour and roles.

Sociocultural perspectives on reading and interpreting organisational culture enriched the research process. I incorporated aspects of a sociocultural approach that involves analysing the written, spoken and unspoken language used in social settings, cultural spaces, organisational practices and institutional relationships in order to fully understand its impact (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996). Based broadly on social learning and cultural theory, sociocultural approaches to research intentionally blur the divisions between disciplines, such as education, psychology and sociology (Wertsch, 1995). It analyses processes of symbolisation and representation in an attempt to better understand subjectivity, the psyche and the self. It provides a framework to view gender, mind, culture, history, the social world and the organisational context as interrelated processes. I use this multifaceted framework to assist my understanding of the political, economic and institutional regimes of control operating within the VET sector and two TAFE colleges. A feminist, sociocultural approach provides a less oppressive way of understanding organisational culture by moving away from the stress on objectivity and rule-based practices to those based on discourse, subjectivity, embodiment and reflection (Fletcher, 1998; Franzway, 2001; Probert, 2005).

More specifically, a sociocultural perspective draws attention to the archaeology of knowledge and identity politics in organisations (Chappell, 2001; Lave & Wenger, 1991; Thomas, Mills & Helms Mills, 2004). This provides a loose structure to investigate the
ways in which identities and social relations are constructed through organisational discourses. It assists in examining organisational norms and the way legitimate knowledge and culture is constructed, appropriated and distributed (Linstead & Thomas, 2002; Wertsch, 1995). Therefore, the sociocultural approach construes a gendered subjectivity in relation to social habits, cultural practices and discourses while simultaneously recognising the fluidity of these. It provides a politics of gender, identity and difference that can be used to understand how organisational culture works to disadvantage women and maintain advantage for men in the workplace (Burton, 1991; Cockburn, 1991; Connell, 1987; Eveline, 1994; Yeatman, 1990).

Role of Researcher

My epistemological assumptions influenced how I defined my role as a researcher and what I considered were ethical research practices. It facilitated my choice in methodology and implementation of techniques. It also guided what I counted as data and how it should be interpreted and reported.

My primary role as a researcher was to interview, probe, record and listen to participants’ accounts in order to access their perspective and understand their view of their careers, place in the organisation and the impact on their personal life. I was aware that my own values, perspective, assumptions and knowledge of the organisation and its staff would shape the interview process, the tenor of the conversations and the analysis. My interaction with participants whom I knew well would be influenced by my knowledge of their career paths and by their knowledge of mine. I reflected on my own knowledge base, perspectives and values and used my ‘feminist consciousness’ to recognise these as a strength in the research process (Stanley & Wise, 1990). I recognised that I could analyse colleagues’ accounts with a depth of understanding and familiarity that an outsider could not. I understood that one of my tasks was to recount the participants’ stories as accurately as possible in ways that revealed connections and key themes. I aimed to record the values, attitudes and assumptions that lay behind their accounts in ways that were ethical.

I was faced with ethical considerations in all phases of the research process and used Blunden’s (1999) suggestion to adopt an ethical position based on the equal consideration of interests. This included minimising the harm that could arise to the participants or to me from examining the political ideology underpinning TAFE practices, the gendered nature of organisational culture and the politics in the workplace. First, the two colleges that agreed to participate in the research had an
active interest in the project and expected to benefit from the research. Both colleges provided a research manager and research assistant to help with the logistics of interviewing 100 staff. Both promoted the project through in-house publications and helped to identify possible participants in their respective colleges.

Some of the participants in the study thought that the active ‘support’ of the colleges in the research put pressure on them to conform to the unwritten code of not speaking out against any perceptions of injustice or inequality. I was very mindful that the tenuous position of staff in contract positions or with limited advancement opportunities tended to ‘silence’ their opposition to practices in the organisations (Morley, 2003). I was also aware that the interview process itself could facilitate or constrain individual’s thinking and contributions (Baltes & Staudinger, 1996). Some participants revealed that they uncharacteristically shared their angst and frustrations in the discussions, rather than staying silent as they would normally do.

The ethical considerations I faced included ensuring confidentiality and anonymity. As some participants were interviewed in focus groups, they were privy to the opinions and experiences of people within the group. During the interviews, I assured participants that their confidentiality and anonymity would be protected in any publications resulting from the research. I told them that they could withdraw from the interview at any time. In presenting the data, I avoided using any information that could identify participants or harm the colleges’ reputations. To ensure confidentiality, all participants were given a code, which was used on all computer files. Tapes and transcripts of interviews and any material identifying participants were kept in a locked box in my office.

Participants knew who was to be in their focus group and they had the opportunity to request a different group or choose to participate individually. As part of the validation process, participants were given a copy of their transcript that was to be used in the data analysis and they were given the opportunity to add to, delete or change their responses. If they had any concerns about the research, they were invited to contact my supervisors, the Murdoch University Human Research Ethics Committee (which had granted approval for the research project) or myself. They were also invited to attend a seminar on the presentation of the findings and were advised how to obtain conference papers that had presented aspects of the research (Lorrimar, 2002).
Data Collection Methods

Three forms of data collection were used in the study. The first was gathering a variety of ‘official’ documents, texts and related literature. The second was researcher observation and participation in the study. The third was in-depth interviews of staff from two Western Australian metropolitan TAFE colleges. A repetition of ideas, themes and concerns emerged in the different forms of data, achieving internal consistency and contributing to the validity of the study (Neuman, 1997). This loose form of triangulation acted as a confirmatory exercise in interpreting the findings (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The Discursive Terrain

The first form of data collection was gathering a wide variety of written and oral texts, which included reports, policy documents and briefing notes. These were used to develop the contextual framework and “discursive terrain” of the study (Wetherall, Taylor & Yates, 2001, p. 198). Since contemporary ‘ruling’ in the VET sector depends heavily on objectified forms of knowledge, a thematic analysis of official texts provided insight into the objects of policy analysts and decision-makers. Smith (1990) uses the term ruling relations to encompass the varied and interconnected practices of politicians, economists, businessmen and bureaucrats, and the prominent role their texts play in shaping ideology and practice. She argues that understanding the dynamics of power in organisations requires attention to the textual practices used to legitimise and communicate ideas.

Key documents analysed included research, reports and other papers from the OECD and other international organisations. These provided a glimpse of the metanarrative that was influencing policy direction of VET around the world. Texts reflecting the view of the Commonwealth government, peak industry bodies and ANTA provided Australia’s official position on training. Research reports from the NCVER, the ACIRRT, the Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET), and several others provided a critique on the state of training in Australia. Contextual data pertaining to the broader discursive field of VET was included in Chapter 2.

I collected data from Western Australian government agencies, such as the Office of Equal Opportunity (OEO), Department of Premier and Cabinet and WADOT, to build the discursive terrain of the Western Australian training system and present a snapshot of this perspective in Chapter 3. Data included reports and strategic plans, ministerial
briefing notes, newspaper articles, departmental circulars and state government media releases. I used TAFE college texts, such as annual reports, which formed part of the public face of VET. Data also included oral texts such as ministerial pronouncements, professional conversations and speech acts in meetings.

**Participant Observation and Reflection**

The second form of data collection used researcher participation, observation and reflection to describe and interpret the social, cultural and political settings. I used aspects of institutional ethnography (Smith, 1987) to examine how ruling relations are woven into the discursive frames, policies and practices that are used to organise people’s activities. By consciously ‘listening against the grain of dominant discourses’ (Davies, 2005), I discussed with colleagues how policy and processes can be contested and it became possible to identify possible interventions.

During the data collection phase of my research, I was primarily a principal lecturer in one of the colleges. However, I also worked as a project manager on several short-term contracts for a TAFE college, the Office of the STB and WADOT. I formed close working relationships with senior executives and policy officers, and was able to observe the values, attitudes and everyday behaviours that influenced policy decisions. This enabled an exploration of how the ‘relations of ruling’ are coordinated within the bureaucracy and across TAFE colleges. It illustrates that institutional ethnography is ongoing and based on discovery.

Being an *insider*, I had knowledge of the environment and the extent to which events and activities affected people’s careers. Strong relationships with some of the interviewees meant I had seen at close hand their changing career fortunes. I also had contact with key figures, particularly senior lecturers, managers and executives on a weekly basis, which meant I could describe in detail how the restructuring of one of the colleges to a more corporate basis affected people’s career satisfaction and expectations. My intimate knowledge of the organisational culture of one college allowed me to use anecdotal observations, personal insights and experiences to evaluate the effects of economic managerialism on a wide range of staff.

Conversely, I did not have first hand experience of the other college involved in the study. Being an *outsider* of this institution meant I had some ideas of the culture from previous associations but no actual or everyday understanding of what it was really like to work there. This lack of involvement in the second college allowed me to reflect on
the differences and nuances that can routinely escape an insider’s conscious awareness.

The insider/outsider debate in qualitative inquiry is “simultaneously a contestation over divergent epistemological assumptions, methodological strategies and political claims-making” (Naples, 2003, p. 50). There is a tension between the conceptualisation of knowledge as embodied in particular knowers and as one that defines knowledge in a community of practice. Naples suggests that the insider/outsider dichotomy is false and argues that it neglects the interactive processes that take place between the researched and the researcher.

My insider/outsider knowledge aimed to improve the validity and reliability of the contextual framework of the study. Having current experience in TAFE provided me with an understanding of the social language, discourse and ‘mental modes’ that an outsider could not readily bring to the research process (Bethanis, 1995). My observations could be more accurate as I had the same frames of reference and similar first hand experiences as many of my respondents. I might be less likely to misread the cues of the culture than an onlooker. However, I understood that not all respondents would think the way I did and I was careful to present different viewpoints and emphasise individual uniqueness.

**Interviews**

The third method of data collection was in-depth, open-ended, semi-structured individual and focus group interviews. These were conducted during 2000, with some follow-up interviews and ‘professional conversations’ carried out during 2001 and 2002. The benefit of such a method was that aspects of the organisational culture that were important to individuals could be pursued and allowed me to seek clarification on perceptions of complex issues. The purpose of the interviews was to explore the issues in-depth, share understandings and reflect upon the meanings of what was said and unsaid (Pawson, 1996; Reissman, 1993). Interviews were the primary vehicle for comprehending the impact of neoliberal ideology on people’s working lives. My supervisors also interviewed some of the executives in their respective organisations. Allocating specific timeframes for the interviews ensured they were highly focussed and the interviewees’ time was carefully used. Potential participants were given a letter that outlined the purpose of the research, the format of the interview (see Appendix A) and a copy of the interview questions (see Appendix B), and were invited to participate in the project. Participants who agreed were provided with the opportunity to gain more
information about the research process and were requested to sign a consent form (see Appendix C).

Two interview schedules were used in the study (see Appendix B). The schedules were similar to those used in the 1995-1996 university study, but modified to suit the TAFE environment and aims of the researcher. They assisted in minimising variation in approach by the different interviewers. Although similar, one schedule was specifically designed for executives and the other for staff. A second copy of the questions was emailed to the respondents a week before the interview date. The schedules consisted of 15 questions that addressed five issues in the study:

- factors facilitating or inhibiting career satisfaction and planning;
- attributes for success and barriers faced in getting ahead;
- the nexus between change and power;
- perceptions of fairness and equality;
- the nature and extent of sacrifice.

In addition to the above, the executives’ schedule included two questions that addressed the impact of change on managerial styles and ‘life at the top’.

**Participants’ Profile**

The two TAFE colleges in the study had comparable organisational structures. Both were large metropolitan colleges with roughly the same staff complement and some similarities in training profile. Table 4.1 shows that both colleges had similar numbers of lecturers and administrative staff. One difference was that TAFE College A had nearly twice the number of senior academic staff than TAFE College B. This difference is examined in the section ‘Senior Academics’.

**Table 4.1 Staff Profile of Two TAFE Colleges (June 30 2001) Excludes Casual Staff**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Staff Profile</th>
<th>TAFE College A</th>
<th>TAFE College B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Academic Staff (FTE)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers (FTE)</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>121</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Managers (&gt;Level 5)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administrative Staff (Level 1-4)</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>235</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: TAFE College Staffing Context Statement, as provided by the Managing Directors of TAFE Colleges.*
One hundred people, representative of the organisational structure within the two colleges, were interviewed in the study. I used purposeful sampling to obtain a representative slice of each organisation’s staff profile wherever possible.

Table 4.2 Profile of Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Female</th>
<th></th>
<th>Male</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College A</td>
<td>College B</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>College A</td>
<td>College B</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior Academic</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Administration</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This slice was illustrative of the key work roles in a TAFE college, but would not be used to make generalised statements about the experiences of all TAFE workers. Work role was considered critical in influencing people’s perceptions of the organisational culture and career satisfaction. The different work roles were classified into four main categories:

- executives (directors, general managers and the managing directors appointed to the executive decision-making body);
- senior academic staff (principal lecturers, team leaders, course coordinators and program managers);
- lecturers;
- administration managers and staff (including non-executive directors, corporate services managers, librarians, clerical officers, academic assistants, student information staff and technicians).

**Executives**

Of the 19 executive positions in the colleges, 15 were held by men and four by women. Thirteen executives were directors and two were the heads of the colleges, holding the title of managing director. The executive of each organisation was the core group responsible for the strategic direction and peak decision-making of their respective TAFE colleges. College A had 11 people on its executive while College B had 8 members. All members of each college’s executive participated in the study and the interviews varied in length from 35 minutes to an hour, depending on the interest and time commitments of each executive. On two accounts, all executives merited being interviewed individually. First, executives have considerable influence over the direction
of their college and an intense effect on organisational culture. Second, research in universities suggests that executives are perceived, both by staff and themselves, as a distinct ‘breed’ from staff and have a viewpoint quite different to middle management and the broader community (Currie, Thiele & Harris, 2002). By interviewing all executives individually, I was able to determine if there was a single peak management view or masked, multiple or inconsistent opinions.

Senior Academics

There were 43 senior academics in the two colleges, of which 23 were interviewed (53%). Table 4.3 shows that 14 senior academics were interviewed at College A and 9 from College B. Most chose to be interviewed in a small focus group, although three individuals asked to be interviewed on a one-to-one basis as they wanted to express their opinions in private. For the purposes of comparison, this study defined senior academics as those with a formal academic leadership role, a day-to-day responsibility for academic management or an overall coordination role in determining the profile of their area.

Senior academics were of very different types in the two colleges for significant reasons. At the time of interview, there were 28 senior academics at College A, of which 22 were academic middle managers (called ‘team leaders’) who had both a teaching and management role and six were ‘principal lecturers’. Fourteen were interviewed (50%). All senior academics at College A were employed under the Education Act and covered by the State School Teachers Union (SSTU) award. Most were former senior lecturers or heads of department prior to the introduction of the VET Act. This college was the only TAFE institution in Western Australia to have retained senior academics in both a teaching and management roles.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3 Profile of Senior Academics Interviewed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>College A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Leaders or Program Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Lecturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team Leaders or Program Managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Lecturers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conversely, there were only 15 staff at College B who were senior academics. Six were principal lecturers who were responsible for academic leadership, program coordination
and some management duties. Nine were called ‘program managers’. Unlike College A, these senior academics were employed under the Public Sector Act and their work did not involve any teaching duties. As public sector managers, not all were former TAFE lecturers or managers. Some had transferred into TAFE from other government departments or sectors (such as Telstra and Defence). Others had come from private industry without any teaching or training backgrounds. Of the 15 senior academics at College B, 9 were interviewed (60%).

Lecturers
There were 494 lecturers, excluding casual staff, in the two colleges, of which 34 were interviewed (7%). Sixteen were female and 18 were male. Lecturers were those who held teaching positions with limited coordination or study area management responsibility. Generally, four lecturers from the same study area were interviewed together as a focus group. Given the nature and traditions of study areas, they tended to be highly gendered. Most of the men interviewed were from traditional, male-oriented and dominated trade areas, such as electrical engineering, metal fabrication, building and construction and horticulture. Many of the women interviewed were from general studies, office administration, art, women’s or access and equity programs.

Administration: Managers and Staff
Of the 91 administrative managers in the two colleges, 12 were interviewed (13%). They included non-executive directors in corporate functions (such as information technology or commercial services) and senior managers (such as professional development, research, library services, asset management, regional development and marketing).

Table 4.4 Profile of Administration: Managers and Staff Interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>College A</th>
<th>College B</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level 1-3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level 4-5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level 6-8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Males</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level 1-3</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level 4-5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Level 6-8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sub Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2</strong></td>
<td><strong>6</strong></td>
<td><strong>8</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>24</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Of the 395 administrative staff, 12 were interviewed (3%). This included librarians, clerical staff, student support officers, technicians and maintenance staff. Sixteen females were interviewed of which ten were in administrative support positions. In contrast, of the eight men interviewed, over half were in management positions.

**Sampling Techniques**

Gaining the ideal organisational slice required using several sampling strategies to recruit participants who reflected the stratification of the colleges’ staff profile. I first used participant self-selection as a technique to gain the required sample for the study. I wrote an article on the project in each of the colleges’ newsletters informing people of the nature of the research and the sponsorship of the project. All who self-nominated were accepted in the study. I sent potential participants a letter thanking them for their nomination and provided more details of the project.

As fewer people than my ideal ‘organisational slice’ nominated through self selection, I used purposeful and intensity sampling as a means of gaining the desired variation (Patton, 1990). In addition to work role, the factors considered in gaining participants to take part in the study were:

- gender;
- employment mode;
- experience in TAFE;
- areas of expertise.

I wanted focus groups to be a combination of new and experienced, permanent and contract staff from a range of trade and para-professional study areas and at least three administration areas to take part in the 40-50 minute focus group interviews. I used the logic of intensity sampling (Patton, 1990) to gain information-rich cases and a depth of people’s perceptions of the research question, and used purposeful sampling to seek breadth across a larger sample. As the purpose of the study was to develop insight and understanding and to document diversity and variation, purposeful and intensity sampling were deemed appropriate techniques.

As I knew some colleagues who fitted the required profile, I sought their participation directly. I also enlisted the assistance of the research associates in each organisation to contact managers asking them to identify and encourage people who fitted the criteria to participate. This resulted in people phoning the researcher to volunteer to take part or to find out more information about the project. I also used ‘snowballing’
(Patton, 1990). I contacted potential participants and asked them to suggest others who might be interested. All initial contacts were followed up with a detailed letter that outlined the purpose and nature of the research, the interview time, the composition of the focus groups and the consent forms. All participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality, and could request a change of interview time or focus group.

**Gender**

Gender was a key factor in the study, so purposeful sampling was used to ensure that an equal number of women and men from both colleges were interviewed. Table 4.2 shows that an equal number of males and females participated in the study. Where practical, equal gender representation across the other variables was sought to ensure gendered perspectives were captured. Where equal gender representation was not possible (such as the unequal numbers of female and male executives), it was counterbalanced by over-representation in other areas (such as a higher number of female senior lecturers was sought in the overall sample). Similarly, equal numbers from each college were sought to establish a sense of balance and impartiality. Although I did not have a preconceived number of participants that were to take part in the study, I did want to ensure that the organisational slice was large enough to provide cases of sufficient variety and richness. Of the 50 women who participated in the study, 28 were from ‘TAFE College A’ and 22 were from ‘TAFE College B’. Of these 50 women, 18 held senior positions (14 were senior academics and 4 were executives).

**Employment Mode**

I aimed to recruit representative groups of permanent and contract workers across the different work roles as I assumed that permanent workers would perceive the organisational culture and their working life quite differently to short-term and long-term contract workers. Table 4.5 shows that there were more than twice as many permanent to contract staff. One-third of males and one-quarter of females interviewed were contract staff. I wanted to conduct interviews with more contract staff, but this proved difficult and was indicative of their inherent vulnerability.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Mode</th>
<th>College A</th>
<th>College B</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contract</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recruiting contract staff to take part in the study was difficult for four main reasons. First, many worked split shifts or irregular hours and it was more difficult to contact them directly about the project. Second, they were less likely to participate in meetings or read emails regularly so their awareness and knowledge of the project was limited. Third, many declined to participate as they were not prepared to volunteer their time in an unpaid capacity. Last, some were reluctant to participate in a project about organisational culture when they felt they had been unfairly treated by the system. Some would not participate for fear of recrimination.

Gaining casual¹ staff to participate was even more difficult. Male casual lecturers showed very little interest as their work in TAFE was generally in addition to their main day job and they could not afford to give their time freely to the project. Female lecturers showed more interest but again had competing demands, including family commitments and employment obligations in other places that prevented them from participating. Just five casuals had shown an initial willingness to participate but changed their minds. The main reason was a reluctance to give time despite the fact that the interviewer was prepared to meet with individuals at a time and place of their choosing. The second reason was fear of repercussions if their participation was viewed unfavourably by their managers. Other researchers experienced similar problems in gaining casual workers to participate in their research, “The degree of fear and apprehension felt by many employees is a sobering testimony to the conditions of work and levels of insecurity and intimidation that characterise many workplaces and work experiences today” (Hall, Bretherton & Buchanan, 2000, p. 32). As casual employees are an important segment of the TAFE workforce, I wanted to reflect the ‘casual’ experience, and used two interviewees as case studies. I gathered additional information on the experiences of casual employees from union representatives participating in the study. Insight into the working lives of casual lecturers was also gained from research by a Western Australian researcher, Priscilla Shorne (2000), who focussed on their experiences.

**Experience in TAFE**

To capture a range of experiences within the organisational culture, I included participants who had less than two years experience of TAFE and compared their perceptions to those with several years experience or a career lifetime in TAFE. Newcomers provided a very different perspective to that of experienced staff. They were engaged in quite different activities and phases of organisational socialisation (Lave & Wenger, 1991). Table 4.6 shows that just over half of the participants had more
than ten years experience in TAFE and of those, 20 had more than 20 years experience.

Table 4.6  Profile of Participants by Experience in TAFE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience in TAFE</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Less than 2 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between 2-10 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More than 10 years</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Areas of Expertise
Gaining participants from different fields of expertise was another consideration in the study. Most study or industry areas were trades-oriented, highly gendered and based on long-established traditions and work cultures. Study or industry areas were generally campus specific so the experiences of lecturers and senior academics were highly correlated to their area and campus location. Table 4.7 indicates the profile of participants according to their fields of expertise.

Table 4.7 Profile of Participants by Fields of Expertise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lecturers and Senior Academics</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Trades</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Para-professional</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Twenty of the participants taught in the trades, including electrical, metal, building and construction, horticulture, and hospitality. Eighteen taught in the para-professional fields, including computing, business (administration, management and marketing) and applied science (laboratory and environmental science). Nineteen staff taught in general education, including art and equity programs. As the two TAFE colleges participating in the project had multiple campuses, each with different cultures, traditions and orientations, I recorded these differences. I aimed to capture the stories of those who worked in ‘satellite’ or isolated campuses and compare them to workers in ‘main’, higher status or more centrally located campuses.

Focussing the Analysis
Feminist Discourse Analysis
I analysed the data in connection to historically embedded policy assumptions with a critique of the gendered assumptions of current practices (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). I utilised Naples (2003) concept of feminist discourse analysis to reveal how the
discourses of neoliberalism and gender were used to negotiate the social relations between individuals and how it produced relations of ruling that structured the working lives of TAFE personnel. She defined discourse analysis as exploring “what can be said and what can be heard” in an organisational, political or legislative context (p. 28). She explains that a feminist discourse analysis must retain the integrity of political processes, specific events, diverse actors and social context while revealing the broader processes at work that may not be visible to the participants or even to the researcher at the time they were engaged in the research. It must attend to the “historical and structural patterns of domination and resistance to render visible the features of everyday life that are unrepresented in discursive frames” (Naples, 2003, p. 106). Being mindful of feminist criticism of Foucauldian discourse analysis (that it neglects gendered patterns of power), a feminist analysis examines the dynamics of power on women’s experiences and shows how it differs from men’s.

I also used ‘discourse as data’ (Fairclough, 2001) to make visible the fragile terrain on which VET policy in Australia is built. I used neoliberal discourse as data to gain a broader perspective of its ideological tenets and to guide my analysis on its impact on VET generally and organisational culture specifically. I explored the way neoliberalism became institutionalised as a ‘master frame’ that facilitated managerialism, fractured TAFE teacher identity and inhibited career satisfaction.

By mapping the relations of ruling and reading against the grain, I tried to make visible the way policy makers have used VET regulatory texts to shift the focus away from teaching and learning concerns to focus on national and transnational political and economic agendas. When analysing the policy data, I showed how decision-makers attempted to mobilise support through rhetoric that stressed economic urgency and how they cast the training system as maladaptive and TAFE colleges as non-responsive.

Sociocultural Analysis
In presenting the findings of this research as a study of gendered organisational culture, I used a multidimensional concept of discourse analysis to draw attention to the ideological, social and cultural aspects of discourse. As discourse is constructive, it means that what a person says does not remain consistent from one occasion to another, but varies according to context, rules, constraints and function of talk (Wetherall, Taylor & Yates, 2001) This understanding of discourse provides a way to explain how individuals, groups and the colleges as a whole were constantly changing
by their interactions and activities (Rogoff as cited in Wertsch, 1995). To reveal how
gendered organisational culture is produced, I analysed individual accounts, paying
particular attention to the way language was being used and to nuances in narrative
patterns (Gheradi & Poggio, 2001).

My analysis drew on theories of identity to illustrate the way lecturers and academic
managers wrestled with their professional identities and how they changed their
behaviours as a response to the neoliberal ideology pervading the colleges. It provides
a mechanism to understand how the language of neoliberalism tries to “create new
social identities and new kinds of people: new leaders, new workers and new teachers”
between neoliberalism, gender, power and identity in VET institutions strengthened my
analysis of the way structural inequalities are reproduced in organisational life (Ainley,
2004; Anderson, 2000, 2001; Blackmore & Sachs, 2000, 2003; Chappell, 1998; Halford
& Leonard, 1999; McCoy, 1998; Sagers et al, 2002).

Layers of Analysis
Table 4.8 provides a profile of participants, the coding used to identify individuals and
the number of participants in each category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code Identifier</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Common position(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EF7,EF9-11</td>
<td>Executive women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Director (includes managing directors)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EM1-6, EM8, EM12-18, EM20</td>
<td>Executive men</td>
<td>15</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFP1-SAFP8</td>
<td>Senior Academic, female, permanent</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Program manager or team leader and principal lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMP1-SAMP7</td>
<td>Senior Academic, male, permanent</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAFC1-SAFC6</td>
<td>Senior Academic, female, contract</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Program manager or team leader and principal lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAMC1-SAMC2</td>
<td>Senior Academic, male, contract</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFC1- AFC4</td>
<td>Academic, female, contract</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Lecturer (includes ASL I &amp; II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMC1-AMC12</td>
<td>Academic, male, contract</td>
<td>12</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFP1-AFP10</td>
<td>Academic, female, permanent</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Lecturer (includes ASL I &amp; II)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMP1-AMP6</td>
<td>Academic, male, permanent</td>
<td>6</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ATF1-AFT2</td>
<td>Academic, female, casual</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFP1-GFP15</td>
<td>General staff, female, permanent</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Administrative officers and non-academic managers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMP1-GMP5</td>
<td>General staff, male, permanent</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GFC1-GFC3</td>
<td>General staff, female, contract</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Administrative officers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMC4-GMC6</td>
<td>General staff, male, contract</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>100</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

69
All respondents’ answers to the interview questions were taped, transcribed and entered into NUD.IST. Each transcript was given a document code. Respondents’ names were removed from the transcripts and substituted with a code that identified their work role, gender and employment mode. Executives were not assigned a code for employment mode as their tenure was technically contract at that level; however, all had a ‘fall back’ permanent position.

I applied four layers of ‘case analysis’ to the interview data (Patton, 1990) and used descriptive frameworks to attribute meanings, using key concepts from sociocultural and feminist theory. First, I used individual case analysis to focus on how individuals perceived their careers and how or why they engaged in particular activities. At the time of data collection, each participant’s personal account was treated as an individual case study. Variations in perspective and contradictory statements were recognised and analysed rather than discarded. Several individual interviews that were of special interest were analysed to determine what could be learnt from such cases. An analysis of individual cases helped determine which interview questions had generated the richest data. From these it was possible to reveal a consistent set of patterns to develop themes that were applicable to other cases.

Second, cases were content-analysed question by question. Those questions that generated common patterns and which captured core experiences were analysed in greater depth. Coding frames were generated for each question and were broadly based on the categories and codes generated in the 1995-1996 study but modified to suit the TAFE data. Codes were assigned for base data, broad categories and specific responses or properties. The coding was done collaboratively by the researcher and the supervisors. These sessions generated lengthy debate on the codes, categories and properties being developed. The coding discussions were peppered with questions of perspective, paradigm, orientation and purpose. Using NUD.IST, a matrix was constructed to reveal the number of responses within each category or theme. It was common for respondents to offer several explanations or provide a combination of characteristics in answering each question. Sometimes they would respond to one question, but allude to previous questions and add scope or depth to their earlier accounts. It was not unusual for respondents to contradict their earlier assertions or even admit to holding conflicting ideas about certain issues. At other times, there was a direct correlation between respondents and number of responses. In coding the questions, the aim was to capture the range of responses and illustrate different perceptions rather than oversimplify the answer given by an individual. Not all the data
collected from the interviews was used in the NUD.IST analysis. Some of the answers to the questions were not of sufficient interest or importance to warrant detailed analysis. For example, the answers relating to collegiate support lacked variation and I decided to omit this question in the analysis.

Third, cases were analysed according to the participant profile using factors such as gender, rank, position, employment mode, work role or length of time in TAFE. The cross case analysis provided consistent patterns to illustrate relations of ruling, particularly the way unwritten rules mediate the way people work with one another. It revealed the values and attitudes that lay behind their thoughts and behaviours and provided an insight into the way individuals and groups are socialised into the culture. Cross case analysis captured the shared patterns and core experiences that cut across the two TAFE colleges and assisted in developing the central themes of the study. It was used to develop a narrative of how gender manifested itself in respondents’ accounts and how power and identity politics were used in the institutions.

Last, I used institutional analysis to compare the differences between the two TAFE colleges. Institutional cross case analysis was useful in highlighting the different experiences based on the specific location and cultures of the two institutions. The differences, where they were significant, were examined in the findings.

In presenting the findings, my goal was to capture the different angles of vision provided by the women and men working in TAFE. As they were positioned differently in the social and organisational hierarchy of the colleges, they experienced a range of work cultures. In exploring the research questions, I have quoted extensively from the respondents, allowing their words to tell their story. I have provided their accounts in much detail to enable readers of the data to “draw their own interpretations” (Patton, 1990, p. 375). I have described and analysed the neoliberal context and sociocultural setting of working in TAFE through a textual analysis of policy documents and literature to support my analysis and interpretations. Feminist and sociocultural theoretical perspectives helped clarify the focus of the research and helped determine which issues would be explored in depth, without seeking to generalise.

End Notes

1 In Western Australian TAFE colleges, the definition of a casual worker is someone who is not employed on a contract or permanent basis. They may work the same number of hours each week as a contract staff member, for periods of one or more semesters or years, but do not have
a specific term of employment. Some casual staff have worked the same number of hours per year for more than five years but cannot get a contract.
This chapter analyses how the tenets of neoliberalism and VET policy reforms, described in chapters 2 and 3, were experienced at the college level, both by executives as change agents and advocates of change and by staff as adopters, adapters or resisters to change. These different interpretations and reactions illustrate that individuals actively construct, legitimise or challenge the views offered to them. They also highlight that accounts of and reactions to change are inconsistent, complex and at times contradictory.

Individuals experienced the depth and breadth of change in many different ways. Most executives accepted restructuring as inevitable and many embraced the opportunities that new forms of governance provided. They believed it was necessary for TAFE to adopt a business orientation and they supported the use of management instruments appropriated from the corporate world. Some academic and corporate services managers resented the way that WADOT had shifted from being a support service to a dictator of policy and a purchaser of services. A few felt bitter about the new orientations and practices in teaching, administration and management. Most academic staff (both managers and lecturers) were frustrated with the lack of funding and new forms of accountability.

Components of Change

Interviews with the 19 executives canvassed the political, economic and social changes affecting TAFE colleges and sought their views on ‘life at the top’. They were asked whether they were conscious of having to cross boundaries and wear different hats and whether they felt separated from the rest of the college in their managerial role. In addition, they were asked to reflect on the changing VET climate and to analyse how such changes affected their managerial style.

Table 5.1 identifies the components of change, based on executives’ most frequent responses. All provided more than one response type so the numbers show the total
answers for each category and thus are far greater than the actual number of interviewees. The most frequent responses covered five broad areas: restructuring and corporate models of governance and operations; business orientation; funding constraints and financial imperatives; increased competition; and new forms of accountability.

Table 5.1 Components of Change Percentages and (Numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Change</th>
<th>Male (N=15)</th>
<th>Female (N=4)</th>
<th>Total (N=19)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Restructuring and governance</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restructuring colleges, management, flatter academic structures, broader roles &amp; greater expectations</td>
<td>28% (14)</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>27% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial relation reforms, strategic directions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Business orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial ventures and Contractual agreements</td>
<td>24% (12)</td>
<td>31% (4)</td>
<td>25% (16)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on marketing, positioning &amp; partnering</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased entrepreneurialism</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Funding constraints</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrelenting demands for better IT, resources, staff</td>
<td>20% (10)</td>
<td>23% (3)</td>
<td>21% (13)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centralised control of resource management</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on 'growth through efficiencies'</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Increased competition</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of WADOT’s competition policy</td>
<td>16% (8)</td>
<td>15% (2)</td>
<td>16% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on winning tenders</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between TAFE colleges, training providers, schools</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between directorates and industry areas</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Between staff, particularly contract staff</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>New forms of accountability</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arising from autonomy, relationships with government</td>
<td>12% (6)</td>
<td>8% (1)</td>
<td>11% (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emphasis on quality and performance measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction of the Australian Recognition Framework (now AQTF), workplace trainer qualifications and training packages</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater reporting requirements, increased regulation, surveillance and monitoring</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentages</strong></td>
<td>100% (50)</td>
<td>100% (13)</td>
<td>100% (63)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses</strong></td>
<td>100% (50)</td>
<td>100% (13)</td>
<td>100% (63)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All executives described the 1980s onwards as a period of constant change, unrelenting reform and radical transformation. Some gave accounts of economic, technological and political change, while others provided a response to current threats, opportunities and training issues, including a critique of the interrelationship between training, labour markets, competition, quality assurance and national consistency. Most provided some personal reflection on how the changes had affected their management style, interaction with different stakeholders and relationships with colleagues. The responses were largely consistent with an AEU
survey of TAFE teachers (Kronemann, 2001), which found that the most frequent cited changes were related to restructuring, reporting and accountability requirements, cuts to teaching and support staff and technological change.

Almost all the executives interviewed stated that the most significant change was the structural and governance arrangements of colleges, which occurred as a result of policy imperatives at the Commonwealth and state levels (27% or 17 responses). They claimed that restructuring along corporate models radically changed the organisational structure and operating framework of TAFE colleges. Flatter academic structures resulted and public sector managers were appointed into academic management positions that had previously been held by lecturing staff. Most of the executives endorsed the emergence of corporate structures and argued that the new forms of organisation led to more efficient operational decision-making by middle managers and enabled executive managers to take greater control in setting the strategic direction of the college.

The second most frequently mentioned change was in relation to management orientation, which shifted from education administration to business management (25% or 16 responses). Many executives stated that a business orientation fundamentally changed management practices and gave examples such as the need to win tenders and the pressure to create alliances with industry and partnerships with local businesses. As a result of the new business approach to managing TAFE, executives described the need to market the distinctive identity of colleges and position them in the training market in ways that had never been done before. They commented that managers and lecturers had to be much more focussed on external markets and had to be more entrepreneurial in growing the commercial side of TAFE.

In a similar vein, many executives described the impact of severe funding constraints on management practices (21% or 13 responses). They commented on financial imperatives to meet targets and emphasised the need to rationalise costs. They described the frustration of being unable to meet demands for better information technology software, hardware, resources and systems. Over half of the responses stated that the ‘growth through efficiencies’ policy put pressure on academic managers to achieve greater efficiency and stimulate growth in their areas.
They commented on the impacts that competition policy had on management styles and staff’s operating framework and generally did so positively (16% or 10 responses). Four executives suggested that the training market reforms had placed enormous pressure on supply-side competition and that colleges were vigorously competing against each other for market share, grants and contestable funding. One executive argued that TAFE colleges were at a distinct disadvantage in comparison to private training providers in terms of community service obligations and the industrial relations context in which they operated. Both college managing directors claimed that internal competition had been established to “promote healthy competition between industry areas” and “act as a spur to provide better services to clients”. Three executives stated that competition had delivered real benefits in terms of flexibility, responsiveness and relevance. Only two executives (both of whom had long histories in TAFE) had more qualified assessments about the nature of competition. They commented on the unhealthy or potentially detrimental aspects of competition in terms of professional jealousies and rivalry between staff.

New forms of accountability were the fifth most frequent response (11% or 7 responses). These drew attention to the constraints on college autonomy, such as increased responsibility to a minister, greater emphasis on the many acts and regulations, increased surveillance, and more frequent reporting requirements. In addition, they explained that managers had to impose a more compliance-oriented culture as a result of the implementation of the Australian Recognition Framework and the quality assurance movement as a whole.

By presenting executives’ personal reflections on the five components of change, the chapter illustrate how the ideology of neoliberalism is imposed and sustained in TAFE colleges, irrespective of the human costs. While non-executive staff were asked no specific questions in relation to how changes in the VET sector had affected them, they made numerous references throughout their interviews to the impact of change on their working lives, personal lives and sense of identity. Where the contrast between the executive and staff view are stark, or where staff offer specific views of particular events and unique occasions, these accounts have been interwoven with the reflections of executives.

**Restructuring and Governance**

Restructuring TAFE colleges along corporate lines greatly increased hierarchies of centralised control (particularly executive prerogative) and created new structures,
such as industry advisory committees which supplanted academic councils. The corporatisation of TAFE colleges was bolstered by three critical events: the enactment of the VET Act 1996, the establishment of an autonomous college model and the ratification of the first ‘Certified Agreement for TAFE Lecturers’ (which replaced the Teachers (TAFE) Award 1993). These three triggers changed the organisational structure, governance arrangements and roles of lecturers and managers in TAFE.

Prior to 1995, TAFE colleges were governed primarily by the Education Act 1928 and the Colleges Act 1978. The Acts specified that colleges were to be organised around an academic structure similar to state schools and universities. Lecturers had a career structure similar to universities with promotional positions being available, such as lecturer A, B or C, senior lecturer and head of department. The Teachers (TAFE) Award 1993 governed the appointment and employment conditions of lecturing staff and academic leaders. The heads of colleges were principals, reporting to superintendents appointed by DEVET. Associate directors and heads of departments managed the day-to-day operations of their study area.

The following account from one executive, who was closely involved with restructuring the college to a corporate model, explained how the VET Act 1996 and the Certified Agreement were drafted to change training from an educational system to a corporate model.

In 1995, WADOT advised colleges that a VET Act was being drafted to fundamentally change the training system. This Act would change the organisational structure, employment awards and operating framework of TAFE colleges. The VET Act required a new industrial relation agreement, later known as a ‘Certified Agreement’ to replace the Teachers (TAFE) Award 1993. In late 1995, all colleges were told to restructure their academic management structures, as the positions of head of department, senior lecturer and associate director would be unconstitutional under the new VET Act. The Department of Training made it clear it wanted public servants (not academics) in all middle and senior management positions. (Executive, EM1)

Other executives explained that former heads of departments or senior lecturers who wanted to retain a leadership role would have to apply for the new management positions (variously referred to as ‘program manager’, ‘portfolio manager’, or ‘manager of training services’). Associate directors could apply for other positions in the public sector or apply for the limited number of ‘manager of training services’. The newly-created positions were far fewer than the previous structures and were short-term contract positions. These new positions signalled the Department's
adoption of corporate managerialism and flatter academic management and foreshadowed the dramatic shift away from senior lecturers holding both academic and leadership roles. The new management positions would no longer be education appointments but public sector ones with public service working conditions.

The new Certified Agreement, ratified in late 1995, had no management, leadership or coordinator positions for lecturers. Therefore, any lecturer who held a position of program coordinator, senior lecturer, head of department or associate director had to return to teaching or apply for the few new public sector management positions. Over thirty people in each of the colleges in the study had held such positions and were faced with such decisions. Under the new agreement each college could appoint a small number of lecturers to the position of principal lecturer. Although this newly-created position was regarded as a promotion, in reality it was an honorific title as it required principal lecturers to maintain a full teaching load. There were only six principal lecturer’s positions in each of the colleges participating in the study and few respondents, and none of the principal lecturers themselves thought the position held enough power or status to influence the organisation.

Lecturers explained that the type of structures which existed before the new VET Act and the introduction of the Certified Agreement provided them with better career pathways. Implicit in the following account is that seniority, academic qualifications, country service and generally ‘using the system’ enabled lecturers to get ahead.

Twenty years ago TAFE colleges were structured similarly to schools. You had senior lecturers, heads of departments, deputy principals and principals. And anyone starting at the bottom could get to the top if they did their country service, got their qualifications, toadied to the right people and used the teachers’ tribunal for appeals. All the way through your career you were a teacher with education as your primary interest. When you were a senior lecturer you got 7-8 hours off your teaching load for administration but you still taught. Heads of department taught 8 hours a week but you were still a teacher. Everybody who was a teacher aimed to be a deputy principal or principal. So when TAFE was restructured teachers suffered a very great loss. They lost a career structure, professional identity and any sense of power or ability to influence the system. (Lecturer, AMP7)

In reality, lecturers said that there had been a massive dilution and flattening of academic power, accompanied by a rise in bureaucratic power, which was created by increasing the number of public servants into the system.

There is a very flat academic structure for lecturers. Everyone is ‘just a lecturer’ even the ASL1, ASL2 and principal lecturers are just better paid lecturers with no real authority or influence. As a principal lecturer myself I do not think that I
have any real power to make changes or stop things I disagree with. On the other hand, we have seen layer upon layer of management implemented in the college. In 1996 there were no public service positions above level 8, now there are at least five level 8 directors, three level 9 general managers and the MD [Managing Director] himself. (Principal lecturer, SAFP2)

Many of the lecturers who participated in the study gave personal accounts of what it was like to be faced with the dramatic restructuring of the college, the axing of a career path and the loss of formal power under the new system. Some lecturers described the sort of influence they had in the system before corporatisation.

As senior lecturers we used to have power and were able to have a lot of say on what happened in the college. We discussed issues and made decisions at Academic Council. Council has now been abolished and academic issues never get debated or resolved. We were also able to protect the working conditions of our staff and ensure the allocation of overtime and resources and the like was fair. But over the last five years we have witnessed the emasculation of lecturers with the shift in power to management. Decisions are made unconstrained by collegial and educative values. I no longer feel I have any power and I am not prepared to fight the system. (Lecturer, SAFP4)

Lecturers were concerned that the corporatisation of TAFE undermined collegial decision making, diluted the educative orientation of the organisation and placed insufficient focus on teaching and learning. One lecturer was extremely concerned with the changes from educative structures and orientation to corporate structures, and managerial control.

We have been laminated with this public sector structure, public service management that came in the 1990s. Now the people who are running WADOT and the colleges have not come up through the ranks and had never taught in many cases. They knew nothing about the grassroots needs and expectations of teachers in the classroom or what the various disciplines were about. They came to us from the buses [Department of Transport], the prisons [Department of Justice] and from anywhere. The thought was that if you were a manager, you could manage a TAFE college and do it effectively… I think we have been burdened. (Lecturer, AFP11)

Such negative assessments of the corporatisation of TAFE reflects the anger that many lecturers felt towards managers who had no experience or understanding of VET or who had forsaken the Kangan philosophy of the social role of vocational education for that of the market economy. Six lecturers argued that the restructuring of TAFE to a corporate model and the autonomy of TAFE colleges resulted in more, rather than less bureaucracy and more rigid and autocratic forms of work control, which subjugated their expertise and professional autonomy. They claimed corporatisation and waves of accountability measures resulted in less flexibility in organisational functioning and more constraints in training delivery. A
comparison of lecturers’ experiences of restructuring to those of executives highlights the latter’s power to impose the language of corporatism and their interpretation of its meanings in an attempt to reshape academic staff’s orientation, allegiances, practices and ethos. Executives had suggested that restructuring the college to a corporate model and flattening the hierarchy would lead to increased efficiency, more flexibility and greater teamwork. The reality for TAFE lecturers was less respect accorded to teaching; a decline in their power and influence; and a breakdown in collegiality.

**Business Orientation**

A significant change affecting managerial style was the move from educational administration to a business orientation, focussed on contractual and commercial practices. Brown et al (1996) explain the cultural shift that moved TAFE from a paternalistic organisation to a contractual one with industry was that TAFE was “generally more willing and able than the schools sector to implement policies and administrative procedures which incorporated the type of contractualist principles that were becoming hegemonic in industry” (p. 316). Emerging from the new, corporate structural forms of TAFE colleges were pressures for staff to embrace strategic and entrepreneurial practices.

* I think the college has really changed from a classic public service mentality or public sector management culture to one that is very much more commercially focussed. I think that’s reflected in the managers, their style. I think they have a greater appreciation of the business that we’re in. Their job is running a business as well as delivering the training. I think they’re much more customer focussed and starting to be a bit more strategic, although at the middle management level they are still fairly operationally focussed, but that is starting to change. Of course, there are a few exceptional managers who have really embraced the idea of entrepreneurship and have really turned their sections around. I make sure that such individuals are recognised and rewarded. (Executive, EM15)

All executives commented on the need to operate TAFE as a business and seek additional forms of revenue to meet operating costs and grow.

* TAFE has been restructured as a business with each study area operating as an independent business unit which has to meet its training targets and bottom line...The commercial side of the business is much more important now than in the past... We now focus on measuring training delivery performance, graduate outputs and commercial outcomes rather than inputs. (Executive, EM1)

Furthermore, eight executives stated that concentrating more on the external environment and the big issues (such as implications of the ANTA Agreement, state funding changes, industry needs and employment trends) was a significant change
in their orientation. This obliged them to learn new skills to manage a TAFE college. Executives’ primary interest was linked to the business imperative of running the college, while that of lecturers was preoccupied with pedagogical practice and the effects of managerialism on their work and responsibilities.

*I think one of the big cultural changes is to help staff realise that they have to be more responsive to the needs of industry. It’s not about what they used to do in the past such as generate courses because the student council advised of the need. The driver now is not meeting student aspirations but meeting industry needs.* (Executive, EM6)

This executive went on to explain that TAFE delivery was based on a strategic analysis of industry skill shortages, projected training needs and the economic trends of the state rather than on community expectations and student desire.

*Ten years ago there was a strong push to shift the trade oriented nature of TAFE and make it more accommodating to the needs of women and people who wanted a second chance at a broad education. However, I think that equity impetus has gone or at least declined because as I said before we have shifted to a more business-oriented system of training based on delivering training purchased by the government or private industry. Now the State Training Board decides what colleges will deliver. We are now industry-driven and a lot of those equity courses do not have a high profile and we struggle to get funding. We are often battling to run bridging or TEE courses or literacy or numeracy courses and most of these courses have a hard ceiling so although there is a strong demand for them from people in the community, the Board or Department will not fund them.* (Executive, EM6)

The executives’ matter of fact accounts suggests that they adopted managerialism without much hesitation. They accepted the need to subordinate TAFE’s educative focus and broader community service role to an increasingly rationalised system of production and control (Lorrimar, 1999). In this way, executives acted as technocrats. They took their cues and scripts from government policies and did not question the view that TAFE colleges should be run like a business and structured like a corporation. With the promise of little interference from WADOT and the state and federal governments they thought that TAFE colleges could be effective.

As TAFE adopted the culture of corporate managerialism and the practices of economic rationalism, senior managers and executives required new capabilities, particularly business acumen and entrepreneurial skills (Callan, 2001). They needed strategic analysis, business planning, risk management and market analytical skills. As in the United Kingdom, restructuring of technical and further education produced a move away from “benign liberal paternalism to a more entrepreneurial work...
culture” (Kerfoot & Whitehead, 1998, p. 437). This change rewarded employees who searched out “new niche markets” and responded to industry and client needs.

I think, too, that people who are enterprising have power because if they search out new niche markets or respond to industry’s needs though a comprehensive plan to bring money into the college, they are usually given a free rein to make it happen. Enterprising people can significantly impact on the directions of the college. (Team leader, SAFC3)

As mentioned earlier, executives remarked in glowing terms about the few exceptional managers “who have really embraced the idea of entrepreneurship and have really turned their sections around” (Executive, EM15). In a similar vein, four executives stated that they would publicly commend those individuals who exhibited entrepreneurial flair and who had won sizeable commercial or government contracts.

I have gone out of my way to ensure that those individuals that have won CAT projects [contestable allocated tenders] or research grants in niche markets, such as electrotechnology, aquaculture or turf management, have been recognised and rewarded for their achievements. Those who are working at the cutting edge or are highly motivated to work entrepreneurially have been given more latitude to work directly with industry and international trade agencies than those who work within normal parameters. (Executive, EM4)

By promoting entrepreneurial behaviour, executives were supporting a work culture that sustained competition and embedded individualism. The pursuit of short-term goals offered entrepreneurial individuals the greatest chance of being rewarded. Kerfoot and Whitehead (2000) suggest that entrepreneurialism enables individuals to become diverted into projects and tasks as a means of self-validation. Targets met and project deadlines conquered enables some individuals to gain a more permanent sense of self. They suggest, however, that it may also instil angst and frustration in others who identify with the long term social goals of education.

**Funding Constraints**

Inadequate funding led to the adoption of a blended market-bureaucratic approach to managing colleges. WADOT imposed new regulations to curtail their commercial activities and to reduce ministerial complaints about inconsistencies between TAFE colleges. The need to increase the funding base remained, so greater surveillance of commercial activities added extra pressures and costs to the system. TAFE colleges still operated on a day-to-day level according to the principles of bureaucratic management and directors were not given much discretionary power.
There is a lot of pressure on directors to increase their commercial work and yet we are hamstrung with layers and layers of bureaucracy and red tape. We have to be seen as entrepreneurial and seen as positioning the college on the cutting edge, but the realities are we can barely compete with private providers because of all the on-costs and red tape. (Executive, EM3)

Executives dismissed the tensions that arose from such a dichotomy. They failed to recognise managers’ increased workloads and heightened frustrations:

I think the biggest change is that people have to balance both a commercial approach and a government approach. So the managerial style has changed to one of a dual style if you like. There’s a government approach which emphasises process and procedure but there is also a business imperative to get things done. This dual approach is conflicting and at times incompatible. However, I think successful managers know how to reconcile the differences. (Executive, EM14)

The contradiction is resolved within the persona of a ‘successful manager’ who does not feel the pressure because he or she knows how to reconcile the differences. The discourse of the executive affirms the idea that good management practices are the solution to all dilemmas. Although all executives stated that inadequate funding posed a threat to quality, morale and long-term functioning, there was no suggestion that common action should be taken against the economic rationalist model.

The power of economic dogma to shape thought and behaviour was most evident in the strategic directions espoused by the executives. These were primarily centred around economic goals (‘growth through efficiencies’, ‘responsible economic management’, ‘expanding commercial training markets’ and ‘increasing international training’). The core business of teaching and learning was rarely mentioned. The climate of economic rationalism, entrepreneurialism and financial imperatives was reflected by those who were rewarded in TAFE.

Executives described their main roles as setting the strategic directions of the college, implementing VET and economic reform and managing the bottom line. This translates into negotiating a performance agreement with WADOT for funding training delivery. In return for funds, the college executive is responsible for meeting training targets, implementing national reforms and state training strategies and employing aspects of the ANTA Agreement into organisational policy and practice.

One of the most dramatic changes has been the constant erosion of funds for TAFE colleges. Because we have limited funds, managers have to focus primarily on the bottom line. This has been very difficult for lecturers to accept as they were used to getting resources and support from the Department and associated agencies. Without any support services, managers have had to
make some tough financial decisions. Often the staff does not understand the funding arrangements in colleges and resent the tight-fisted approach of managers. (Executive, EM13)

Executives have imposed impersonal bureaucracies on TAFE colleges and have devolved responsibility for financial management upon directors, while maintaining stringent control over expenditure. Directors, in turn, have given the responsibility for operational and financial management to program managers and team leaders without giving them the resources and authority to do it effectively.

A result of all the change is that you have to push so many things downwards. It’s almost like an hourglass. Everything gets poured in the top and you have to filter it down to managers and they, in turn, need to push tasks down to lecturing staff. There is so much more to do now and team leaders have to take on much more financial responsibility for their study area than before. (Executive, EM8)

Stringent funding models that measured output in SCH were implemented in the late 1990s. These models did not provide an allowance for ‘inputs’, such as course coordination or academic student support services.

In the past, several academic coordinators’ positions were funded. For example, Departmental funding included coordinator or leadership positions such as Study Area Coordinator, Adult Literacy Officer, Disability Officer, Women’s Liaison Officer, to name a few. Some of these positions were full-time and held by experienced lecturers. Others were part-time positions, again held by senior lecturers who performed these duties in lieu of a full-time teaching load. These academic positions have been gradually abolished over the last five years. Since the introduction of training packages, the Department no longer funds the coordination of programs and student support services. These functions were deemed to be part and parcel of the training purchased and therefore part of a lecturer’s full-time load. (Executive, EM2)

The competing priorities of bureaucracy and the corporate model took their greatest toll on academic managers. Preoccupied with reducing costs, they were re-engineered as financial managers rather than academic leaders of their industry areas. Financial imperatives took precedence over their concerns for students’ lives and educational interests.

There is a critical need to win tenders and commercial contracts to make our area financially viable. The emphasis is on meeting the training profile and minimising costs. To do this, some program managers have resorted to dodgy practices that are not really in students’ long-term best interests, like increased recognition of prior learning, flexible delivery and ‘fast track’ courses. Few students complain because they complete their courses more quickly, but I am not convinced the quality is the same as it used to be. (Team leader, SAMP4)

Faced with increased pressure to produce new efficiencies, program managers used contractualisation and casualisation as methods to reduce staff costs. Many
tried to increase commercial courses or fees to offset under-resourced government funded courses. Some used flexible delivery to reduce course delivery costs and a few resorted to practices such as ‘shaving hours off courses’ as a method of funding course coordination.

We are no longer funded to allow lecturers to coordinate units or courses as they did five years ago. It is obvious to program managers and lecturers that there is a huge amount of coordination necessary to run a course properly but there is no money to pay coordinators to do this. We have resorted to skimming hours off courses, approximately 10%, to pay for coordination. So, if a course is 500 hours, I take off 50 hours and this pays for a lecturer to coordinate the course, ensure units are clustered properly, unit outlines and assessments are consistent and moderated across campuses. Course coordinators are expected to help with roll creations, enrolments, student enquiries and complaints, purchasing of resources and liaising with industry and universities. They are expected to do all this for less than three hours a week, which has in effect been paid for by students’ tuition fees. We are not happy about this, but have no other means of funding coordination. (Program manager, SAFP7)

Lecturers were largely unsympathetic to the repositioning of academic managers as financial administrators and largely blamed them for the ‘lean and mean’ approach to educational administration. Program managers complained that they could not meet lecturers’ expectations and did not have enough funds to meet maintenance of equipment or purchase basic learning resources.

There has not been any decrease in the bureaucracy even though we are supposed to operate more like a ‘lean and mean’ business. I am given an inadequate budget to meet the running costs of my department and have no ability to attract high calibre lecturers or weed out the dinosaurs. I don’t even have money for maintenance of equipment. At least in the past WADOT had a maintenance cycle so eventually things would get fixed or replaced. Now nothing gets replaced unless it falls apart and even then it’s a bureaucratic nightmare to get new equipment. Yet I am supposed to produce more: more corporate training, commercial work, international students, apprentices, win tenders, auspice VETiS, you name it - without any increase in lecturers, support staff, professional development or time allowances. I’m even expected to run corporate days where we invite industry to discuss their training needs and sell them our training products. But I don’t have any money or time to do such things. I could do more but then I am strangled by paperwork and bureaucratic rules about staffing and not going over budget. Everything I want to do has five pages of procedures and needs three signatures. (Program manager, SAMP8)

This program manager was expected to grow his industry area and operate his unit as a business, but he had very little discretionary power or resources to turn goals into reality. Lean production appeared to exploit rather than empower managers and lecturing staff (Goozee, 2001). Respondents suggested that the rhetoric of ‘lean and mean’ production was a pseudonym for ‘dodgy practices’, increased demands and intensified pace.
Academic managers claimed that the new managerialism provided the power plays of traditional bureaucracies and was undermining new forms of educational leadership and professional ethics. They claimed that the discourse of practical rationality and instrumental approaches to training delivery overrode concerns of an academic nature. Without proper course coordination, study area leadership and academic support, they believed the quality of programs was compromised. The sidelining of academic issues entrenched executive prerogative and market orientation and normalised an ill-fitting, uncomfortably blended market-bureaucratic approach to the administration of vocational education.

**Increased Competition**

There were three main types of competition that operated in the college. Each directly impacted on the organisational culture. Firstly, external competition between colleges and private providers became a powerful tool that radically changed the way TAFE practitioners interacted with others outside their organisation.

*One of the most powerful changes has arisen from autonomy and competition. Staff are expected to be more professional and respond to new training needs or niche markets. We are faced with competition from a growing number of private providers and other colleges and this means we have to increase our competitive edge, quality and decrease our overheads in order to compete.*

(Executive, EM4)

Executives appeared to welcome competition and seemed comfortable in developing an aggressive, entrepreneurial culture. Staff, however, viewed the impact of competition less favourably and focussed on its impact on collegiality, networking and shared practice.

*Competition has killed professionalism in TAFE. We used to work very closely with other TAFE colleges and freely exchanged ideas and resources. Now my colleagues from other TAFE colleges are my competitors and I no longer share information or meet with them. I really miss the camaraderie of the study area network and think competition has stunted professionalism and weakened the system.*

(Lecturer, SAMP4)

Secondly, internal competition between ‘business units’ was established. Some executives suggested it would encourage innovation, foster flexibility and decentralise operational authority to program managers and team leaders.

*The best way to sharpen focus on financial imperatives is to make study areas responsible for their operations, targets and budgets.* (Executive, EM4)
Executives devolved the responsibility for resource management to the program level and at the same time kept centralised control of resource allocation. This meant that resources allocated to program management were inadequate but shifted the responsibility for making each unit financially viable to academic managers. Managers, operating in a competitive environment, were loath to share their methods of meeting the bottom line with others. They suggested that the executives and directors used the rhetoric of internal competition to avoid managing the overall financial health of the organisation and used it to shift the pain of financial management away from themselves. Lecturers, on the other hand, saw the introduction of business units as an artificial barrier to collegiality and yet another mechanism of control that resulted in internal jealousies and decreased cooperation.

*By separating campuses or broad study areas into business units, the college made each unit accountable for its own performance independent of other areas. This built up unhealthy competitive practices and increased demarcation. No one helped out another industry area as a professional courtesy. Every activity was premised on a monetary transaction. There is no pooling of resources for the common good.* (Principal lecturer, SAMP2)

Thirdly, competition between individuals, particularly contract, casual and permanent staff, fractured the professional identity of TAFE lecturers. Competition increased individualism and decreased professional collegiality.

*TAFE lecturers now compete against one another, especially contract lecturers. There is very little sharing of information or helping one another. It is every man for himself.* (Lecturer, AMC3)

‘Being professional’ within the corporate organisation involved notions of using technical competence to achieve ‘competitive advantage’ over others and achieving organisational goals set by executives. The dominant logic was that professionalism rested with individual loyalty to the organisation rather than to students, a professional body or an educative philosophy. Chappell (2000) suggests that once the government created a competitive environment in which TAFE became just another player, it withdrew its responsibility for TAFE teacher training and professional development, which inevitably led to a “defacto de-professionalisation of the TAFE workforce” (p. 2). Lecturers claimed they felt marginal to the core business and thought that their identity as professionals was under attack.

*I no longer feel like a professional. I certainly don’t get treated as a professional. I feel more akin to a factory production worker – just a pair of hands in the production line.* (Lecturer, AFP2)
There was a sense amongst lecturers of a discernible shift in emphasis away from professional knowledge, issues and quality improvement in teaching, learning, assessment and organisational learning to a focus on generating income and cutting costs, which forced them into competitive relationships with colleagues and other colleges. Despite the rhetoric about flexibility and trust, they were not empowered to act quickly to changing circumstances or entrusted to make decisions on behalf of their colleagues or managers.

Professionalism, suggests Clarke and Newman (1997), is a strategy used to define entry into influential cliques and powerful elites:

Professionalism operates as an occupational strategy, defining entry and negotiating the power and rewards due to expertise and as an organisational strategy, shaping the patterns of power, place and relationships around which organisations are coordinated (p. 7).

In VET, the meaning of professionalism is being shifted from occupations to organisational values. Being professional means embracing business management, financial accountability, productive alliances, liaising with industry and articulating the vision of the organisation (Falk & Smith, 2003; Mulcahy, 2003). Managerial practices and executive capabilities, rather than pedagogical expertise, dominate discourses of what is required by leaders in training organisations (Callan, 2001). Executives clearly defined professionalism in management terms and looked for people who met corporate goals.

In the past few years there has been a move from lecturers being seen as an expert in their field. I can recall some senior lecturers feeling some role conflict in that they had gained their position on the basis of their expertise in a particular industry and yet they were being bypassed in terms of leadership positions. This has caused disappointment and some difficulty. We tend to look for managers now with depth and breadth of industry experience rather than people who have been in the public sector or education for many years.

(Executive, EM13)

This 'depth and breadth of industry experience' relegates teaching expertise to the background. In the context in which lecturers are given no time allowance to do all the 'outward-looking' things, they are forced to make unpalatable changes in the conduct of their work and their work identity.

It is no longer acceptable for TAFE teachers to focus inwardly on their classroom practice. Lecturers who do so are labelled inward-looking or narrow-focussed. Our core focus, quality teaching and learning, is treated as if it’s inconsequential to the operations of TAFE. I heard the managing director
Accepting that the very nature of TAFE teachers' work has changed, Chappell (2000) echoes lecturers' fears regarding the wellbeing of the teaching profession. He maintains that the erosion of TAFE teachers' separate professional identity is a genuine cause for concern. Seddon (1995) suggests that the reconceptualisation of TAFE teachers' work is in line with the policy interventions that emerged in Australia in the 1990s. TAFE teachers are conceptualised, not as individuals, but rather as units of production:

Workers are engaged in a labour process in classrooms, schools and school systems - their workplaces - and that their work involves them, either consciously or unconsciously in social and political action that have effects within and beyond the walls of classrooms and the lives of individuals (p. 237).

Part of the social and political action involving TAFE teachers were the attempts by policy makers and others to redefine TAFE teachers in a business paradigm as workplace trainers or 'VET practitioners'. During this period, educators questioned the assumptions that underpinned a business orientation for vocational educational institutions (Ball, 1994; Bates, 1995; Kell, 1993; Marginson, 1993). Sachs (1999) argues that TAFE teachers are resisting the business paradigm of education for good reasons. She suggests they resist a technocratic approach to vocational education which serve the interests of powerful industry groups to the detriment of students' long-term interests. They resist the discourse and practices of 'managerial professionalism' which undermines their pedagogical expertise. Pat Forward, federal president of the TAFE division of the AEU claims that TAFE teachers are treated as:

Operational workers, as mere technicians who carry out clear navigational orders from above...the quality of learning is under threat because TAFE teachers have become a completely marginalised, casualised and dispensable workforce (AEU, 2001, p. 7).

The Commonwealth Senate Report into the Quality of VET in Australia (2000) is scathing of the contrasts between the work and worth of managers and 'workers'. It claims the skills of workers (TAFE teachers and administrative officers) are 'deployed' by managers and taken for granted as low-level, non-creative and routine. Lecturers' comments in this study echoed similar sentiments. They found managers undermined teachers and did not treat them as skilled professionals. Some lecturers took their grievances to the union.
It is a matter of insult to the teaching staff that they are being administered by non-teachers. I had a row some years ago about an academic matter and got no mileage at all from the program manager and director even though I was completely right. I ran it past the Board of Secondary Education and ran it past the union and they both said I was 100% right. The managers were asking me to take TEE classes at the end of the year and yet I hadn’t taught the subject for over ten years. I said it would be totally inappropriate to do that. They got quite nasty. But if the people in charge of me had been teachers, then they would have realised that what I said was correct. So, in terms of being practical, it is difficult; but in terms of self-esteem and people’s attitude to the job, it’s a disaster. When I first started in TAFE, you could count on that if you did the right thing, you could end up as a senior lecturer or head of department – it was something that gave you pride in your job and pride in the organisation. But we don’t have that anymore. (Lecturer, AMP7)

The skills of TAFE teachers were seen as secondary to the needs of employers and managers and therefore the skilling and employment needs of ‘workers’ received scant attention beyond the immediate task at hand. This diminishing of TAFE lecturers’ worth and professional standing is a recurrent theme throughout the study.

New Forms of Accountability

The impact of TAFE colleges becoming autonomous statutory bodies was twofold. Autonomy brought increased responsibilities for strategic planning of training delivery and increased accountability to the minister responsible for training and to the government. It reasserted “executive prerogative out of the need for immediate responses to government policies” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2003, p. 483). There was also increased responsibility and accountability for operational policies and quality assurance to national and international standards. Devolved responsibility was regulated through accountability mechanisms, such as CEO performance agreements, annual delivery and resource agreements, individual performance management and internal and external quality assurance audits.

As explained in Chapter 3, the VET Act in Western Australia placed all responsibility for training delivery on providers. It specified that the state training authority was to operate as a purchaser of training and that TAC would register training organisations and monitor quality. Executives explained that autonomy dramatically altered the relationship between TAFE colleges, WADOT and TAC.

Autonomy has shifted management practices substantially. Once we became autonomous we were expected to compete hard to reach and exceed our training profile. But although we were autonomous, the Department still restricted training delivery. Hard ceilings [strict quotas] in some industry areas meant we couldn't increase delivery even if we wanted to and we were pressured by the government to shift resources and delivery to apprenticeships and traineeships and away from community education. Furthermore, although
we are autonomous, we have to meet strict guidelines. We are heavily regulated and monitored by TAC. (Executive, EM16)

Being autonomous, TAFE colleges act as ‘neocorporate bureaucracies’ because they focus on accountability to meet the demands of government or their constituencies (Limerick, Cunnington & Crowther, 1996, p. 84). Executives drew attention to the extensive reporting and accountability measures operating in TAFE as a result of a ‘whole of government approach to policy’. They described the importance of understanding the dynamic interactions between the college, WADOT and the whole of government.

Over the last five years I think generic skills have emerged as pre-requisite skills for senior managers. In addition I think resource management skills very clearly have come to the fore, as well as an ability to understand whole of government policy, and overlay that on vocational education and training. That’s a fairly dynamic interaction and senior managers in TAFE need to understand that what they do on a day-to-day basis not only relates to VET, but also relates to how vocationally our training policy sits within whole of government policies both at the state and Commonwealth level. (Executive, EM20)

There are a lot of external pressures and accountability requirements imposed on TAFE colleges compared to private industry. The MD [Managing Director] is accountable to both the Minister and College Board and in reality still jumps to the policy imperatives of the Department. We are accountable to meeting local and national industry needs and without a focus on achieving student and apprentice training targets we will be out of business. The introduction of the AQTF has imposed another layer of accountability. (Executive, EM4)

Two executives suggested that the accountability frameworks imposed on TAFE colleges were heavily reliant on a few key performance measures, in particular the achievement of student and apprentice contact hour targets. Two executives also described the increased emphasis on regulatory and quality frameworks, accountability to external agencies, WADOT and the minister. One drew attention to the reporting structures that resulted from the introduction of the VET Act.

The change to autonomy has resulted in a major accountability issue. There has been recognition that not documenting, not keeping adequate records and not meeting legislative requirements can lead to disastrous consequences. So there’s been an increased focus on compliance, legislative requirements, contract law and that sort of stuff. A lawyer that I met at a conference on risk management and risk cover said that the government sector is now the most complex legal environment in Australia. So, our managers have had to lift their game to meet that environment. (Executive, EM14)

Five executives commented on changes to the national recognition framework, which outlined quality standards and accountability measures. They explained that it imposed a raft of compliance measures against which colleges are audited. Two
executives also expressed concerns about the introduction of the AQTF (which replaced the ARF) as it required extensive record keeping and had placed onerous compliance obligations on the system. On the whole, however, executives’ responses to autonomy, accountability and the quality movement were positive. They suggested that TAFE colleges had formulated a corporate culture by adopting the practices of the quality movement in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s.

A major change has been the whole quality movement, whether it was introducing international standards, benchmarking or adopting the new national quality framework. This has resulted in a greater emphasis on quality, processes and procedures. We have now got a quality department and quality manager, responsible for documenting all the processes and procedures necessary to foster quality and consistency across the board. This new form of accountability has enabled us to increase flexibility and promote better customer service. (Executive, EM5)

In contrast, academic managers and lecturer’s perceptions of autonomy and quality standards were much less positive. They focussed on the increased accountability requirements that resulted from devolution.

I think the AQTF and the whole quality movement has been about compliance, standardisation and industry control of VET. It has done nothing to improve the educational outcomes of our students. The time and costs associated with compliance have sapped everyone’s enthusiasm and energy. We are much less likely to be innovative now. (Lecturer, SAFP4)

Some lecturers and program managers stated that regulation dominated the nature of teaching and compliance monitoring dictated the relationship with WADOT and TAC. Despite WADOT devolving responsibility to colleges for training delivery and assessment, they were still heavily regulated through the strong accountability standards prescribed in the AQTF.

We have had a really tough time over the past five years and have just been audited by TAC. It has been quite traumatic getting everyone to get the paperwork right. I would just like to consolidate what we are doing now so that we can do it properly without the pressure to expand our delivery to commercial ventures and international students. We are being forced to expand and compete when we have not got our basic product right. We have not had the resources to properly unpack training packages and now to add insult to injury we are blamed for the outcomes of training from impoverished materials. (Principal lecturer, SAFP8)

Lecturing staff claimed that the “time and costs associated with compliance” had resulted in less effort in innovative teaching and improving learning practices and a greater focus on record keeping and administration. They were concerned that the speed of change had forced them to compete with other training providers instead of
getting “our basic product right” (Principal lecturer, SAFP8). Lecturers were angry that they had been given inadequate time or resources to implement training packages properly and were being blamed for the outcomes of training from poorly implemented programs. In addition, several trade lecturers were angry that the AQTF and training packages imposed a narrow vocationalism that was detrimental to students’ lifelong learning and wider career prospects.

The emphasis on training packages masks the control agenda of industry and governments. Control rather than trust underpins the system. Training now focuses totally on a narrow set of specific industry standards rather than on the ‘family of trades’ or broad generic skills. All the rhetoric on underpinning skills and key competencies masks the fact that training is now about cost efficiency. The introduction of training packages and the AQTF has not improved student outcomes, long-term career prospects or teaching quality. (Lecturer, AMP3)

The AQTF, aimed at improving quality and consistency, not only imposed extra time and cost factors, but was also a layer of accountability that undermined academic autonomy, lecturer confidence and the professionalism of TAFE colleges.

Whoever decided to impose the AQTF must be anally retentive. I am sick of constipated administrators who impose mechanistic regimes, audits and compliance cultures on education. These accountability measures do nothing to improve the quality of training delivery. We have spent hours on paperwork for very little gain. The AQTF has undermined our confidence as experts and educators and devolved legislative responsibility for training onto our shoulders. Training is now becoming so narrow and prescriptive. The students will lose because we will be too fearful to do anything new or innovative for fear of ‘non compliance’ or legal repercussions. (Lecturer, AFP8)

The issue of academic freedom, integrity, innovation and professionalism contrasts with the idea of accountability and legal responsibility. In one focus group, experienced lecturers thought that the introduction of training packages and the imposition of the AQTF diminished what little expert power and professional autonomy they had as lecturers. Furthermore, they were ‘insulted’ that the AQTF imposed a narrow prescription on the nature of the training program to be developed. They accused WADOT bureaucrats, auditors and college managers of failing to trust TAFE teachers and acting as ‘assessment Mafia’ who used the AQTF to impose control and extract conformity.

The assessment Mafia love the AQTF. They can check up on teachers’ work in ways that they never could before. I am insulted that my expertise and professional autonomy is even further diminished. I cannot believe my work is now being monitored like factory work, with checklists and sign offs… I think the focus on assessment rather than teaching and learning is another attack on the relevance and professionalism of TAFE teachers. How dare they suggest that we are mere assessors rather than educators. An obsessive focus on assessment has undermined teaching and learning pedagogy. The Department
seldom holds professional development seminars on adult learning or the like but encourages us to join networks of assessors. (Lecturer, AMP4)

His colleague, in response to this account, suggested that coercive policy interventions, such as training packages and the AQTF, aimed to change the very nature of TAFE teaching and training in Australia and ‘deskilled lecturers’. He thought the rise in administrative tasks and legislative professional accountability associated with quality assurance requirements had become an industrial issue for academic staff and a performance management tool for managers.

I think managers have grossly underestimated the psychological and physical impact. The union is now campaigning hard to reduce TAFE teachers’ teaching hours to compensate for the increase in accountability and administrative workloads. (Lecturer, AMP3)

The angst expressed by lecturers about the implementation of training packages and associated quality audits was dismissed by ANTA (2004) in *The Report of the High Level Review of Training Packages*:

There is an unacceptably high level of confusion amongst educators in particular about the relationship between training packages and teaching, learning and assessment. Many do not seem to understand how training packages work or how to work with them, and blame them for what may well be their own planning and practice or inadequate management support (p. 27).

The Report rejects the view that training packages devalue curriculum, teaching and learning and asserts that accountability for delivery, risk management and quality of teachers rests with the provider. In my study, academic managers argued that training packages were part of the accountability regime and their implementation were overt mechanisms of state and national control. They claimed the colleges failed to provide the staff and resources to properly implement new programs and monitor quality. They thought that the government had abrogated its responsibility by devolving accountability to academic managers without proper support mechanisms in place. This illustrates the way the VET system has objectified the process of curriculum implementation where documents and funding formulas have replaced individuals as the living subjects of the process. Academic managers also suggested that the AQTF was another tool being used for administrative control rather than instructional improvement in the training sector:

The focus on quality and improvement has been desirable and necessary, but too much of the quality movement has been hijacked for ulterior motives. Student and employer expectations are now higher. They expect flexible delivery and high quality resources. We just cannot deliver on quality when staff are inadequately trained and we are resourced so poorly. (Program manager, SAFP7)
One team leader stated that the time and money invested in audit arrangements were pointless unless there was a complementary commitment to professional development to build the skills of staff to deal with the new environment.

_The increased accountability now required under the AQTF makes a mockery of autonomy, self managed teams, trust and devolution of power. I am so restricted in what I can do now or sanction. I am very aware of the legal implications in what we now do. We are putting so much time and money into compliance but without an equal investment in staff, I think the exercise is pointless._ (Team Leader, SAFP5)

The values inherent in the VET legislative requirements and the quality frameworks underpinning TAFE practice are based on compliance rather than trust, expediency rather than suitability. As technologies of control, legislative and WADOT requirements reassert executive and state prerogative to ensure academic staff and TAFE colleges respond to government policies. Grace (2005) suggests that regulatory texts (such as training packages and the AQTF standards) tend to shift authority from educators to those with audit expertise. Noonan (2001) claims that “regulatory compliance is a blunt and unsatisfactory way of building the future capacity of the VET system” (p. 4). He suggests that state training authorities have treated TAFE colleges as “just another training provider” in the system without regard to the long-term health of these agencies. He argues that governments, as the owners of TAFE colleges, should assist them to come to grips with the new quality requirements.

**In Summary**

The accounts presented in this chapter illustrate how a new work culture or ‘new work order’ (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996) is created and sustained by changing structures, governance, orientation, funding and accountability arrangements. Three key points can be drawn from the accounts in relation to the nexus between neoliberalism and organisational change. Firstly, organisational restructuring along corporate lines and the redesign of academic leadership positions enabled a business orientation and financial imperatives to override educational concerns. Consequently, restructuring gave executives direct control of resource allocation and centralised decision-making. Secondly, new forms of regulation and accountability measures prevented colleges from performing as true businesses. Academic managers found they had to operate rather uncomfortably within the regulatory framework and financial constraints of the bureaucracy and the command and control operations of the hierarchy and still meet market-driven demands of
clients. Lecturers found training packages and external accountability measures prevented them from exercising their professional expertise and found their status as professionals undermined. Thirdly, by subjecting the financing and provision of training to competition, there was a cultural shift away from public service to private enterprise. This shift changed the underlying philosophy of TAFE from providing vocational education as a service to conducting a business by supplying training as a product, packaged more cost effectively than its competitors.

End Notes

1 The respondents’ codes have been omitted to preserve confidentiality and anonymity of identity. The term ‘industry areas’ is used in TAFE to define the areas of training delivery for a particular industry and is broadly synonymous with ‘study area’ or ‘faculty’.

2 The ARF provides quality assurance of training products and services and mutual recognition arrangements. The key elements are nationally recognised competency standards, nationally recognised qualifications and nationally recognised training organisations. In 2003, the AQTF superseded the ARF.

3 The Kangan philosophy referred to by this respondent was outlined in Chapter 2 and refers to the ideas promoted in the 1974 report TAFE in Australia.

4 The shift to a ‘second chance at a broad education’ or broader community service role of TAFE began in the 1970s and increased markedly in the 1980s. However by the early 1990s the broad educational programs had been curtailed and had been replaced by labour market programs (Pocock, 1987).
Chapter 6
The Dynamics of Power

Against a background of change, a multidimensional framework of power provides one way of understanding and examining the organisational culture of TAFE colleges. Halford and Leonard (2001) suggest that both structural and poststructuralist perspectives of power offer important insights into organisational practices. They argue that “different sorts of power are mobilised by different sorts of people in different kinds of ways” (p. 99). They propose that a multidimensional understanding of power “enables us to admit to the complex and contradictory picture of organisational life” (p. 215).

Fletcher (1999) suggests that at least three dimensions of power need to be considered in any analysis of organisations. The first is the macro, systemic or structural dimension, which analyses who has power over others and the visible mechanisms used to make and enforce decisions (such as positional authority, design of organisational hierarchies, control of regulatory texts, rules and procedures). This dimension emphasises the stability of formal power, the role of individual agency and the deep structures within society (such as patriarchy, class and ethnicity). The second is the discourse of power (Foucault, 1982; Hindess, 1996) which analyses how power is used to shape perception, belief systems, language and behaviour (such as promoting entrepreneurial attributes, controlling agendas and legitimising issues and ideas). This dimension emphasises the intrapersonal conceptualisation of power and its ideological and interpretative function. The third is the informal exercise of power at the micropolitical and local level, which emphasises where and how power is relayed in everyday practices by means of social networks, coalitions, hidden agendas or invisible structures (Morley, 1999). This dimension emphasises the dynamics of power, its distribution, unpredictability and reliance on the minutiae of interpersonal relationships to function. This dimension provides a counter view to that which emphasises individualism, hierarchical relationships, bureaucratic rationality and abstract moral principles (Adler, Laney & Packer, 1993).
Drawing on Foucault’s (1982) concept of discourse helps understand power as relational, multifaceted and incomplete. A discourse of power provides one way of understanding how subject positions and power relations are located and inscribed. Citing Foucault as one of the most influential theorists on power, Bradley (1999) suggests that any theoretical approach to power should utilise the notion of 'dynamics' operating at a societal level and then explore processes of change and resistance at the micro level. She claims this approach “can link structure and action, the global and the local” (p. 21). It portrays women and men as active agents of change and resistance rather than passive victims of structural forces.

From a poststructural perspective, power is a productive force when it is dispersed through institutional structures and processes. Being dynamic, diffuse, limitless and pervasive suggests that power can "reside in every perception, every judgement and every act" (Deetz, 1992, p. 37). Power can be considered "creative rather than limiting, inseparable from knowledge rather than directing it, and its productive force comes from below as well as above" (Deetz, 2000, p. 144). It can be thought of as "running around and through us, like honey, in various degrees of fluidity and sticky congealment” (Caine & Pringle, 1995, p. ix). In its positive sense, power provides energy and competence rather than dominance (Collinson, 2000). It can liberate the inner-self, transform relationships or create and maintain orderly, productive work environments (Giddens, 1994). In its negative sense, power is oppressive, exclusionary and crushing. It can be used to coerce, co-opt or constrain, and is defined by relationships of inequality and domination (Connell, 1987). An analysis of power in organisations, therefore, needs to be concerned with both its positive and negative perceptions, its workings in the formation of competing interests, and its formal and informal representations.

An analysis of power in TAFE colleges also needs to consider its relationship with gender. There is a small but significant body of literature that analyses the gendered organisational culture of TAFE colleges in Australia and focuses on the sociological impact of power relations (Angwin, 1994; Blackmore & Sachs, 2000, 2003; Kerfoot & Whitehead, 1998; Pocock, 1987, 1988). This literature suggests that the dominant model of management in TAFE colleges is a particular form of masculinity associated with technical rationality, overlaid with a high level of instrumentalism and pragmatism associated with past 'scientific management approaches' rather than with more recent cultural approaches (Blackmore & Sachs, 2003). This managerial style is a manifestation of the standardising processes of neoliberalism
and is aligned to perspectives of power that emphasise centralised control and authority, outcomes, order, regulation and accountability (Bethanis, 1995). As illustrated in Chapter 5, these views marginalise cultural or pedagogical discourses and the educative values that can underpin vocational education.

Studies of senior women in further education suggest that women do not feel powerful (Adler, Laney & Packer, 1993) and are “alienated by the masculinist portrayal of power, leadership and organisational life which emphasises control, individualism and hierarchy” (Blackmore, 1989, p. 123). Women identify instead with less rigid structures that relate more closely to their experiences in the private sphere. Blackmore theorises that women view power as multi-dimensional and multi-directional, encouraging empowerment of all members of an organisation. From a feminist perspective, then, it is critical to analyse the gendered nature of power in organisations to determine if and how institutional structures and practices can enable the empowerment of members or perpetuate unequal power relations.

This chapter aims to explore men’s and women’s perceptions of power and experiences of power relations in colleges during times of increased managerialism. My analysis focuses on the structural, intrapersonal and interpersonal ways that power is perceived and exercised. First, the positional power base of executives, academic managers and lecturers is examined and then the attributes associated with power are explored. Second, the location and types of informal power are analysed and the implications assessed.

**Structural Power**

The study found that definitions of power and perceptions of fairness were largely contingent on staff’s position, employment mode, gender, value systems and experience in the TAFE system. Generally, the more positive views of power were from those positioned closer to the top of the hierarchy than the bottom. Respondents alluded to power in terms of structures, positions, attributes and influence. In the study, staff (excluding executives) were asked to nominate those who had power and describe their attributes. Responses at the two TAFE colleges were reasonably consistent, as were responses from men and women, managers and administrative staff. However, lecturers described those in power more critically than other groups. This difference relates to the shift in power from lecturers to management and administration as noted in the previous chapter. This shift will be
discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Table 6.1 summarises perceptions of formal power within the colleges by position and institutional leadership (executives were not asked this question).

Table 6.1 Who has Power? Percentages and (Numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positions of Formal Power</th>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Minister or WADOT</td>
<td>5 (5)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Executive</td>
<td>12 (11)</td>
<td>21 (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directors</td>
<td>9 (8)</td>
<td>7 (7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program managers/Team Leaders</td>
<td>9 (8)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>9 (8)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Admin managers</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
<td>1 (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No-one or 'too hard to say' or 'don’t know'</td>
<td>4 (4)</td>
<td>2 (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Respondents understood that different kinds of formal power resided in different sorts of positions and locations. Responses fleshed out the relative power of each group and indicated that there was a strong correlation between those who had formal power, those who had access to resources and information and those who were rewarded in the system.

**Ministerial Power**

In the study, 10% of respondents (two program managers, five lecturers and two administrative staff) claimed that power lay with the minister for training or his Department. Some of these staff were very conscious of the paradoxes created by the twin themes of autonomy and ministerial accountability. They claimed that the perception of autonomous power and operational independence did not, in practice, tally with the realities of ministerial power and WADOT control.

_Our autonomy is only surface, isn't it? The managing director, who supposedly runs an autonomous college, really doesn't appear to have quite as much power as you might think. Our independence is a bit more theoretical than real. I think real power lies with the Minister or Department._ (Team leader, SAFP5)

Although TAFE colleges were statutory authorities and could develop their own vision statements and strategic directions, in reality they were accountable to the minister for governmental priorities and initiatives and could not participate in business arrangements without the approval of the minister.
I think there is very little power in TAFE, even in the face of so-called autonomy. Lecturers certainly have less autonomy over the content of their courses and the way they assess. Managers too, have very little autonomy or room to manoeuvre in regards to affecting change, appointing staff or redirecting resources. Even though we’ve corporatised TAFE, with CEOs, directors and managers we still operate as a bureaucracy. I think the restructuring is a fad thing. (Program manager, SAFP7)

I think there is a perception of power but when you take a closer look, uncover the façade, there is really not much guts to it. I look outside at other organisations and see some of the directors behind these companies and they have got a sort of drive and determination and an inspiration within them. I don’t see these guys having that. (Program manager, SAFC3)

Furthermore, while college managing directors were technically answerable to the minister, the reality was they were accountable to WADOT as his delegated authority. Colleges were expected to participate in initiatives that involved the whole state training system and follow directives from the Department.

The college is supposed to be autonomous and self-managing but the reality is we are heavily monitored and accountable to the Department, minister and government. Our operational independence is pretty marginal in comparison to other statutory bodies, such as universities. (Team leader, SAMP3)

Ultimately who has power? It seems vested in distant people. I mean it always seems to come back to considering the minister or the head of the Department of Training and what goes on in ‘Silver City’. You know it is a ‘Never Never’ kind of thing. Who has the real power? There is a kind of nit picking and kind of struggle that goes on with some people in the Department trying to get the crumbs of power. (Lecturer, AMC3)

An uneasy, destabilising tension existed between a college’s right to autonomy and self management and its responsibility to follow ‘Silver City’ dictums. (‘Silver City’ is the derisory pseudonym for WADOT, gaining its name from its building being a colossus of aluminium and steel.) The quotes show that lecturing staff were aware of the power plays between the college’s executives and those within the minister’s office and the Department. They thought that any power that rested within the college bureaucracy was more illusory than real. The phrase “you know it is a ‘Never Never’ kind of thing” (Lecturer, AMC3) reflected people’s perceptions of the college being embroiled in flights of fantasy and paranoia politics. The whims of politicians and “the power of the purse” (Lecturer, AMC4) of WADOT coloured the relationships between key players.

Well maybe I’m a bit of a pessimist because I don’t really think anyone within a TAFE college has much power at all. I mean, you know, basically I think we all respond to some, you know, rather large-scale external forces. I mean sure, you know the executive presumably has the power to hire and fire and so on, but given the financial constraints and the responsibilities placed on them, they...
don’t have a lot of room to move. The power of the purse lies with the Department, and colleges have to dance to the tune to get their money. 
(Lecturer, AMC4)

Staff responses highlighted the controls imposed on TAFE colleges as government administrators enforced accountability measures to obtain maximum organisational efficiency and performance. This illustrates the way technologies of control eschew concerns about professionalism, quality teaching and ethical considerations about the long-term impact of training packages on the career aspirations of students.

Executive Power
Despite that acknowledgement of the broader picture, the largest group of responses (39%) nominated the executive as powerful. There was no doubt in many respondent accounts that executive authority kept ‘the troops’ in line.

Those who have positional power are executives. What attributes do they have? They control budgets and resources and are pretty hard nosed. They expect to make the decisions and don’t think they need to consult with the troops. They’re elitist. They make decisions in a vacuum. (Administrative staff, GFP1)

Twice as many managers as lecturers claimed power was within the executive. Some lecturers referred to executives as if they were omnipotent, and yet quite a few could not name them or explain what they did. Others seemed a little fearful or apprehensive about a power source that no-one really understood.

How does the executive work? What goes on in executive meetings? We never get to see the agenda or minutes. I know they call the shots but never fire the gun. They are so distant and unapproachable. (Principal lecturer, SAFP8)

TAFE colleges are similar to any large bureaucracy in that control is exercised from the top with few opportunities for ‘the troops’ to participate in decision-making or raise concerns. Executives appear to enjoy an operational separation from the day to day concerns facing managers, lecturers and administrators. They hold the academic divisions at arms length so as to increase the scope for centralised executive power. Executives, as a bureaucratic elite, control the main political and economic resources in each of the two colleges. The executive, comprised of between five and eleven people, confines power to a small core. This is a key strategy in the centralisation of control that consolidates power in the hands of a select few (Lafferty & Fleming, 2000). This core is manifestly male. As pointed out in Chapter 4, at the time of interviewing, there was only one female executive (out of eight) at College B and she was in an ‘acting position’. At College A, three women
out of eleven were in the executive but none held the position of director (level 8) and instead held lower ranks, such as ‘manager - training services’. (Later, this college restructured its executive, reducing it to five and only one woman remained in its core.)

In Chapter 5, it was explained that managing directors, executives and directors of TAFE colleges evolved from the pre-ANTA days of principals and superintendents. These were Education Act appointments and meant that the working conditions and industrial awards of senior management were the same as those of heads of department and lecturers, and were drafted alike from an educative focus. Staff were aware that the state government, in adopting the tenets of managerialism was endorsing the concept of a generic manager or senior executive to lead TAFE colleges without the need to have a training, teaching or education background. Staff were equally aware that the WASSTU and AEU were against executive managers, with little or no teaching experience, being appointed to lead an educational institution.

The union thinks, and has always thought, that it is wrong that people can become academic managers, even become managing directors of TAFE colleges, and every rank in between, without any teaching experience. We are now seeing MD’s and general managers being appointed from Premier and Cabinet, Treasury or corporations who know nothing about education and training. (Lecturer, AMP7)

Today, most TAFE executives belong to the Senior Executive Service of the public sector and many do not have a teaching background. They form a small managerial elite above Public Sector level 9 and hold titles such as executive director, general manager, managing director or CEO. As the executive may no longer come up through the ranks their allegiance and capacity to manage an educational business is questioned. As I point out later in the chapter, executive hegemony is never absolute: the workplace becomes a ‘contested terrain’ (Edwards, 1979) with overt confrontation or pockets of covert resistance, particularly from unionists and long serving lecturers.

**Academic Managers’ Power**

In the study, academic managers were defined as those with a formal academic leadership, management or coordination role. These were academic directors, training service managers, program or portfolio managers, team leaders and principal lecturers. Generally, less than a third of respondents thought that formal
power rested with senior academic managers. Of these, 17 claimed that power rested predominantly with directors and 11 respondents thought program managers or team leaders had the most power. Academic managers themselves rarely attributed their own position as powerful, but spoke positively of others in positions of power. Implicitly, they supported their power and translated it as deserved.

In order to analyse perceptions of power it is important to explore the differences among academic manager’s views. Table 6.2 is a summary of their responses to the following two questions: How would you describe those who have power? What attributes do they have? The categories provide a useful basis with which to tease out the types of attributes, characteristics and behaviours that are associated with those who have power.

Table 6.2 Attributes of Power  Academic Managers’ Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response (Ranked by frequency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>Task orientation</td>
<td>Unemotional. Think systematically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Unemotional. Think systematically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Goal-driven. They get the job done.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They make decisions quickly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They have a willingness to do anything or go anywhere.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal qualities</td>
<td>Act with confidence and certainty.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They’ve got determination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They have a strong personal drive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Enterprising people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They depersonalise the issue.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interpersonal</td>
<td>Some are pretty approachable and open.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>Good communicators and networkers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some are easy going.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They share information</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Seniority</td>
<td>Age is on their side.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They hold secure positions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They use their seniority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Personal flaws</td>
<td>Some are bordering on the psychotic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Some are egocentric.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They’re a bully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>They are dead scared to encourage anyone else to come up from the lower ranks.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Dictatorial rather than conciliatory.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic managers described the attributes of power in mostly positive language, with the most frequent responses related to task orientation. Responses emphasised action or the ability to achieve objectives, usually in relation to cognitive skills such as ‘making decisions quickly’. The second most common positive response related to personal qualities, such as determination, drive and
entrepreneurialism. The third positive response was connected to interpersonal skills, communication and networking. In most instances, respondents’ descriptions of power overlapped one or more categories.

*People with power act with confidence and certainty. They are team players and outcomes focussed. They get the job done but without treading on anyone’s toes in the process.* (Program manager, SAMP7)

At times positive responses included a sting in the tail or a negative throwaway line:

*Well the ones with the power are the directors … I think we’ve got really quite a diverse bunch. I can’t say that they have any common attributes. Some are pretty approachable and open, whereas some are bordering on the psychotic.* (Program manager, SAMP6)

Most of the positive responses focussed on the kinds of behaviour that are important in organisations: doing whatever it takes to get the job done; sharing information; thinking systematically rather than focussing on their own interests. However, most positive responses tended to emphasise achieving outcomes over relational practices.

The most frequently mentioned neutral response was in relation to age and length of service in the system. Respondents suggested that powerful people in TAFE were generally over 50 years of age and had been in and out of the public sector for many years. Intimated in such responses was that powerful people had strong networks and had made useful contacts in the public and private sector that they could draw upon to make things happen.

Responses that described the negative aspects of power were framed around personal flaws and mindsets that produced particular behaviours, such as bullying, intimidation, manipulation and coercion. Other responses suggested that fear or low self-esteem were behind the misuse of power. Two women in middle management positions claimed that young, up-and-coming managers threatened senior managers and insecurity drove many of their decisions.

*It is really hard to say what attributes those who have the power have and how to describe them. Some are egocentric. Some are easy going. I think the biggest thing I could say is that they are dead scared to encourage anyone else to come up from the lower ranks. They’re dead scared that somebody’s going to take their jobs. So in all honesty I’d say probably that the majority of them are fairly insecure people.* (Program manager, SAFP6)
Perhaps it is understandable that directors and executives fear the ‘up and coming from the lower ranks’, for as senior managers and executives retire, a new breed of manager is taking their place. These managers are entrepreneurial, aggressive, competitive and highly individualistic. The majority are male, usually without an education background, and have management credentials and experience in industry and large corporations.

The power vested in director’s positions was very evident. They controlled day-to-day functioning at each campus and oversaw a range of particular industries or study areas that formed their ‘industry area’ or ‘directorate’. A typical director was responsible for between one-half and up to a million hours of training delivery, measured in SCH, and usually had at least two program managers, five team leaders and at least one principal lecturer directly reporting to him or her. Directors, unlike executives, interacted with program managers and administrative support staff on a daily basis and exercised their power directly. They were deemed to be closely aligned to the executive and were variously described as feeding the entrepreneurial culture or turning the college into a business organisation. Directors operated within a complex web of accountability, performance targets, short-term cycles and instrumental goals, which weakened their obligations to their staff.

While directors were granted some budgetary autonomy within the framework of institutional business plans, operational plans, performance measures and delivery targets, they were also responsible for generating revenue to prop up inadequate baseline resources. As pointed out by Marginson and Considine (2000) “targets are powerful constraints which hem in devolved managers, restraining their capacity to innovate or resist” (p. 10). Directors’ objectives and abilities to act were increasingly controlled by executives and they were expected to devolve human resource management to their team leaders and program managers.

Without exception, program managers and team leaders in this study thought that they had enormous responsibilities as a result of directors’ delegated authority, but had very limited power to act. They thought they had little power in comparison to directors or executives and were critical of the way they were ‘kept on a tight leash’.

*In relation to directors or the managing director, or what happens in this college, I have absolutely none [power]. Absolutely none. I would say every program manager has absolutely no influence and no power. The only power you have really in this college is as a director or MD. None of the rest of us have any power. I mean we make decisions and we’re supposed to be decentralised.*
We're meant to make decisions but they [executive and directors] keep us on such a tight leash. We can't spend any more than $5000 without approval from the executive. I can't spend anymore that $1000 on equipment without approval from the director. Our printer died in the staff room and it's $1800 to replace a laser printer. I had to go begging and pleading to the campus director. I didn't have any money in my budget, but it had died so it was essential to replace. So I had to go begging and pleading. I had to write a report about why it was necessary and how important it was and you know, I had to do all this running around to get a lousy printer for $1800. You know, my section brings in probably $2 million to the college and we deliver 150,000 SCH, worth about $1.2 million. (Program manager, SAFP6)

Program managers claimed they had very little discretionary power as a result of stringent financial controls and bureaucratic processes. They claimed that lecturing staff did not appreciate the constrained nature of their power. Program managers had to manage their own frustrations with work overload and simultaneously deal with angry staff and students. With very little administrative or executive support they reported serious stress levels and an overwhelming sense of powerlessness. All program managers claimed that senior management kept enlarging their jobs and increasing their responsibilities. Their jobs were broadened through organisational restructuring and under-staffing. For example, in College B when the staff development officer and quality manager’s jobs were abolished, program managers had to take on the responsibility for all staff development and quality audit requirements for their section.

**Lecturers’ Power and Influence**

Lecturers described the attributes of power in similar ways to managers except for one key theme. Academic prestige, expert knowledge or credibility were described as key attributes of power. Lecturers, more than any other group, described intimate knowledge of industry and expertise in their areas as potent factors determining colleagues and managers’ power base. Table 6.3 summarises lecturers’ responses to the questions on power.

Among male lecturers, the most frequently expressed positive response related to the characteristics associated with power from predominantly a hard management perspective. Responses such as ‘strong and decisive’ and ‘getting the job done’ reflected a task-oriented perspective on power. These perspectives emphasised attributes related to achieving goals and organisational skills, and were strongly consistent with managers’ responses.
Table 6.3 Attributes of Power Lecturers’ Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Response Category</th>
<th>Response (ranked by frequency)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Task orientation</td>
<td>Well organised. People who make things happen… have the responsibility to get things done. Strong and decisive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strategic and knowledgeable</td>
<td>Political awareness… They’ve got an overview, an eagle eye overview - big picture. You access networks and attend the right meetings and mix with the right people. Knowledge is power. Expertise is power… if you know where the trends are going you can position yourself as an expert. I think the biggest indicator of power is credibility. Insider knowledge of the system. Powerful people align themselves to TAFE /college goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Personal qualities and interpersonal skills</td>
<td>Very flexible and very approachable. Assertive or hard working or focussed. Innovative. They back their own judgement and take risks. You don’t really notice the person who’s in charge. They ensure work is done… through collaborative relationships… are sensitive to the needs of others. They show integrity and exercise discretion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>They depersonalise the issue. They have a sense of mystique. Seem rather distant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business focus</td>
<td>Entrepreneurial focus (not lecturer focussed). To be completely devoid of any interest in what’s happening at the lecturer level and down. They expect the job to be done regardless of what it takes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>Hard nosed… bitchy. They do anything to get what they want. People who have power rarely apologise. Manipulating… intimidating or bullying. They use their power to exclude or include. They use bluff and bluster.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Female lecturers, on the other hand, were more likely to express the same attributes as negative. Responses such as ‘entrepreneurial-focussed rather than lecturer-focussed’, ‘hard-nosed’ and ‘intimidating or bullying’ suggested that female lecturers viewed structural perspectives of power in terms of dominance and coercion. Their responses intimated that managers viewed ‘the end as justifying the means’. Negative expressions of power suggested that power was abused to ensure organisational goals were achieved. These views support the findings of Leathwood (2000) who contends that paternalism, authoritarianism and ‘bully-boy’ tactics are prevalent in further education colleges in England.
Among female lecturers, the most frequently mentioned positive response described power as being linked to personal qualities on the one hand, and inherently relational in context on the other hand. The personal qualities that were emphasised were ‘assertive, hard working and focussed’ and ‘well organised, very flexible and very approachable’. Four female lecturers equated power with integrity, responsibility and being sensitive to the needs of others. Like male lecturers’ responses, female lecturers emphasised task orientation, but unlike male lecturers they emphasised the way the job got done. Women were twice as likely to couch the attributes of power from a soft management perspective, such as ‘they make sure work gets done through collaborative relationships’. Weedon (1987) contends that conceptions of power, which emphasise its relational and contextual aspects, offer theoretical tools that can give a better understanding of power relations and its attributes in ways that enable change.

In the study, it was only lecturers who thought that lecturers exercised power (10% of responses). They suggested that lecturers’ power lay in their credibility as content experts, industry networkers and professional teachers or trainers.

Lecturers make a lot of decisions without reference to management, day-to-day decisions in the study area and although everyone is basically equal, there are some who have more power than others in the group. Some have more influence on the decisions that are being made. And in our group, for instance, we’ve got people who are very credible academically. We’ve got people who are very credible with industry and others who are skilled at manipulating students or others to get things done. (Lecturer, AMP3)

I think we have power in ourselves because, you know, we are in a very, very important role because in some ways we control the success or failure of students and apprentices, and therefore our industry. I think we have to be very careful that in ourselves we don’t abuse that power, because I mean a lot of these young people are in financial hardship or under personal sort of constraints. We have to take on board a lot of stuff. We’ve got a lot of responsibility with this power we have. That’s how I see myself with my group of people. We endow each other with power. (Lecturer, AMP6)

This sense of personal power (having a strong impact on students’ lives) shifts the concept of power onto a different terrain. The question remains whether it replaces, compensates or coexists with a sense of organisational powerlessness. The above lecturer explained that he had little interaction with those in senior positions of power and that organisational power structures had little influence or impact on lecturers’ perceptions of their own power or daily work life.

To be quite frank, I don’t have much to do with those in power. They’ve got a position or a job to do but that does not impact on me other than that is some
decision or protocol that has to be gone through… Our area is fairly autonomous and we are ahead of the pack so to speak and I think that is a good sign of management. (Lecturer, AMP6)

The following comment (from a 66 year old lecturer who had been teaching in TAFE for 35 years) reveals that he did not really know who were the power brokers in the college and did not think they had power over lecturers’ daily teaching practices.

*I suppose we don't really meet them much [people in power], do we? We never see them. Half the time we don't even know who they are. They don't know who we are, that's for sure. They have very little power or influence in our lives.* (Lecturer, AMP5)

Lecturers who provided positive assessments of their formal and personal power held strong convictions of their important role in the pedagogical relationship with their students. These lecturers did not find a conflict of interest or express any concern with role ambiguity. For these lecturers, knowledge is power and they exercised their power within the classroom. They exuded confidence and conviction in the primacy of their role within the organisation and insisted that management and administration had ‘little power or influence in our lives’. Such lecturers operated in relatively secure pockets of the organisation, such as traditional trades, technology and business. These findings reflect other studies of further education lecturers. Adler, Laney & Packer (1993) found that lecturers viewed themselves as powerful role models and were comfortable in using their power, mainly seen as knowledge and expertise.

In contrast, 19 lecturers suggested that their power base and pedagogical practices were being undermined by system imperatives. As pointed out in Chapter 5, many lecturers expressed angst about the organisation not valuing their professional expertise and thought they lacked influence.

*I think the role of the TAFE teacher has dramatically changed and their power base has eroded. I don't think that lecturers' abilities, qualifications and interests are valued. I think downgrading teaching qualifications was an example of the deprofessionalising of TAFE teachers, which coincided with corporate restructures, and their eroded power and influence.* (Principal lecturer, SAFP3)

Lecturers talked about the loss of power associated with the devaluing of professional competence and expertise. They claimed their status as TAFE teachers had been downgraded with the introduction of workplace trainer qualifications and that this had coincided with the dilution of union power and the demise of professional TAFE teacher associations.
The other marked response from lecturers concerning the erosion of their power was in relation to administrative staff. Some had a clear sense that administrative staff had power both over and relative to them.

Lecturers seem to be servicing administrators instead of the other way around. They treat us like we are subservient, that their paper work is more important than our needs. The finance and human resource areas should be more proactive and serve us and treat us like their customers... we are the ones having to do all the ringing and not having any power to make them act. They have no sense of purpose or sense of urgency to assist us. They should be saying ‘What can I do to help you?’ Instead they treat us with no respect. In fact, I would go a step further and say that with restructuring a lot of administrative positions were axed, but the work has not disappeared. It has been shifted onto lecturers especially study, counselling and career support because they axed counsellors and student support positions. So in other words our core business, which is teaching, lecturing and demonstrating, and showing and bringing young people the skills of the trade, is becoming secondary to enrolment management, counselling, paper shuffling and you name it. (Lecturer, AMP6)

Lecturers described feeling subservient to public servants who focussed on administrative paper trails rather than the needs of lecturers and students. The responses suggested that they felt powerless to challenge the managerialist and increasingly technocratic culture. They had no effective channels of influence within the organisation and largely relied on a handful of union delegates to voice their concerns. They felt deceived and patronised as executives claimed to be concerned with community and equity issues when their management practices showed they were preoccupied with financial accountability, compliance and improving the bottom line of every ‘business unit’. They felt angry and demoralised as they were expected to adopt economic rationalist approaches to education and accept managerialist governance. Lecturers’ responses showed they were humiliated that their labour was being used and counted as a commodity that could be pared back at corporate will.

As a former AEU president, Peoples (1996) claims that deregulation of the economy, global competition and training markets has led to teaching practices and awards that no longer protect teachers from exploitation. He suggests that TAFE teachers are now expected to work in industry and community workplaces. He argues that the critical test for managers is to create healthy organisational cultures that respect the new role of TAFE teachers and increases their power sharing:

There has to be agreement about the shift in power, in its degree and how and who exercises it. The group being offered the power has to agree with the previous power group. They have to accept their new responsibilities and be accountable for their performance (p. 7).
He concludes that employees in TAFE must be paid an appropriate salary for exercising real power and accepting responsibility. The responses from lecturers in this study suggest that they are unable to exercise real power and that their ability to exercise professional authority has decreased substantially with the introduction of workplace trainer qualifications, training packages, external auditing and compliance to the AQTF standards.

**Locations of Informal Power**

Positions of formal power hide the multiple differences, the range of attributes and the networks of relationships that can cement or arrest the legitimate authority of any position. This section examines the locations of informal power in the two colleges and analyses the various ways it was constructed and exercised. Informal power is revealed through gendered relationships, social hierarchies, attitudes and behaviours, and can generate insights into organisational culture (Mills, 2002). An analysis of informal power shows how workplaces can become discriminatory or dysfunctional (Gheradi & Poggio, 2001). Referring to informal power as ‘micropolitics’, Morley (1999, 2003) identifies the range of subtle and sophisticated ways in which dominance and advantage is achieved in organisations. Informal power reveals the way individuals, factions or groups resist organisational culture and retain power to control activities, options and even identities (Marshall, 1997).

Thirty-eight respondents described the locations of informal power and pointed to the overt or subtle ways that such power is used within a wide range of situations. Some respondents spoke of informal power or power struggles arising from functional competition or occupational hierarchies, geographic placement in the organisation or through social relations. These respondents described the invisible structures of control, which became evident largely as a result of two questions: *What sort of power and influence do you have?* and *Do you think the spread of power and influence is fairly distributed between campuses and centres?* Table 6.4 summarises the informal power located within the two colleges, bequeathed by the hidden structures, subterranean internal factions, employment status of individuals and embodied by personal conflicts.

The scope and dynamics of informal power suggest that it is much broader and more multi-dimensional than formal positions of authority. The respondents in the
study provided accounts of their experiences and articulated their perceptions that were useful in thinking about power in new ways.

Table 6.4 Locations of Informal Power  Numbers and (Percentages)

| Proximity to centre of power, affiliation, alliance or association, favouritism | Gender | Position |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Male | Female | Admin | Lecturer | Manager | Total |
| 5 | 6 | 2 | 5 | 4 | 11 (30%) |
| Through threat, resistance and solidarity of ‘factions’ or peer cultures | 5 | 3 | 2 | 5 | 1 | 8 (20%) |
| Through incorporation, co-option, complicity | 3 | 4 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 7 (18%) |
| Visibility in strategic or high-profile areas | 1 | 5 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 6 (16%) |
| Prior or permanent positions, longevity in the system | 3 | 3 | 1 | 2 | 3 | (6) 16% |
| Total Respondents | 17 | 21 | 5 | 18 | 15 | (38) 100% |

Proximity to Power

Eleven respondents (30%) suggested that there was a constant power struggle between campuses and centres, and that power and influence were unfairly distributed. Both colleges in the study had between five and eight campuses and up to ten smaller centres. Both colleges had a ‘main’ campus (although this was officially denied) that housed the majority of the executive, corporate administration and special centres, such as curriculum or research. At both colleges there was an acknowledgement that those who operated in close proximity to those in positional power, or who had the ear of the powerful, had significant advantages in comparison to those who accessed the powerful only through formal channels.

It’s amazing what you can find out just by being on the main campus and regularly passing influential people or those in the know. I found out a whole lot of information from bumping into people in the corridors, or seeing them in the canteen queue. If I have a problem, I’ve got immediate access to people who can suggest what to do or who to see. I bumped into the director of finance the other day and asked for advice on how to get around something in the system. I think I caught him off guard and he gave me great advice that he would never have given in a formal situation, meeting or via email. Within two minutes I had a solution to my problem, but when you operate through the formal channels it can take days to get answers or find someone willing to stick their neck out with the answer. (Corporate manager, GFP10)
Staff who worked from ‘satellite’ campuses or centres thought that they were treated with less respect than those who worked on the ‘main’ campus. Some respondents suggested that there was a sense that the ‘anointed ones’ were positioned closest to the main campus of power. “We’re on a satellite campus. Too far from the shining light to be taken seriously” (Lecturer, SAMP3).

If you want to see where the power is or who the newly anointed ones are, just wander around [name of campus]. All the preening and manoeuvring happens there. And if you are out of favour, you are banished to the furthest campus away from the centre. (Program manager, SAFP6)

I would like to say quite strongly that [name of campus] is the biggest campus we’ve got and the most productive, and yet it is treated like a working class eastern suburbs campus. And in terms of facilities, even facilities for students, we are not on a par with the other campuses. Go see our canteen. Those poor women who work there… in summer the temperature’s 50 degrees in there… There are five principal lecturers at the college but only two on this campus, the rest are at [name of main campus]. (Principal lecturer, SAFP8)

In addition to geographic proximity to power, four respondents suggested that some people had power by association in that they ‘rubbed shoulders’ with well-connected people both within the organisation and outside of it.

Some people know the right people. They rub shoulders with powerful people through their work or happen to be friends outside of work. They know all the goings on. (Administrative staff, GFP4)

Some had close ties with senior executives in WADOT, while others had affiliations to powerful unions, political parties and influential businesses or corporations.

There are a couple of people in the college who are strongly affiliated with the union and Labor government. They have a lot of power as they have insider information that is useful to the college. They get the royal treatment at the moment. No-one questions why their sections seem to get more resources and staff than others. (Corporate manager, GFP7)

Respondents from both colleges suggested that favouritism, personal friendships, political alliances, and arbitrary and distorted power blocs operated, which gave some individuals a far greater sphere of influence than was merited based on position, ability or effort. Similarly, respondents claimed that some campuses were ‘flavour of the month’ (and the power brokers within them), particularly those that were situated in ‘more upmarket socioeconomic areas’ and those more aligned to the middle class professional study areas (such as business, accounting and science). There was a sense that those who operated in campuses that served the working class and traditional trades were not as powerful.
Power through Threat and Resistance

Eight respondents (21%) claimed that informal power was most obvious when individuals took collective action of opposition to the formal operations of power. One manager, five lecturers and two administrators cited examples of overt political resistance to the new practices imposed on TAFE colleges, assisted by union edicts banning certain work practices. Lecturers, more than any other occupational group, exerted their power by threatening industrial action or by not participating in extra curricular, corporate citizenship or administrative work. Five lecturers expressed resistance to managerialism by refusing to undertake administration duties or implement new systems of quality control.

I exert my power by refusing to do any tasks associated with administrivia. The union has made it clear that lecturers do not have to undertake administration tasks. That is what administrative assistants and managers are for. My job is to teach and my professional duties extend to preparing work and assessments for students. (Lecturer, AMP2)

Academic managers and principal lecturers described the impact of the loss of power on teaching staff. They described accounts of gross indifference, active resistance, unresponsiveness, sabotage and ignorance. Some claimed such responses were a defence mechanism to the alienation and resentment felt by the academic staff.

I'm surprised as a team leader, working with a bunch of fairly highly educated people just how much management they require. I mean with a bunch of sales reps or something like that, who might not be overly skilled or qualified, you'd expect it. But I'm surprised that I'm constantly being asked things that they should know and have enough intelligence to be able to work it out for themselves. I find that they don't know much at all. (Team leader, SAMC2)

In reply to this account, his colleague asserted.

I think there is a lot of resentment about the shifts in power and manager's attitudes to lecturing staff. It's tough teaching. The teachers see their job is to teach. All the other administrative things that go along with that are just a distraction and so they try not to focus too much on it. They are very blasé about it. It drives managers to tears as they try to get lecturers to cooperate. They've got deadlines to meet and forms to fill, and reports and submissions to support. I think lecturers play dumb as an act of defiance or resistance. (Lecturer, AMP4)

Teachers contested the business paradigm imposed on TAFE and refused to meet managers’ expectations to adopt corporatist or managerial behaviours. Bates (1995) suggests their acts of defiance are for good reason. They are resisting system imperatives and administrative processes that try to dismantle sound pedagogical
practices and industrial award conditions. They oppose devolution of responsibility and accountability when the organisation has not provided them with time to complete such tasks. They actively resist the rhetoric of doing more with less.

**Co-option and Complicity**

Five academic managers and two lecturers (18% of respondents) described the angst of being co-opted into the controls of corporate managerialism (such as business imperatives, focussing on the bottom line, performance management of lecturing staff and complying with a plethora of accountability requirements). They stated that executives, in setting the agenda for a new way of doing TAFE business, co-opted directors and incorporated them into the market ideology, or recruited the desired breed of corporate manager into the college from the private sector. Academic managers, with a deep-seated compassion for teaching and learning, found it very difficult to reconcile the educational service orientation of the old TAFE system with the new corporate, business model. Those who tried to provide better resources and improve working conditions faced opposition from directors and executives as the focus on the bottom line outweighed the needs of lecturing staff.

Some academic managers interviewed in this study were former academic heads of departments or senior lecturers until these positions were abolished under the terms of the 1996 Certified Agreement. One former senior lecturer made the choice to become an academic manager in 1996 and described the unease of co-option.

*I guess I chose to become a program manager instead of going back lecturing. It went against my principles a lot… I had to implement and do things I really didn’t agree with… it wasn’t very nice and it didn’t sit well with me. It was hard times.* (Lecturer, AFP5)

Later, this same woman relinquished her position as manager and went back to teaching as she could not reconcile her values with those of the organisation. Two managers claimed that executives and directors used accountability controls as strategies of surveillance to ensure managers were operating in accordance with the neoliberal ethos. Concurrently, managers were being asked by lecturing staff to resist certain business practices and to maintain the teaching union’s stance on varying issues. In the day-to-day management of the organisation, the academic managers were on the front line confronting problems and settling disputes. They had to be available to staff, the executive and even industry. Lecturers saw that program managers had to solve conflicts and cope with ‘mind numbing administrative requirements’ that directors and executives did not have to face.
Team leaders and program managers are always available to staff but it is very hard for team leaders to get directors involved. The directors are always at meetings, visiting industry or trying to win new contracts. They never deal with mind numbing administrative requirements or staff crises, and are never available for the time-consuming, down-in-the-trenches discussions or debates. Directors have washed their hands of any responsibility for staff and have left that ‘task’ to team leaders and program managers. (Team leader, SAFP1)

Academic managers struggled to explain how they were co-opted into systems of power that worked against their own interests. They described feeling powerless, complicit in their own work-overload and self-subordinate, exploited both by management and lecturing staff, and left in a no-win position. As a result of the constant power plays sustained over the last eight years, five academic managers stated that the job was untenable. All academic managers were looking for other career prospects. The comment below is from one former manager who decided to go back to teaching at the end of her three-year contract.

I quite enjoyed the job at times, but it got too stressful. All you were getting really were the hassles. You were only ever seeing the students when they were dissatisfied, sorting out their problems. Lecturers would only see you when they were complaining. And then executive management was there, you know, breathing down your neck, heaping the pressure on. It was just awful. You had no support. Couldn’t even get clerical support. I think it’s a little better now, but the systems were so poor, the computers so poor. It was just very, very hard and I felt I didn’t get the support I needed. (Lecturer, AFP1)

Although individual women and men moved into academic middle management positions as a result of the corporatisation of TAFE colleges, they were positioned within a highly masculine culture that co-opted their service orientation, but subjugated their concerns for student and staff welfare, and undermined their passion for education. While women and men academic managers perceived and exchanged power differently, it was the male-oriented versions of power that were upheld and defended in the organisation.

Visibility in Strategic or High-Profile Areas

There appeared to be an occupational hierarchy in the TAFE colleges so that some positions conferred higher status and greater power to some individuals than others. Six respondents (16%) stated that those who worked in strategic, high-profile areas (such as maritime, computing, engineering, oil and gas, defence, accounting and business management) appeared to have easier access to resources, information and support staff. These areas were traditionally masculine and heavily regulated by outside licensing bodies, union or professional associations. In addition, these areas were supported by large industry groups or corporations and so were able to offer
commercial, full fee-for-service courses. Such courses enabled these industry areas to make large profits to augment their slim operating budgets.

In sharp contrast, staff who worked in community education, access and equity programs, Aboriginal programs, TEE studies, art and general studies thought that their study areas had less status. Not only were they deemed inferior to high-profile industry areas, they were also of a lower status than para-professional studies (such as community or children’s services). Similarly, staff from smaller industry areas, particularly those that were predominantly feminised industries (such as hairdressing, beauty, fashion and massage) thought that they had less power than those that operated from larger, more ‘masculine’ areas.

Some areas in the college are propped up even though they are in the red. Take engineering, for example. Everyone knows that section is making a huge loss and yet they are given extra personnel and resources to help. Even though their study area is dysfunctional, engineering lecturers and the program manager seem to have more power than other areas, especially compared to people like us [referring to general studies]. (Academic coordinator, SAFC6)

A high level of instrumentalism and pragmatism or ‘just in time’ training practices overtook the more community-oriented education and bridging programs that had emerged in the 1970s and flourished in the 1980s (Pocock, 1988). These programs addressed the education and personal development needs of equity groups, such as young mothers, mature women, migrants and disadvantaged youth. Equity programs were concerned with addressing inequality and social class, issues that were sidelined in the late 1990s despite evidence of growing need (Teese, 2000). During the 1990s, there was a retreat from community-based and second-chance education programs to training programs more aligned with the labour market. The strong focus on the employment outcomes of training and the increasingly commodified nature of national curriculum and training packages reasserted an orientation to a narrow vocationalism. In turn, this led to moves to corporatise training and shift power from academics to management (Limerick, Cunnington & Crowther, 1996).

Power through Prior or Permanent Positions
People who had held senior positions prior to restructuring the college still exerted power and influence in the organisations. Similarly, those who had acting positions or seconded positions maintained their status when they reverted back to their substantive permanent positions. Six contract staff (16% of respondents) stated that
they thought they and other non-permanent staff had very little power to exercise and were fearful of speaking out against any management directions for fear of losing their jobs. Permanent staff acknowledged they had more power than contract or casual staff. They claimed that TAFE managers who had worked in the training system for more than 20 years exerted power through tacit knowledge of how the public sector really worked and had the confidence to operate outside policy guidelines to get things done.

*Those who have most of the power seem to be in fairly secure positions, public servant positions. Some have been public servants all their lives while others have risen up the ranks from the old days of superintendents and the like. And once they get to senior positions they stay there. Most of our senior managers got promoted through seniority rather than ability. I don't think they have got anything special, no attributes that are outstanding. They all seem to be very well connected and get things done via ‘unofficial’ means.* (Lecturer, SAMP4)

Some respondents claimed that too many people in positions of power in colleges are products of the bureaucratic, public service system where seniority, connections and maleness were the key factors in getting ahead. They claimed that seniority, coupled with a background of several high profile positions of strategic or political importance, enabled some individuals to wield disproportionate personal power. Nicholson and West (1988) assert that mobility in the earliest period of a career correlates with later mobility and ability to secure positions of power. This study revealed that men who had been in the TAFE system for more than 20 or 30 years held many of the high-profile, senior management or executive positions today.

*Have you heard of VOMITS? They’re the ones in control of the college. VOMITS are ‘Very Old Men In TAFE!’ They’ve moved around and seem to fall on their feet with cushy jobs or management positions.* (Team leader, SAFP3)

The prime informal power holders in the TAFE colleges were senior men, regardless of the formal positions they held. Men, more than women, appeared to hold positions with exposure, visibility, connections and status. Senior managers, executives and even the managing director appeared to use seniority as a form of power in addition to their positional authority. Length of service in the training system, long-term associations, alliances and networks operated more effectively as tools to effect change than formal power. Two directors explained how their power was constrained by the bureaucracy and ministerialisation, as centralisation of policy and financial frameworks steered organisational behaviour. However, they explained that they knew ways to get around the system and make things happen. They used
networking, lobbying and calling on owed favours to exert pressure on others to work around the 'red tape' and find a way to get the required outcome.

In Summary

Overall, participants described the dynamic nature of power in TAFE colleges against a background of change. They explained who had power and how it was mobilised by occupational groups who used knowledge and skills as resources to increase their power base. Power circulated within key groups of people and accumulated in strategic and high-profile areas. The responses indicated that TAFE colleges are complex rather than simple hierarchical organisations, with combinations of corporate, bureaucratic and academic structures that intersected in contradictory ways with formal and informal power.

An analysis of structural power highlighted competing interests. Despite an alleged trend towards flatter management, the importance of hierarchies of control was reinforced by ministers and state bureaucrats. While executives exercised control from the top, they were constrained by ministerial authority and WADOT policy. Academic managers were incorporated into the managerial culture; however, they had limited power to control economic resources and little discretion to make significant changes. The power imbalances in the colleges were structural and played out in micropolitical struggles. Positions of formal power, while problematic in terms of generalisations, are useful categories because you cannot call attention to a cultural pattern (which consistently privileges one group over another) if you cannot name the groups. Principal lecturers, for example, had to be named so that their absence from organisational decision-making could be recognised and labelled problematic. Lecturers, with marginal formal power, used their knowledge and skills to increase their informal power and resisted managers’ expectations to undertake more administrative duties. While such examples of micropolitical resistance may seem trivial, they acquire significance when located within a wider analysis of organisational culture.

Informal power emphasised social relations, informal channels of communication and contextual aspects of campus culture. It was exercised through alliances and factions, which either marginalised or enhanced the status of particular individuals or the profile of certain groups. One of the striking patterns that emerged in the study was the association between positions of formal power and locations of informal
power, with positive and negative conceptions of power. If respondents described the attributes of power positively they categorised associates, subordinates and superiors as powerful, and viewed power as dispersed and exercised by everyone to some degree. They recognised that academic or administrative staff, executives or middle managers were different groups with their own cultures and that such groups were not in opposition. Respondents who had negative conceptions of power, tended to view the organisational culture as dysfunctional and occupational categories as dialectically opposite. Using binary logic (Davies, 1996), they viewed themselves or others as either powerful or powerless, complicit or resistant. They were more likely to associate negative attributes of power with executives and directors, with whom they had little contact and had not established a sense of connection. Lecturers were identified as belonging to a subordinate or oppressed category in the organisational structure and they tended to see them as powerless.

The different ways that formal and informal power were created and used in the colleges provides an understanding of the structures of control and exposed the micropolitics of advantage. Social relations, professional affiliations, political alliances, lobbying, networking and favouritism played a significant role in advancing the power base of individuals or groups. These findings support an assertion by Foucault (1982) that it is critical to pay attention to the myriad of ways in which power manifests, both positive and negative, in order to understand difference and appreciate the multifaceted nature of organisational culture.
Career satisfaction within TAFE is part of a wider power struggle, contingent on the interactive nature of gender, organisational culture, identity politics and other factors. Studies on gendered career satisfaction indicate that career assessment is significantly related to power, occupational self-concept, job features, expectations and aspirations (Betz & Fitzgerald, 1987; Still, 1993). Chapter 6 illustrated that formal power is exercised within occupational hierarchies in which the decisions of the few control the working lives of the many. Individuals exercise their informal power in different ways to position themselves inside or outside of organisations. They forge alliances and mobilise resources to promote and protect their interests. As such, the exercise of power gives some individuals career opportunities that are not available to others. Those individuals with the greatest power are in the best position to shape their working lives.

It is important to investigate the factors contributing to career satisfaction as it has implications for wellbeing, motivation, performance and an individual’s willingness to contribute to an organisation. However, it is also important to recognise that people’s assessment of their careers changes over time. Burke and McKeen (1995) found that career satisfaction was largely contingent on the length of employment gaps and career prospects. This study found that feelings and reactions waxed and waned as they came to grips with the full impact of the demands, limitations and opportunities imparted by constant change.

In this study, executives and most corporate managers in TAFE were very satisfied with their working lives. Their stories expressed optimism and feelings of pride. Academic managers, lecturers and administrative staff were more ambivalent. They liked their jobs, but aspects of their work environment were dissatisfying. For a smaller contingent of academic managers and teaching staff, the dissatisfying
elements had developed into a story of disappointment, marginalisation and disillusion.

Executives and staff were asked: *We would like you to think about your career. How satisfied do you feel with your working life?* In addition, executives were asked to describe the *most satisfying thing in their careers*. Responses were coded into four broad categories: unqualified satisfaction, expressions of neutrality, ambivalence and dissatisfaction.

**Life at the Top**

Executives, as a peak group, were the most satisfied. They had the power to influence change and impact on the structures and processes in their organisation. They had opportunities to take on new projects and increase their networks. High-profile challenges and a variety of work roles kept them stimulated, well regarded by peers and satisfied. Table 7.1 shows that 13 out of the 19 executives (68%) were satisfied with their careers and working lives.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>TAFE A</th>
<th>TAFE B</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unqualified satisfaction</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral satisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalence</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
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Nicholson and West (1988) assert that male executives’ evaluations of their careers are materialistic and framed within traditional concepts, such as salary, progression, status, formal recognition and benefits. This study found that executives similarly used these traditional indicators of career satisfaction, but importance was placed on being involved in exciting and challenging developments that enabled them to have an impact on the direction of the organisation. Many spoke at length about the importance of their autonomy to make decisions and influence change. The following response, from an executive who described actively planning his career and aspiring to the top job, is typical of his peers. He feels satisfied with his TAFE career in terms of being involved with peak bodies at a state and national level.

*Well I’m pretty happy with the career path that I've been able to follow. I believe I've been proactive in terms of my career path. I've deliberately taken on external things, such as being involved with the teacher's union early in my*
career, which gave me external exposure and exposure to the high levels of management within TAFE and the Education Department. I've been prepared to move to other colleges and other positions. Having decided that I wanted to pursue a management role, I've been prepared to find out what the guidelines, both informal or formal, are about progressing. I've done additional study in the early years to give me an edge. I've been involved with the teacher's union and national bodies, which has given me greater exposure and a breadth of experience that I wouldn't have got just staying as a teacher. And I feel that it's paid off in terms of being able to progress through the ranks. (Executive, EM16)

A common response of satisfied male executives was their need for constant challenge and recognition for fulfilling particularly difficult tasks. Most stated they needed work to be challenging and constantly varied in order for them to feel satisfied. The reflections highlight a strongly male-oriented view of career satisfaction in that achievement needs to be overt, tangible in terms of awards, targets and positions of power. These are very visible signs of success. This confirms Ozga and Walker’s (1999) premise that masculine ideals, such as an orientation towards outcomes, peer recognition and objectivity, are valued more highly than cooperation, connectedness and subjectivity.

Women executives were less calculating than men in career planning. They tended to take on extra study, new roles or difficult projects for the promise of intellectual stimulation and challenge rather than as a strategic move to position themselves for advancement. They thought that luck, rather than planning, played a significant part in providing them with opportunities in their careers.

My career path at the moment, because I’m in the acting director’s position, has been fine. What happens when I go back to my substantive job is a different matter. I’ve been in a situation where I’ve been able to step into this job twice now in the last 18 months, and it has been a really worthwhile experience and it’s helped me grow immensely. It’s given me a far better insight into my own abilities than anybody would have been able to tell me I could have done. It’s been extremely worthwhile. It’s certainly given me a different direction to look at for my own career. If you ask me where that is going to be, then I’m not sure I could answer. As far as the career paths available, I still think they’re limited. I’ve had an opportunity that not many people will get. So in that way I’m fortunate. But I don’t think that opportunity arises a lot. There are not a lot of career opportunities within our own college for advancement. Therefore, if you haven’t got those career opportunities, it’s hard to gauge which path you should go down unless you are very career-oriented. (Executive, EF11)

Executives’ replies revealed that there is a strong relationship between high performance, opportunity and autonomy. Their career satisfaction was contingent on their ability to exert their independence and individualism and to perform to their potential. They had the best of both worlds. They could draw on the expertise of others within the training system to get things done and could rely on the
advantages of the public sector for security and knowledge of opportunities. They could choose judicially which projects to tackle to enable them to position themselves for the next career move.

The View from Below

In relation to the 81 staff in the study (who were not in executive positions), organisational culture factors had an equal impact on career satisfaction as external ones. The type of work being performed, workload, the degree of autonomy and the way people were recognised for their contributions, were significant indicators. External drivers of change, such as increased competition in the VET sector and labour market reforms, changed their working conditions and caused many individuals to reassess their sense of security and identity.

Feeling Satisfied

Career satisfaction was influenced by gender, work roles, position and employment mode. Forty percent of staff were satisfied with their career and working life (32 respondents). In terms of gender, men were more satisfied with their careers than women. Nearly half of the men, (49% or 17 out of 35) were satisfied with their working life compared to 33% of women (15 out of 46). Table 7.2 summarises expressions of career satisfaction by gender and work role.

Table 7.2  Expressions of Satisfaction  Numbers by gender and work role (Percentages)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Academic Managers</th>
<th>Lecturers</th>
<th>Admin Staff &amp; Managers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Fem</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Fem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisfaction</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissatisfaction</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Men appreciated that TAFE offered less physically demanding work than their previous trade or position, and less stress than private business or the corporate sector. Some referred to being previously unemployed, retrenched or redeployed and were now grateful that they had found a niche in TAFE. Others were very
excited about giving something back to the profession that had supported them through their careers. The following comments are indicative of the glowing accounts some men gave of their TAFE careers.

I’ve been with the college 12 months now… I’m very satisfied with my current position. The college is growing and it’s good to be in an organisation where there’s certainly a future, and it’s innovative and gives me an opportunity to do new things. (Corporate manager, GMC4)

I have found my niche as a teacher. I have a high need for affiliation and therefore enjoy this area. I have been teaching in TAFE for four years; two at a traditional campus and two at an open learning one. (Lecturer, AMC11)

Women’s account of career satisfaction was expressed most frequently in terms of self-fulfillment, wonderful colleagues, and exciting and enjoyable work.

I feel very satisfied. I’ve always been employed. I’ve always virtually got any job that I’ve gone for, which probably wouldn’t be the case now. I never thought I would end up teaching, but my husband was a teacher and I suppose that’s how I got interested in doing it. I feel satisfied. I enjoy teaching and until I retire I can’t think of doing anything else. I have no ambition to leave teaching for an administrative position… I have been in TAFE since 1982. (Lecturer, AFP6)

In terms of work role, administrative managers were the most satisfied and gave similar reasons to those expressed by executives. They were more likely to initiate new projects and be involved in exciting ventures. They also gained satisfaction in managing the change process within the organisation.

I’ve been here for three years. Prior to that I was in the private sector as a consultant for ten years and prior to that in the public sector as a senior finance officer for five years. I have not planned my career. What I do is to try to extend the boundaries of the jobs that I do. So when I accepted this job, I thought: ‘Can I do that?’ And I thought I’d have a go. This is the most delightful job that I’ve had. There’s so many opportunities here. The next 18 months are going to be fascinating. We’re right into the change management processes and to a large extent we’re driving that… I have an excellent team working with me on that. (Corporate manager, GMC5)

I started out doing primary school teaching and then went into migrant education. I worked there for several years in as many positions within that organisation as I could possibly do. And I don’t know that I’ve actually stopped and planned anything. I have just - if opportunities have come up – said, ‘Yeah, I’ll have a go at that’. I now hold a level 6 management position: it’s stimulating, exciting, challenging, yet exhausting. (Corporate manager, GFP13)

The 32 staff, satisfied with their careers, reported a range of intrinsic, material and external motivators. Expressions of satisfaction were broadly coded into five types.
Table 7.3 Expressions of Satisfaction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Intrinsic Motivators</th>
<th>External Motivators</th>
<th>Material Motivators</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interesting and satisfying work</td>
<td>Good relationship with colleagues and managers</td>
<td>New opportunity</td>
<td>Work/life balance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fem</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The intrinsic motivators of interesting work and good relationships were key factors of career satisfaction (19 responses). Working with colleagues on new projects from their inception to conclusion was commonly referred to as the pinnacle of satisfaction. Projects or roles that were most intrinsically satisfying stretched people’s capabilities and armed them with new skills and knowledge. These findings are congruent with research that finds that the quality of work and relationships are pivotal factors on which excellent workplaces are founded (Hull & Read, 2003). They also support research which shows that the most satisfied with their working lives put less emphasis on personal ambition and status and more on empowering others and getting things done (Deem, Ozga & Prichard, 2000).

External motivators, such as accessing new and influential networks, and gaining status, professional reward and formal recognition, were also cited as reasons for satisfaction (nine responses). Material motivators were the least important (four responses). Typical material benefits included job security, holidays, increased salary and flexible working hours.

Positive expressions of satisfaction suggest that individuals need a sense of vocation combined with balance and security, without sacrificing the self for the job. According to Fox (1994), a radical priest and author, work that is spiritually nourishing is a sacrament, but unrewarding work squeezes the inner life out of individuals, leaving them without energy to create good work and help others.

Neutral Satisfaction: ‘My career’s okay, I guess’
Eleven participants (four academic managers, four lecturers and three administrative staff) expressed ‘reasonable’ or neutral satisfaction with their current job or work. All were permanent employees. An equal number of men and women gave a rather detached assessment of their working life and career satisfaction.
Their responses were more reserved or mild compared to the overwhelmingly positive responses from the satisfied group. Participants made dispassionate or simple statements about their career. Some said they had never really given their career or working life much thought, and others assessed their career satisfaction as ‘fairly satisfied’ and their careers as simply ‘okay’. Neutral or bland assessments of careers were usually couched in phrases such as ‘My career’s okay, I guess’.

*I am reasonably satisfied with my working life. I probably haven’t planned it the way it has gone.* (Principal lecturer, SAMP2)

*I think because of the changes that have occurred, I’m satisfied, but not to any great degree.* (Lecturer, AFP1)

These lukewarm assessments of a working life and indifferent responses to career satisfaction illustrate that some people are comfortable with a job providing external benefits, such as job security and life balance rather than intrinsic rewards.

*Satisfaction I suppose is pretty hard to define in the TAFE situation. I’d say I’m satisfied basically, by the fact, you know, I have permanent employment.* (Lecturer, AMP6)

*I do my job very well. I like my job, but sometimes I feel I’m on autopilot… so I don’t think I have a career in a sense. I don’t think I’m going anywhere anymore. I think I have come to the end of my path. Overall, I’m satisfied but no passion. Grateful that I can balance all things actually quite well. Balance is probably the word.* (Lecturer, AFP10)

The external benefits alluded to in the above two responses were indicative of those who were satisfied because of tolerable working conditions, permanency, average wages and relative job security. This group of workers were ‘grateful’ for their jobs, but there was no sense of joy in their work, just resigned acceptance that work was psychologically limiting. Thus, they looked for outside interests and relationships to bring them ‘passion’ or life satisfaction.

**Ambivalent: ‘I love my job, but...’**

Twenty-eight staff expressed conflicting feelings towards their careers. A common comment was ‘I feel okay about my job, but...’. They were satisfied to some extent with their working lives but a range of factors limited their satisfaction in some way. Internal and external motivators centred on security, opportunity, sense of worth and organisational culture, operated to qualify career satisfaction. Table 7.4 shows four key factors that impacted on the career satisfaction.
Table 7.4  Key Factors Impacting on Career Satisfaction  Percentages and (Numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Qualifiers</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Job uncertainty</td>
<td>33% (18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of opportunities to progress</td>
<td>31% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undervalued and underpaid</td>
<td>18% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System structures and ideology</td>
<td>18% (10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentages (No of Responses)</td>
<td>100% (55)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 55 responses given by the 28 participants, the key qualifier of career satisfaction was job uncertainty (33% or 18 responses) followed closely by disquiet about future aspirations and frustration with the lack of opportunities to progress within the organisation (31% or 17 responses). Equal numbers of responses commented on being underpaid for the type of work being performed or having the complexity of their work underrated and feeling resentful about the structures or ideology underpinning the training system (18% or 10 responses). Those who expressed general satisfaction, but qualified their feelings, often did so by separating satisfaction with colleagues, work role or tasks from dissatisfaction with the system. Lecturers often stated satisfaction with their teaching role but dissatisfaction with resources, administrative support or changes to the system, its orientation and practices.

Eight administrative staff, all women, expressed dissatisfaction with job security in terms of planning their future and fear of being unable to financially support their families.

I’m a level 1 contract worker, working as a client service officer… I like it here. I’m quite happy being a level 1. I like doing the mundane stuff, somebody has to do it. I do mail and very basic things, but I like doing that and I have no desire to be at a higher level. At my age, I know the responsibility and pressure that goes with it and I don’t choose to look in that direction. At 51 years of age, I like to live a pressure-free life as I can… I would like to be permanent, I think. It’s a bit hard to come by. You can’t plan anything when you’re a contract worker. You live from pay-to-pay and you can’t ever look ahead because there’s no guarantee that pay will be there past your contract. So that’s a bit frustrating sometimes because I’m the breadwinner at home. I’ve been a contract worker over the last three years on and off. (Administrative staff, AFC3)

All contract staff in the study stated that in one way or another job security was a prerequisite for career or job satisfaction. Some executives and managers also acknowledged that job insecurity was a fundamental change in the nature of work and dramatically affected organisational culture in TAFE.
The inability to advance or move sideways in the organisation was a major frustration. Eight lecturers expressed a need for a mapped career path or at least signs that there was some opportunity to grow or expand one’s horizons.

*I quite enjoy the job, but it’s changing in many ways because there is a lot of uncertainty about the way that staff these days aren’t really given a career path. Whereas, when I was first properly engaged, there was a structured career path. You could obtain full-time permanency so long as you met the criteria and obtained a degree in teaching. There was a career path that could lead into other roles in TAFE, in management or somewhere like that. But I see now a lesser type of situation. I think it may cause uncertainty about roles and about the way TAFE teachers perceive a career path.* (Principal lecturer, SAMP2)

Most lecturers were very satisfied with teaching and found it fulfilling, but realised that burn out was a possibility and some thought that a saturation point was inevitable. Four lecturers feared future years of stagnation and repetitive work.

*I find teaching fulfilling. I find it enormously hard work to teach but as far as a career, there’s no clear pathway... You know, the thought of doing this for the rest of my life is really discouraging, but at the present it’s great and it’s fine. I can cope with that. But I certainly don’t want to be doing this in ten year’s time, and yet I can’t see where it’s leading me other than keep doing what I’m doing.* (Lecturer, AFC3)

There is no real career path in TAFE teaching. Throughout the study, lecturers, principal lecturers, team leaders and academic managers didn’t see ‘getting ahead’ as a distinct possibility in the traditional sense of climbing the ladder to higher positions. There are no powerful academic positions in TAFE and so there are very limited career pathways for VET educators. The lack of opportunities to get ahead or influence the system prevents talented lecturers reaching their full potential. Six lecturers thought they had been overlooked when career opportunities arose. They claimed that lecturers rarely got the opportunity to move into short-term acting positions or were rarely offered secondments to other colleges or the Department.

*I think a lot of short-term appointments or projects are earmarked for non-teaching staff as it is easier to move their workloads around than it is to make major changes to teaching timetables. Teaching staff miss out on lots of attractive assignments because it is all too hard to organise from a manager’s perspective.* (Lecturer, AMC2)

Three academic managers agreed that there were very few opportunities for lecturers to get ahead in the system and acknowledged that it caused career frustration for a number.

*It is possible for a person who’s prepared to stay as a lecturer to start off at level 3 or level 4 salary to progress to level 11, but invariably they get frustrated. So*
the people who tend to get ahead in this college are people who are more likely to move into a position as a program manager… I really don’t think lecturers get ahead at all. (Academic manager, SAFC5)

Five administrative staff also thought there were limited opportunities for career progression within the TAFE structure.

I worked for 15 years as a contract tradesman in between some bad times, lulls in the heavy machinery industry. I moved out of industry into a government position in the maintenance section. I was there for 13 years and then became redundant. I took a redeployment package to this campus and have been here almost four years. My career has been very satisfying. I get a lot of enjoyment out of what I do. But currently I feel that I’m at a bit of a dead end because of the structure within the government here. There is very little room for me to be able to move or use my current talents further than what they are currently being used. (Administrative staff, GMP4)

Although colleges had flatter organisational structures and limited opportunities for promotion, many people were still looking to the organisation to provide them with a tangible career pathway. The reality is that organisations rarely provide adequate career management initiatives or counselling services for their staff, particularly for those lowest in the hierarchy (Smith & Hutchinson, 1995). Still (1993) claims that women, more than men, will be stuck in the realms of fantasy without a more systematic approach to their careers. She claims that women need to be educated about what careers mean if they are to achieve their ambitions and full potential.

Nine participants thought that their job satisfaction was largely compromised due to their work being undervalued and consequently underpaid. Six female administration workers made the most responses in relation to their work being unrewarded financially and its complexity underrated. Four women felt their work was unappreciated or its complexity overlooked or minimised in comparison to the higher administration levels.

I really enjoy my job. I love working at this campus. I love working for the college. I’m very, very happy working in this unit, but I just feel that my duties are far more advanced than a level 1 position, much higher than that. (Administrative staff, GFP9)

Female administrative staff felt exploited by the colleges, believing they were expected to undertake complex work or duties but accept low levels of pay. Some felt the worth of their contributions was overlooked or downplayed. This is a major issue for female administration workers with computing, keyboarding and secretarial backgrounds. Burton (1991) suggests there is a stigma attached to office, secretarial or administrative work:
There is evidence that a history in this type of job is not highly valued in an organisation. People in these positions tend not to receive positive assessments of their capacity to advance (p. 67).

Six of the female administrative staff gained great satisfaction from their work, but were dismayed at the barriers or lack of opportunities for advancement.

I am still a substantive level 1. I have been acting for four years as a level 2, but then went back into the redeployment system because of different political things that happened. I am quite disillusioned at the moment with the union because they don’t do a thing. I’ve acted as level 2 and have been acting as level 3 now for about two and a half years now. And yet I’m still a substantive level 1. I would just be very, very happy to find a stable position in an organisation that was as committed to me as much as I am committed to it. (Administrative staff, GFP11)

These women commented that they saw very different treatment and encouragement being given to lower graded males than to lower grade females. Most females found it difficult to gain experience in challenging projects or in acting positions. Some stated this was a very open means of gender discrimination. One female contract worker was very distressed in recounting an incident where a male was given a project to manage at a level 3 position and none of the females was invited to apply. When she raised the matter with her supervisor, he dismissed her concerns of unfair treatment and said he did not think any of the women would want the project as it entailed travel and being away from home for several weeks.

Five highly qualified lecturers, both male and female, also claimed that the complexity of their work was underrated and that their pay was incommensurate with their skills and experience. They had taught in primary school, high school, training companies and universities and yet none of this accounted for much in the pay scales. Although deciding they wanted to take a job in TAFE, it meant that many lecturers had to accept significant pay cuts. The issue of earnings inequalities emerged as a significant marker of neoliberalism taking root in the TAFE colleges.

Fundamental questions about VET, such as its purpose, goals and whose interests it is serving, are central to the development of the training system. Throughout the interview process most lecturers and academic managers were critical of the neoliberal ideology that led to TAFE colleges becoming restructured along corporate models. Seven respondents claimed that neoliberalism directly affected their career satisfaction. They alluded to changes implemented in TAFE as a result of the NTRA
and the AQTF. They were highly critical of the implementation of training packages, which had occurred in both the colleges in 1999 and 2000.

I think the concept of applying competition theory to education is an anathema. The funding structures they've put in place I think are inappropriate. I think the industry people who are behind training packages don't know what they are doing and aren't producing the results that are good for people. I don't think people realise how silly it is particularly in the science and engineering field that I am familiar with. A new graduate is always recognised as somebody who lacked experience compared to a graduate with three or four year's experience. They're two different animals and industry has always recognised that. I can't see how training packages for the same dollars and time allocation can produce graduates with the same ability as someone with experience in that industry.

(Lecturer, AMP3)

Several submissions to the Senate Committee (2000) Report argued that deficiencies in the national training packages were a reflection of the lack of expertise and educationalist input in their development. A submission from Holmesglen Institute of TAFE in Victoria argues:

Educationalists have been excluded from the planning and development of the 'new' TAFE system, which has led to a narrowly focussed system which will not provide Australia with the skilled workforce that is required for a smart, knowledge-rich country (p. 146).

Four lecturers claimed that many of the training package support materials assumed students were already employed, and thus had not been adequately developed for the majority of students who were not in employment. Too much of the support material was based on students being assessed 'on-the-job' when in reality access to a well-simulated workplace was unavailable or too difficult to create. Three of the lecturers claimed that the educational and cognitive goals of TAFE have been undermined or even eradicated with the implementation of training packages with their instrumental approach to competency.

They also argued that students had been re-engineered as ‘clients or customers’ and were assumed to be in employment. Two lecturers were angry that the system was trying to paint an ideal image of a TAFE student, who was employed as a trainee or was seeking to change their career. The reality is that many students access TAFE as a second chance at a broad education, and need educational support and career guidance as well as psychological counselling. These services have been whittled away over the last decade as the ideal student does not present at TAFE with personal problems or learning difficulties. The lack of student focus and addressing student needs was an issue reported by several lecturers.
I’m happy to be a TAFE lecturer, but unhappy with the TAFE system and its total lack of regard for students. I’m not going to let the system cause me to give up. Luckily I’m permanent, otherwise I’d be a nervous wreck. (Lecturer, AMP1)

Lecturers were most concerned that management and administration appeared disinterested with the teaching and learning process and lacked knowledge of the skills and time needed to develop educationally sound programs from training package materials. They thought that there was inadequate acknowledgement of the importance of learning environments and that the managers were only concerned with the bottom line. When examining lecturers’ account, there seemed to be a common link between their feelings of satisfaction with their degree of autonomy, empowerment and sense of professionalism. Like other professionals, lecturers asserted their right to be recognised as experts who operate within the guidelines of professional standards (Mulcahy, 2003). They thought the highly prescriptive nature of training packages had diminished their curriculum autonomy and that their considerable expertise in specialist fields was generally ignored.

Dissatisfied and Disillusioned

For ten staff, life in TAFE had become burdensome (12% of respondents). Nine women and one man articulated their frustration and despair about a system that ran on the goodwill and commitment of workers who, in turn, were rewarded with disloyalty and disregard. Six academic managers and four lecturers described instances of exploitation and explained that years of mean-spirited underfunding had taken its toll.

In this study, the disillusioned expressed dissatisfaction with the same factors as the ambivalent group. They too rated employment status, job security and lack of advancement as major impediments to their career satisfaction. In addition, this group expressed high levels of dissatisfaction with the lack of professional development, including the erosion of collegial networking and ability to influence the system. The lecturers spoke passionately about the deprofessionalisation of lecturers and their marginalisation in the strategic direction of the colleges. They cited evidence of system bias in the college where more glamorous or high tech industries were receiving funding to the detriment of traditional study areas. They claimed a role identity crisis as they became disenfranchised in the system. The dissatisfied also referred to excessive workloads and erosion of professional status.
The dissatisfied claimed it was the interaction of these factors that led to intolerable levels of stress that was affecting their health, family life and relationships. All dissatisfied lecturers complained about ‘administrivia’ or the lack of administrative support for the teaching programs. They were seeking rewarding, challenging work but were unable to access such work without relinquishing their academic positions. It appeared that stimulating project work was available only to those who crossed over to the management side.

A number of participants attempted to advance their careers by applying for promotional positions within the college. Unsuccessful applicants were very critical of the system. Program managers and principal lecturers described feeling vulnerable and felt ‘caught in the middle’: unable to progress within the organisation and left stuck with the ‘dirty work’ of balancing the various demands of teaching, management and other responsibilities in a highly fractured and changing environment. Three senior women felt there was evidence of a gender bias.

*Generally speaking, I would have thought I would have been a lot further than what I am now. I would have thought I would have had by now a couple of years as a campus director under my belt and that’s where I was heading 18 months ago. Not getting the director’s job was a turning point… I don’t want to say anything bad about the previous managing director. She was very good in the fact that she was a woman and she was very active in terms of getting women into management and that was obvious. But as soon as she left, women seemed to be overlooked. It was quite marked.* (Program manager, SAFP6)

Shain (2000), drawing on research of women managers in British further education colleges, suggests that women managers desire promotion but focus on achieving organisational goals whereas men expect promotion and work to that end. Sachs and Blackmore (1998) argue that women tend to be less successful in gaining promotion due to disabling factors such as their achievements being undervalued.

The four lecturers in the dissatisfied group were all female and were very critical in regards to career advancement within the system. With the management structures changing in 1995-1996, lecturers who wanted to further their careers had to leave the education sector and enter the public service. The only avenues for lecturers were to be appointed Advanced Skilled Lecturer (ASL) level 1 and 2 or principal lecturer. These positions were advertised widely in 1997-1999 and filled according to a quota, but few vacancies have been advertised since then and no additional positions have been created. One lecturer provides a critical case to illustrate how change in system ideology brought about the demise of the professional educator at
the individual level. Her case highlights the very personal nature of the change process. She recalls her attempt to advance her academic career.

I joined TAFE in 1986 part-time on a 0.4 fraction by luck and not by design. An accident that really worked to my advantage. They were prepared to second me from the Education Department, which meant I kept my permanency. I first taught TEE history and economics and now communication subjects for most industries... there were times when I felt really motivated about a career path. I did a master degree in educational management in 1991. It took me four years and I did it because I thought I'd be looking for a change in direction and perhaps move into administrative roles, like head of department and program manager. That was the goal I set for myself, but that focus had changed by the time I finished the masters. I had a couple of stints acting as program manager and have had pressure to take on that role again, but I have said, 'I will not do it because I do not like the job. I don't want to do it. They are administrative positions. It's all paper work'. Those positions are very unrewarding, financially unrewarding and lead to job dissatisfaction. (Lecturer, AFP8)

This lecturer did not want to pursue an administrative career, so set her sights on gaining the only promotional academic position in TAFE, the principal lecturer position. There were only six of these academic positions in the two colleges.

So I came back to teaching. I thought another career step for me was going to be the principal lecturer... it was to be an academic career path for those lecturers who like to lecture... I thought it would be another step up and a continuation of the role that I already do and enjoy: supporting and developing curriculum, mentoring staff, you know, the processes which I find rewarding... so I applied and didn’t even get an interview. Twice I tried. When I rang up to see why I didn’t get an interview, I was told that my CV was too academic. Whatever that was meant to mean, I do not know. How in education can you be too academic? (Lecturer, AFP8)

This lecturer was furious that she had dedicated herself to the profession of TAFE teaching only to be told in a post-interview that she did not have current industry experience. She was told that if she had worked in a child care centre, she would have been more competitive. She summed up this experience.

I was penalised because I had a long, consistent history in the educational sector, I have moved with all the changes. It's a travesty. The academic side is not valued. So those of us that have that kind of aspiration or that academic focus are marginalised. So many people just step back. (Lecturer, AFP8)

Her colleagues in the focus group were very empathetic to her situation and all agreed that professional educators had been undermined in the current system. They thought it was very difficult for them to gain a principal lecturer's position unless they were in a high-profile industry, involved in high-stakes on-the-job industry training or involved in the latest learning technologies. Many lecturers are
unable to get these types of experiences and are therefore never in the running for the scarce principal lecturer jobs.

The major factor leading to dissatisfaction for lecturers was a feeling of alienation in the training system. Increased corporatisation, casualisation and contractualisation led to skilled lecturers feeling undermined and increasingly marginalised. Leathwood (2000) suggests that there is a more fundamental problem with the way lecturers are marginalised. She argues that managers, like Victorian fathers, view lecturers as troublesome children and treat them as infantiles who should be seen but not heard and who need to be shamed into changing practices. Gonczi (1998) is also deeply concerned about the status of TAFE teachers and asserts that the structures, ideology and funding regimes imposed on TAFE colleges are not merely intellectually bankrupt, but have the potential to destroy teachers’ morale and the TAFE system completely. He claims that the level of funding in the system is designed to encourage ‘just in time’ training arrangements and instrumental approaches to teachers’ work:

It is a fundamental point of grievance for students and student organisations in the sector that the critical state of staffing has such a detrimental impact on the pedagogical relationship (p. 142).

TAFE teachers’ corporate knowledge and expertise in pedagogy are undervalued and sidelined. Five lecturers stated that they were disenchanted with the training system as commercial activity, profit orientation and competitive practices have overtaken professional teaching concerns and collegial values.

We have been burdened with this corporate management structure ever since 1988. And the whole teaching practice has declined to its lowest ebb imaginable. I can only speak for myself. I am totally alienated from my job, a job I used to love. I used to love coming to work in the morning and that enthusiasm connected with the people I worked with, the students and the other staff. Staff would greet each other with happiness before. Now we don’t even meet. I don’t think I have had real contact with other members of staff in this college for the last five years. We never see each other and don’t have any ability to influence the system. (Lecturer, AFP10)

Lecturers were most critical of the way they had been sidelined in decision-making processes and the enormous erosion of their power to influence the system. Three long-serving senior lecturers described feeling subordinated and marginalised. Two claimed they were accused of being dinosaurs, unable to adopt the neoliberal practices promoted in the new breed of colleges. Those that tried to discuss the
quality of teaching and delivery issues were accused of being old-fashioned educationalists who hankered after the old supply-driven models of yesteryear.

All ten dissatisfied staff, bemoaned the lack of professional development available since the late 1990s. Prior to the cuts heralded by economic rationalism and the ‘growth through efficiency’ model of funding, each college was allocated money specifically for staff development from WADOT and the federal government through the National Staff Development Committee (NSDC). Formerly, each college had a professional development officer and support personnel, ensuring each staff member received induction and further development. At the time of this study, colleges do not receive specified allocations for professional development and devolve responsibility for professional development to business units and program managers, who in turn cry poverty. Five participants in the study claimed that the lack of development stifled their job satisfaction and retarded their access to networks, industry trends and new knowledge, including development in current work roles and lack of opportunities to learn new skills for the future.

In Summary

This study draws attention to the complexity of career satisfaction and offers insight into those aspects of work that TAFE employees felt contributed most to a good working life. The study revealed that those individuals with a strong sense of power had the greatest degree of career satisfaction. It was not surprising, therefore, that women had less career satisfaction than men.

Most staff claimed that their career satisfaction was based on the interaction of many factors. External factors imposed on the organisation, such as economic rationalism, corporate managerialism and training reforms, fundamentally changed the nature of work and caused many staff to reassess their sense of security and identity. Labour relation factors, such as job security, career opportunities, workload and remuneration, were strongly related to perceptions of fairness and attitudes towards the changing nature of work. Funding cuts to academic support, professional development and delivery resources also marred career satisfaction.

Organisational culture factors, such as the type of work to be done, the extent of control over the way it is carried out and the way people were recognised within the organisation, contributed to career satisfaction. A lack of interesting and satisfying
work was a major factor in dissatisfaction. Feeling undervalued, unacknowledged, marginalised or mistreated was directly related to the way individuals interacted with managers. The constant change, system restructures and attacks on professional identity caused a minority of staff to be disenfranchised. It was clear that appropriate recognition, strong collegial working relationships, and secure professional identity and self-worth were contributing factors to career satisfaction.

Occupation, position within the organisation and employment mode impacted on career satisfaction. Executives and administrative managers were the winners, claiming a high degree of satisfaction with their work. A business orientation gave them challenging work, influence, power and status. Lecturers, new to the TAFE system, expressed little concern with the training reforms and their career satisfaction was high. The losers were the low-level administrative staff, long-serving lecturers and academic managers. Administrative staff found themselves sandwiched between serving the competing interests of lecturers, students, employers and management. Where once TAFE lecturers and academic managers were pivotal to college operations and issues of an academic nature were central to its deliberations, they were now less able to influence activities and advance within the system. Lecturers were grappling with conflicting feelings about their careers and were the most ambivalent about the changes. Academic managers were struggling to cope with the workloads and suffered the most stress and frustration.
Chapter 8
A Masquerade of Equality and Fairness

Radical changes are transforming the nature of work. Life-time careers are disappearing, wages and conditions are being eroded and precarious employment is rapidly increasing (Callus & Lansbury, 2002). Many Australians are disenchanted with the quality of their working lives and fear further erosion of job security, career pathways and lifestyle aspirations (McQueen, 2001). According to Healy (2000), declining career satisfaction is a result of distrust towards employers and the labour market becoming polarised between the over-employed and under-employed. He claims that the quantity of employment and quality of work are key equity issues. Sheehan (2001) is more emphatic. He argues that massive changes in the distribution of jobs and earnings, since the early 1990s, has created a deep social division within the Australian community. This division between the ‘work rich and work poor’, high earners and low paid, and a ‘hollowing out of middle Australia’ raises fundamental issues about fairness and the nature of Australian society.

Despite professing liberal values, such as equal opportunity, Bensimon and Marshall (1997) suggest that post-secondary education systems maintain structures which enable men to retain control and protect their interests, while ensuring women are moulded to work in support roles. From a feminist perspective, engaging with issues of equality and fairness is about accounting for and preventing persistent inequalities between men’s and women’s access to rewarding work, remuneration, benefits and career advancement opportunities. As such, analysing equality goes beyond gender equity and “focusses on the redistribution of resources inside and outside of institutions” (Morley, 2003, p. 38). It examines strategies to dismantle patriarchal power, eliminate oppressive social practices, and increase respect for gender and difference. Sen (1992) suggests that audit cultures need to include gender equity and social inclusion, with more effective monitoring of national and organisational policies. Burton (1993) advocates that equal employment opportunity should be part of corporate planning and evaluation.
Gender Equity

Like gender analysis, gender mainstreaming was developed and promoted as a mechanism to highlight and overcome gender-based inequalities (Bacchi, 2001; Todd & Eveline, 2004). In brief, it aimed to enable the state to deliver gender-sensitive policy and transform gender relations. It entailed bringing the perceptions, experiences, knowledge and interests of women as well as men to bear on policy making, planning and decision-making. In the public sector, it aimed to make gender equity a mainstream management issue and gender equality a strategic goal. As a policy strategy for change, gender mainstreaming uses the language of efficiency and the instruments of public bureaucracy. Governments and institutions were expected to develop strategies which were sensitive to women’s lives and meet their requirements. Heads of departments were expected to meet performance targets and implement mechanisms to counter individual and collective resistance.

In Western Australia, data which showed that women were clustered at the bottom of organisational hierarchies and in a narrow range of occupations was used to produce new equal opportunity policies and intervention strategies in the public sector. For example, the government’s two-year plan for women 1999-2001 included commitments from 86 agencies in the priority areas of safety, health, economic independence and decision-making. By 1999, the OEO in Public Employment audited and monitored the performance of all public sector agencies and required them to provide diversity and gender data each year (as stipulated by the Equal Opportunity Act 1984). This data provides an aggregate measure of how well the public sector is progressing in achieving the government’s equity and diversity goals. Each agency receives a confidential report, *Diversity in the Public Sector – how does your agency compare?*, which analyses five workforce variables: representation and distribution of men and women; age distribution; salary range; employment type and mode; and management and senior executive service profile.

Table 8.1 shows the number and proportion of women in each of the colleges and compares it to the public sector in Western Australia. It indicates that the proportion of women in the public sector is greater than men, but that this is not the case in the colleges. On average, women represent 48% of the total workforce in metropolitan colleges. However, an analysis of the teachers reveals that only 42% were women.
Table 8.1  Representation and Distribution of Women (includes casual staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Public Sector</th>
<th>TAFE College A</th>
<th>TAFE College B</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of employees</td>
<td>107,168</td>
<td>842</td>
<td>760</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of women</td>
<td>41,810</td>
<td>399</td>
<td>368</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women as a percentage of total</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>47.4%</td>
<td>48.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women as a percentage of estimated FTE positions</td>
<td>56.3%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In analysing age distribution, metropolitan TAFE colleges had the highest proportion of employees over the age of 45 compared with other state government agencies. A key figure revealed in the data was the aging population of the academic workforce. The average age of lecturers was 53. Female lecturers were younger than their male colleagues in all colleges. A high proportion of male lecturers were aged between 50-54 years of age (26%) and 28% of all male lecturers were within the age of retirement (55+).

Differences in male and female salary range exist in all public sector organisations and TAFE colleges are no exception. When taking account of employment mode, permanency, age and length of service, gender pay inequity persists. This indicates that gender differences are not simply a legacy of past practices but continue to be produced by a system in which male employees fare better than female colleagues. Across the Western Australian public service, women are compressed at the lower salary levels. In 2000, of all public sector employees earning salaries at range 1, 77% were women and 23% were men. Similarly, in 2001, of all TAFE employees earning salaries below $33,556 (range 1), 76% were women and 24% were men (OEO, 2001, Diversity in the Public Sector Yearly Report).

During 1999-2001, much of the inequality in earnings in TAFE was driven by changes in career structures, with more men than women securing the newly created senior management positions and gaining reclassifications to higher levels. In 2001, of all TAFE employees earning salaries above range 8, 20% were women and 80% were men (OEO, 2001, Diversity in the Public Sector Yearly Report).

An analysis of data provided by TAFE College A in this study shows that in 2001, 68% of women and 8% of men were in salary range 1. Table 8.2 illustrates the salary range profile of TAFE College A. It shows that women’s salaries are at the lower levels. In examining the ‘middle class’ in TAFE using the mode salary range, women again fare much worse than men. As Table 8.2 shows, of the 155
employees who were on salary range 6 and above, only 35 or 22% were women. Similarly, at salary range 5, of 79 employees only 18 or 23% were women. Further analysis of the data reveals that female lecturers lag behind male counterparts in salaries, and rates of permanency and seniority.

Table 8.2 Permanent and Contract Employees in College A (excludes casual staff)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Salary Range</th>
<th>Salary Range ($)</th>
<th>Women N</th>
<th>Men N</th>
<th>Total N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>&lt;33,556</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>33,577 - 38,577</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>38,578 - 43,431</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>43,432 - 47,604</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>47,605 - 55,376</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>55,337 - 64,567</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>64,568 - 72,824</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>72,825 - 83,586</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>83,587 - 94,798</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>&gt;94,798</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>189</td>
<td>273</td>
<td>462</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 8.3 shows TAFE College A and B's progress towards the achievement of a better equity index for women. The ideal index is 100, which would indicate that there is no compression of women's salaries in the organisation. The lower the index, the more compression of women's salaries at the lower levels. The equity index provides a single measure of distribution across the salary ranges. Table 8.3 shows a slow improvement in the distribution of women in the public sector with TAFE colleges faring marginally better.

Table 8.3 Equity Index for Women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equity Index for Women in TAFE College A and B</td>
<td>61.7</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equity Index in Public Sector</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variance in Equity Index</td>
<td>-13.7</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-3</td>
<td>-6</td>
<td>-7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


In the report TAFE Colleges in Western Australia – Workforce Profile (WADOT, 2000, June) the earning differentials between males and females was evident, but there were no specific recommendations to redress or explore the issue further:

The majority of metropolitan lecturers are male, employed on a permanent basis, aged either 50-54 or 55-59 years and earn between $55,001-$60,000 per annum. The majority of metropolitan female lecturers are contract, aged between 40-49 years, earning between $35,001-$40,000 per annum (p. 10).
In 2003, the Western Australian SSTU, in partnership with the Women’s Economic Policy Unit at Curtin University, suggested that research would be helpful in examining the experience of Western Australian TAFE lecturers from a gender and pay equity perspective; however, WADOT did not support the proposal. They claimed that gender and pay equity was not an issue that needed to be investigated as it was being ‘evaluated’ within the department as part of its workforce development strategy.

This brief introduction to this chapter illustrates the way that installing data collection mechanisms and monitoring gender equity does not necessarily result in critical gender analysis or adequate intervention strategies. Without a mixture of surveillance mechanisms and incentives to develop robust strategies, it is very easy for aggregate statistics to be used to dismiss claims of gender and pay inequities in TAFE colleges and the public sector in general. Gender mainstreaming has become a top-down practice which fails to deal adequately with multiple inequalities.

**Perceptions of Fairness**

Within the context of gender equity, this chapter illustrates the multiple inequalities that exist in the two TAFE college sites. It explores perceptions of fairness in relation to employment practices and the distribution of workloads and rewards in TAFE colleges. For the purposes of this research the following terminology and definitions are used to refer to the employment mode of staff. Permanent staff are those that occupy a permanent, on-going tenured position. Contract staff have a short-term, fixed contract and a specific number of hours per week. Casual staff are employed in temporary positions, with the possibility of varying hours of work per week.

In the study, staff were invited to reflect on employment and work practices and asked questions relating to perceptions of fairness. They were asked whether they thought the system of recruitment, promotion and reclassification in their college was fair. The study found that the current employment system does not fairly reward effort. It rewards market power and managerialism. This is most evident in the rapid growth of executive and senior managers’ status, benefits and salaries through promotions and reclassifications of their positions. Staff were also asked questions related to the distribution of benefits in the workplace and whether duties or responsibilities were fairly spread and reflected appropriate reward mechanisms. Their answers were contingent on their employment status and many responses
related to the salary level received on appointment. A story of unequal earnings emerged in the study (with lecturers, in particular contract and part-time female lecturers) claiming that their pay levels were incommensurate with their industry experience and qualifications. Low-level administrative staff, predominantly women, claimed that their salaries were far too low in relation to their work responsibilities.

Lecturers, union delegates and managers acknowledged the gendered nature of pay inequity for lecturing staff. One unionist claimed it was the sheer workload and complex nature of gender pay equity issues that had resulted in little advancement.

*The union has been fighting and moaning about gender inequities in pay for years. Bear in mind that the Western Australian SSTU TAFE Committee is largely female, most members are women, the union is a feminised organisation. The ex-president of the AEU was a woman, Pat Burne, so women are well represented in the union and their issues are well debated. However, getting a pay equity case to the Commission is a huge undertaking. Getting hard facts to support a case is not as simple as it seems.* (Lecturer, AMPT)

Table 8.4 shows the salary range of lecturers in 2000 when most of the interviews with staff were conducted. TAFE lecturers are usually appointed at the lowest level on the lecturer’s salary grade if they do not have teaching qualifications. If they do have qualifications, they are appointed at level 3 or 4. Although the Certified Agreement allows managers to appoint lecturers on salaries higher than level 4 (if they have appropriate qualifications and industry experience), this study shows that this rarely happens. Many lecturers have industry qualifications, degrees and postgraduate qualifications in education and training. Some have taught in schools, training companies and universities and yet none of this broad-based experience accounted for much in the pay scales.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Salary (1/1 2000)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lecturers</td>
<td>Grade 1</td>
<td>$37,454</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 2</td>
<td>$39,291</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 3</td>
<td>$41,129</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 4</td>
<td>$42,965</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 5</td>
<td>$44,802</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 6</td>
<td>$46,649</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 7</td>
<td>$48,478</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 8</td>
<td>$50,316</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 9</td>
<td>$52,152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Grade 10</td>
<td>$53,988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Skills Lecturer 1</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>$59,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advanced Skills Lecturer 2</td>
<td>Year 3</td>
<td>$61,877</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Principal Lecturer</td>
<td></td>
<td>$64,489</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Seven highly-qualified lecturers were very critical of their work being underrated and inadequately remunerated. They spoke bitterly about the lack of financial recognition for their credentials, skills and experience when entering TAFE.

_I came into this system having come from Northern Territory University. I was appointed here at level 2 or 3, I forget which now. My salary dropped one-third and no consideration was given to my qualifications and experience, whether it was education or industry experience._ (Lecturer, SAMP5)

_Last year I did some lecturing at the college as a casual, and when a position was advertised early this year I applied. It was made clear to me that the appointment would require qualifications and that the applicant with the best qualifications and experience would probably get the job. I won the position and have a Diploma of Teaching, Bachelor of Education, a Graduate Diploma of Health Sciences, a Master of Science and a PhD. I have over 20 years experience and five years experience in the human service field. I nevertheless found myself appointed to the lowest salary level for appointment, level 4._ (Lecturer, SAFC5)

Three lecturers described methods that they used to try to negotiate better starting salaries. Some lecturers claimed that men had more chance of negotiating a higher starting salary than women, particularly if they were in a trade that was in demand.

_I actually wrote to the managing director and itemised nine considerations as to why I should be appointed at a higher salary grade. I received a letter back saying that it was college policy not to appoint a lecturer on a salary grade higher than level 3 or 4 irrespective of qualifications and experience. There was absolutely no consideration given to my situation. I was deeply hurt and frustrated._ (Lecturer, SAFC5)

_Pay equity is definitely something where gender is a factor. For example, sheet metal, fitting and machining, or boilermaking tradesmen tend to be appointed on a much higher pay scale than women recruited from hairdressing or childcare. Managers tell the union that it is a question of market forces. People who are doing fitting and machining are earning much more money than people doing hairdressing, therefore to attract them to the college, we have to start them on a higher salary grade. The union’s response is that once they are appointed to a college, they are no longer sheet metal workers, boilermakers or hairdressers, they are TAFE teachers. They should, therefore, start at the same level. I do not know why the pay inequities have never gone to the Commission. I presume it is because the union lawyers say we wouldn’t win._ (Lecturer, AMP7)

TAFE managers claimed that lecturers were appointed on conditions underpinned by the Certified Agreement, but acknowledged that it was possible that men in key trade areas or professions were advantaged in negotiating a better starting salary. One manager argued that ‘market forces’ compelled the college to pay tradesmen higher starting salaries than tradeswomen.
The irony in these accounts is obvious. TAFE colleges, in the business of selling and promoting courses and qualifications, devalue and discount the qualifications of their own workforce and employ lecturers on the lowest salary grade. This supports the claim by the AEU Federal TAFE secretary, Pat Forward (2004), that state governments and training institutions have “conspired through neglect or deliberate intent” to “patently undermine the qualifications and experience of the existing workforce and reduce standards overall” (p. 16).

It is disturbing that the autonomous college model, developed to stimulate competition between providers to ensure better training delivery, has prevented staff from transferring from one TAFE college to another. People changing colleges often took a pay cut at their next college appointment. The inability to transfer between colleges and retain entitlements left contract lecturers especially vulnerable to exploitation.

I'm contract and taught in high schools whilst doing more postgraduate study in South Africa. I then became a university lecturer for a couple of years. And then we moved and I had a child and it all changed. When we came here, I started teaching ESL [English as a Second Language] at a private college and then went to TAFE in Bentley and taught there for three years as well as working casual as a computing lecturer… Now I am employed in this college and am only paid on a grade 4 on the salary scale. At the end of the week, when I open my pay packet, I've only got $420. I lost a whole lot of credit when I changed colleges. I've got two postgraduate qualifications and I end up with a lousy $420. I'm so exhausted, I really deserve better. (Lecturer, AFC3)

There is still an expectation that lecturers require further qualifications to do the job. Several lecturers complained that they were given mixed messages in regards to qualifications and appropriate remuneration. There is little value placed on teaching qualifications, and little incentive to gain them. During this study, a salary bar prevented teachers without tertiary teaching qualifications progressing beyond two salary increments. Several lecturers spoke about trying to improve their salaries by gaining qualifications, but found the financial stress of a low income, coupled with university study, placed an intolerable strain on their lives and relationships.

I enjoy what I do and I enjoy working with people. I think there have been challenges that have been good, but by the same token there has been a big impact on family life. Because I took a pay cut to work at TAFE, I worked on weekends. As well, I was studying at uni. For a number of years, it was pretty hard going. My time was pretty well taken up and there was a fair bit of stress and tension to get through and survive. A lot of people I know in other areas suffered too, relationship wise. (Lecturer, AMP3)
According to a national study conducted by the AEU, TAFE lecturers, despite the pressures of heavy workloads and poor pay, are making extraordinary efforts to maintain and update the currency of their skills and qualifications:

The vast majority of teachers have undertaken professional development last semester. More than a quarter are engaged in formal study, to enhance either their teaching, vocational or industry qualifications. More than seven in ten teachers already hold a degree or postgraduate qualification and over half have a degree or postgraduate qualification as their highest relevant industry or trade qualification (Kronemann, 2001, p. 91).

Academic managers agreed that many lecturers, regardless of gender, were short-changed. They conceded that lecturers’ qualifications, industry knowledge and experiences were not adequately recognised.

The pay is very poor. People working for me are on $18.50 an hour with a four year degree and 20 years of teaching experience, and it really isn’t good enough. My colleagues and I don’t just give our nine to five bit. We actually give it a lot more than that. And it does seem wrong that it isn’t recognised in some way, that people’s experiences aren’t taken into consideration or that program managers don’t have the flexibility to actually say, ‘Well look, this team member is working at 150% and I think that they should be recognised by some kind of monetary reward’. (Academic coordinator, SAFC6)

Some managers stated they were often embarrassed and frustrated with the salary grade they were required to give to new employees. They complained that colleges placed job advertisements in the papers showing a broad salary range, but that new lecturers were usually appointed at the base grade.

I employ a lot of staff… I have a lot of people from industry applying for lecturing positions who are earning a lot more money than they are going to be offered in TAFE to start off. That is a drawback as far as the quality of the staff that you can employ. When they find out that they are going to be coming in on around $33,000-$37,000 when they have been working in a managerial role in a large operation on about $45,000, they cannot believe it. (Program manager, SAMP5)

When lecturers were asked why they accepted positions in TAFE even though they would take substantial pay cuts, the answers were varied.

In my case I needed the bread and butter on the table. It was a practical reality. It was also for the sheer love of the job. I had already worked here on a series of short contracts and found that the staff I worked with were excellent. This made it easy to take a salary cut. It was also relatively close to where I lived and I thought ‘Well, here’s a starting point’, and at no time did I think this was going to be my chosen career path. (Academic coordinator, SAFC5)

Women tended to accept lower salaries than they deemed they were worth for practical and economic reasons. They often made the choice based on factors other
than salary. Alternatively, men accepted lower salaries in lieu of the stress of the corporate world where hours were even longer than in TAFE. Some trade lecturers stated they accepted lower salaries in return for better working conditions and less physically demanding work. As indicated in Chapter 7, a few accepted lower salaries as they preferred to ‘work in a job they love’ and ‘wanted to give something back to the industry that had been good to them’.

Recruitment and Contractualisation

In 2000, research on the growth of non-standard work and its impact on training was undertaken for the NCVER. It found that over 40% of the Australian workforce was employed in contract employment, and that many workers would prefer more ongoing and certain employment. As Hall, Bretherton and Buchanan (2000) comment:

Levels of non-standard employment appear to be rising because increased competitive pressure is forcing firms to cut costs in general and reduce fixed labour overheads in particular. Reducing fixed labour overheads is not simply a matter of increasing efficiency; it often involves shifting costs and risks onto the weakest party in an employment situation (p. vii).

The report, *TAFE Colleges in Western Australia - Workforce Profile* (WADOT, 2000 June), mapped the workforce profile of TAFE college lecturing staff and found that overall 61% of lecturers were on contract and 39% were permanent. In regional colleges, 77% of lecturers were on contract and 23% were permanent. Of those lecturers who were permanent, 68% were male and 32% female. The report found that colleges were unable to provide readily available, accurate and consistent data about their workforce profile. The fact that two-thirds of women were contractualised reinforces the notion that women workers are used as a reserve army and operate on the periphery of the organisation. It also signifies the gendered, disadvantaged position of women in TAFE generally.

In this study, the impact of contract appointments on executives, managers, lectures and administrative staff varied markedly. The proportion of contract staff in teaching was four times higher than those in management or administration. One program manager stated that 80% of community service lecturers were either on short-term contracts or casual, and that most of her staff were women. When executives were asked to describe the changes that had affected the organisation, they commented on the system of recruitment, which resulted in greater contractualisation of the workforce. In the main, executives did not view contractualisation as a problem, but
acknowledged that it had negative effects on organisational culture because it had a destabilising effect on staff morale and commitment.

The nature of employment has changed. Staff who had an expectation of a through-life employment, no longer have that, particularly lecturers who now through the contract system have to reapply for their jobs every year. Thankfully, the state is now introducing three year maximum contracts. These are being advertised state-wide and contract staff have to reapply. Needless to say, casual staff will also apply for the new contracts. So, there is a great deal of insecurity and a lack of commitment to the future due to the three year contracts. This wasn't happening five years ago. (Executive, EM4)

While many lecturers and administrative staff were applying for one to three year contracts, only two executives in the study were on non-renewable, five-year contracts. One of these executives was into the fourth year of his appointment at the time of interview and left shortly after to take an appointment outside the TAFE system. Most executives and senior managers, although technically on five year contracts, had a ‘fall back’ permanent position within the training system, which provided permanent tenure and job security.

I took on the manager’s job because I really wanted a career change. I am now acting in the director’s job and it’s great. I do not want to go back teaching, but if I don’t get my contract renewed I know I have a job to go back to. If I didn’t have permanency, I wouldn’t do this job. (Senior manager, GFP14)

This sense of job security provides senior managers with the ability to take risks, accept short-term projects and secondments, knowing that, come what may, they will always have a job. Such security provides a baseline for career satisfaction and advancement as demonstrated in Chapter 7. Academic managers, without permanent status, were greatly concerned about their career prospects. Those who were on contract felt torn between their own lack of job security and their professional obligation to speak out about issues or directions they disagreed with. Program managers on short-term contracts stated they looked after management’s concerns before staff’s. The following account demonstrates the negative impact of job instability on organisational culture.

Prior to our becoming permanent, which was about two years ago, one of our main concerns was the instability of having to go for your job, again and again. Every 12 months we were going for our jobs, and so there weren’t even long-term contracts. They were just 12 months. So it was basically a case of saying ‘Well, what can I do? What can’t I do? Can I rock the boat? If you do rock the boat, you’re not going to get your job back. So it was very unstable, very unsure. People weren’t working well as a team. The sections weren’t working well. We weren’t performing. (Program manager, SAFP7)
The majority of contract staff wanted more work and greater job security. They claimed contractualisation led to high stress levels and poor job satisfaction. Some stated that a preoccupation with job insecurity was ruining their working lives. For these workers, the weakening of unions and the advent of enterprise bargaining increased their sense of powerlessness. Lecturers on short-term contracts were particularly vulnerable. Contracts from 1996-1999 were often less than one year, meaning lecturers could not gain access to holiday pay over the traditional Christmas period. Some lecturers on one year contracts had to reapply for their jobs at the end of their contract, and suffered the indignity of seeing their job advertised in the paper and confronted the stress of facing an interview panel of well-known colleagues. Several people in the study had to apply four or more times for their own jobs in a two to three year period. They told stories of spending days writing CVs, preparing for job interviews and having to compete with outsiders for their position.

I initially started out in TAFE by default. Someone needed a lecturer and they rang me up and said, ‘Do you want to do some lecturing?’ I’d never taught a day in my life, but I figured I knew enough about hospitality to figure it out. So I started as a casual lecturer, then won a three month contract. Later I applied again for my job and was given a one year contract. At the end of that contract, my job was readvertised and I was given a three year contract. So, you know, in two years, I actually applied for my job four times. I find that totally mechanistic. (Lecturer, AFC2)

The precarious nature of contract staff’s employment resulted in more than job insecurity. Upon recruitment contract staff knew they could be arbitrarily moved from one campus to another with little course of appeal. They also knew that their timetable could be changed, forcing them to work split shifts or unsociable hours such as evening or weekend work. With little notice or explanation, their contracts could be shortened or fragmented. In addition, contract staff suffered ‘skill insecurity’, claiming a lack of access to professional development, challenging projects and career enhancement.

I have been in TAFE for five years now and am still on contract. I do not have any teacher qualifications and there is no incentive for me to do so. I would have thought there would be much better opportunities to return to industry to keep abreast of the latest technology and work practices. Already, I feel I am becoming deskilled. I am on several industry committees outside of TAFE, through personal choice, and this is one way I keep in touch with what is going on. I am not on any committees in TAFE as that seems to be only available to program managers and directors. (Lecturer, AMC6)

They also referred to ‘representation insecurity’. They claimed they lacked access to a recognised voice in the workplace, such as membership of committees or project
teams. While the union advocated the rights of contract lecturers, many contract staff stated they would not speak out or discuss their plight for fear of reprisals.

I have been in TAFE for four years. I work under contract and have to reapply for my position every three years, which is a publicly funded advertised position to the world at large. Which I suppose, as a 44 year old, makes me very cautious, suspicious and somewhat on tenterhooks because of it. Because trying to find a position at 44 years of age, even with a MBA, it is difficult, almost impossible, because you’ve got so many young graduates coming out of universities now. (Team leader, SAMC2)

At the national TAFE Council AGM, held in January 2002, union delegates agreed to focus on recruitment practices, particularly those of casual and contract staff. The AEU aimed to maximise permanent employment and push for longer fixed-term contracts. Where it was clear that work was on-going, the union claimed there should be an option to convert contracts to permanent positions. The AEU (2002) claims that it is critical to ensure that working conditions for casual and contract staff are consistent with the conditions and protection enjoyed by permanent staff to provide a robust and equitable training system:

The current trend towards the employment of casual and temporary staff has resulted in an increasing number of non-permanent staff, whose employment may provide management with flexibility in the short-term, but is detrimental to the system in the long-term (p. 14).

Overall, the union and contract staff claimed the current employment system was very unfair, based on exploitative work practices, false promises and psychological fear. The Labour government indicated that it would address labour relations if it were elected to power.

Casualisation

From the mid-1980s to the cusp of the new millennium, the proportion of casual workers in Australia rose from 15.8% to 26.1% (Hall et al, 2000). Women were more likely than men to be employed on a casual basis in the workforce, public sector generally and the TAFE sector particularly. Table 8.5 provides a snapshot of the workforce profile in College A and illustrates that casual employment fluctuated for both men and women over the period 1999-2002.

Over the four year period, casual employees represented between 40% and 44% of all employees. However, the percentage of casual women was between 14% and 17% more than casual men. On average, casual men represented 34% of all male employees. Casual women represented 50% of all female staff, but due to the
seasonal nature of casual employment and the need for relief teachers, the human resource manager stated that the actual number of casual women employed at any one time could be 10-20% higher. Colleges were using casual labour at peak times of the academic year, such as enrolment and at the end of each semester, to complete academic records and to prepare materials for the next period. Many of the competitively tendered programs employed female casual staff.

Table 8.5 TAFE College A Workforce Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Employment Type</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Permanent Full time</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Permanent part-time</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women who are permanent f/t</td>
<td>28.2%</td>
<td>26.6%</td>
<td>43.7%</td>
<td>44.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed term full time</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed term part-time</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of women who are casual</td>
<td>48%</td>
<td>51.5%</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of men who are casual</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from OEO (2003, June 30) Diversity in the Public Sector Yearly Report.

In the study, 22 women and 30 men had been in TAFE for more than ten years. Of these, four women had been in TAFE for more than 15 years but had been employed as ‘temporary’ for most of that period. Respondents claimed that most temporary staff were women.

I have a friend who is on contract now rather than being called ‘temporary’. She has been ‘temporary’ for 15 years, but at least she didn’t have to apply for her job every year and go through all that stress and not know if she has a job. She was reasonably secure, well not really. She got a letter at the end of each year terminating her employment and then got another letter appointing her in the New Year. This went on for 15 years, without an interview or anything. (Lecturer, AFP9)

This account shows that staff classified as ‘temporary’ were neither casual or contract and were used to maximise management flexibility. They had their employment terminated at the end of each year, although they were re-employed at the beginning of the following year. While they did not have to apply for their job every year, they still had to contend with job insecurity and periods of no pay. Such blatant exploitation reveals the lack of fairness in the TAFE sector. As the following response indicates, the gendered nature of recruitment has a history of obfuscation.

If you were a woman you were appointed as a casual or temporary, if you were a man you got a contract or permanency. It was clearly the case. Men lecturers when they came got a contract, women lecturers were casual. The union thought there was a strong case to argue for gender discrimination. Then we looked at the figures. These did not support the claim that women were being
unfairly treated. There were a lot of men as casual lecturers. The reason being was that these men had a full time job during the day and also did a couple of casual hours at night. For women, the casual job was their main ‘day’ job. It was difficult to prove discrimination when the figures showed a relative balance between the number of women and men casual workers. (Lecturer, AMP7)

The above example illustrates the subtle nature of gender discrimination. It shows a readiness to read equity from gross statistics without unpacking the discriminatory practice of offering women causal or ‘temporary’ work rather than fixed-term contracts or permanency. Union delegates claim that women casual workers received less work than men and under-employment made it difficult for them to achieve a reasonable standard of living. Casual female staff had to find further employment elsewhere. This was not the case for most men, according to union delegates. They claimed men were using casual employment to top up a contract or full-time job. Walby (1997) contends that the position of women is increasingly polarised as to whether they have access to good employment, and suggests that women's under-employment and access to poorly paid work is “a form of backlash or opposition to feminism” (p. 164).

During 1999-2001, the two TAFE colleges in the study maintained a large pool of ‘casual’ workers, approximately 40%-50% of their staff over the year. This figure is much higher during first semester. The report, *TAFE Colleges in Western Australia - Workforce Profile* (WADOT, 2000 June), was unable to analyse casual employment in TAFE colleges as they were unable to download consistent and accurate data from their human resource information systems.

As part of the Certified Agreement, the union restricted casual staff to teach only eight hours a week (in an attempt to force colleges to convert casual staff to contract). According to staff interviewed in the study, this restriction did not lead to more contracts but resulted in more casual staff being employed at each college. Employing more casual staff increased academic managers’ workloads and frustrated lecturers who had to mentor more staff. Table 8.4 shows that the most a casual lecturer could earn at any one college was $339.60. This led to casual staff becoming ‘portfolio workers’, having to work at more than one college to make a reasonable living.

**Table 8.6 Salary Range of Casual Lecturers (January 1 2000)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Salary Rate per hour</th>
<th>Maximum Salary per week</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Level 1</td>
<td>$29.96</td>
<td>$239.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level 2</td>
<td>$42.45</td>
<td>$339.60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One casual staff member interviewed in College A provided an account of years of discrimination and poor treatment.

I have been in TAFE over ten years. At one time I had a contract as Team Leader, but when that position was abolished I went back to working eight hours a week as a casual. For a number of years, being casual suited me, but now I am really angry that I have worked for ten years and have nothing to show for it. For the last three years I have taught 15 hours a week (in breach of the Certified Agreement) and yet I still can't get a contract. I want something much more secure and am prepared to get the union to do something about it. (Lecturer, ATF1)

This lecturer stated that each time she fell pregnant, she had to leave the workforce and lost her contract. She had no leave entitlements and found it increasingly difficult each time she returned to work to secure a contract. Although she was very experienced and was asked to coordinate programs she was unable to secure a contract even when teaching up to 15 hours a week. In a follow-up interview, she explained that she took her case to the union. She claims the union representative found her case amazing and agreed to take it to the industrial relations commission on several grounds, including failure to work within the equal opportunity guidelines. As a result, her employer agreed to give her a contract, thus avoiding defending its stance at the commission.

Forward (2000) claims that “the human cost of casualisation is enormous” and has reduced the credibility and professionalism of the training system (p. 3). She states that it is almost impossible to get figures from the respective state authorities and ANTA on the percentage of the teaching workforce in the VET sector who are casually employed. She claims that “casualisation is the biggest time bomb in the VET sector” and that casual teachers are “victims of the revolution of the VET system” (p. 3). Cornford (1999) also describes the impact of casualisation on the training system, claiming that it has impoverished the quality of vocational education and the relationship between learners and teachers. Shorne (2000) describes the frustration and alienation felt by casual TAFE teachers, claiming that managers do not give enough attention to the needs of casual staff. The notion of a core-periphery workforce, delineated on gender, occupation and employment mode, is a recurrent theme in this study. It enabled some staff to gain secure and relatively well-paid work, while causing others to contend with poor pay and insecure futures.
Promotion and Reclassification

Staff were asked two questions about their perceptions of fairness in relation to promotion, reclassification and career advancement. *Do you think the system of promotion and reclassification is fair? Are there any barriers to ‘getting ahead’?*

Their perceptions reflect their aspirations, what they want and expect from work, and their inside knowledge of how the system works in practice rather than in theory. Table 8.7 indicates that 32 respondents stated that the promotion system was fair, 14 stated that it was not fair, 19 did not know and 16 did not provide an answer.

| Table 8.7  Is the promotion and reclassification system fair? Numbers |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes, the system is fair | No, the system is unfair | Do not know | Uncoded (non-answers) | Total |
| Administrative Managers | 6 | 2 | 2 | 0 | 10 |
| Academic managers & Principal lecturers | 13 | 2 | 3 | 5 | 23 |
| Lecturers | 9 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 32 |
| Administrative staff | 4 | 3 | 5 | 4 | 16 |
| Total | 32 | 14 | 19 | 16 | 81 |

The difficulty with interpreting these results as an indication of perceptions of fairness and satisfaction with the system, is that 35 respondents gave ‘don’t know’ or non-answers (43%) and that many of the affirmative answers contained ambiguities. Even those who asserted the system was fair (32 respondents) also acknowledged that it could be used to mask favouritism and management preference for outsiders above insiders.

Administrative managers spoke about the strict public sector standards and processes for promotion, secondments and reclassification, and thought that these were adhered to in practice in the majority of cases. Principal lecturers claimed that the system of promotion was superficially fair but could easily mask those incidents where there appeared to be promotion based on seniority, political manoeuvring or favouritism. Similarly, academic managers stated the system was fair. Five commented that the system hid the way promotional opportunities favoured particular insiders or incumbents in ‘acting’ positions or outsiders with certain connections.

*It is much more difficult for people to plan a career path. We are witnessing directors being appointed from outside the organisation. People who think they are in line for a promotion are shocked when they are overlooked and an outsider with no TAFE experience is brought in ahead of them. It can be quite
humiliating for those who had worked really hard and assumed they would be rewarded through promotion. (Program manager, SAFP2)

Four lecturers in the affirmative group also claimed that outsiders were favoured in the promotion stakes. Two commented that the lack of succession planning or succession culture favoured outsiders.

The appointment of ‘outsiders’ was generally seen as tantamount to a betrayal of those who had ‘done the right thing’ and were being bypassed. One managing director told his senior executives that he was actively looking to appoint a general manager from outside the VET system to bring new perspectives to the organisation. A management culture that assumes that outsiders have more to offer limits the potential for maximum utilisation of management talents within the organisation, and devalues corporate and tacit knowledge. Some claimed the government’s appointment of redeployees into advertised promotional positions was also reprehensible in an educational institution.

*Our program manager was appointed as a redeployee from community services. As far as I know she never taught in TAFE or worked in WADOT. She has no inclination to be involved in the education side of things and was given the job ahead of lecturers who knew the training system.* (Lecturer, AFP10)

The appointment of ‘insiders’ to promotional positions was seen as technically fair in that all promotions are advertised, but it was common knowledge in the colleges that there were certain positions, generally in senior management, that had been earmarked for certain individuals. Some respondents claimed the ‘tap on the shoulder’ approach existed in TAFE, but operated for only a small pool of core workers who were well known to the executive. This practice effectively excluded the large pool of workers who operated on the periphery of the college or in low profile areas.

*The people who are given work assignments that enable them to gain a high profile are usually well known to the directors. It is rare for someone unknown to the executive to be given a high stakes project. This means that people with potential must self-promote if they are to be given any chance later for promotions. They must get themselves into positions or projects that come to the notice of the executive, such as working on international or defence contracts. This effectively means they have to be commercially focussed and not concerned with improving teaching and learning practice. This effectively limits the career opportunities for many lecturers.* (Principal lecturer, SAMP2)

While 32 respondents claimed the promotion and reclassification was fair, the relative high number of ‘don’t know’ (19) and uncoded answers (16) suggests that
the issue of promotion is less relevant to the experience of many in TAFE. This is borne out by the responses of those who did not think the system was fair. For example, seven lecturers who claimed the system of promotion was unfair did so because there were very limited opportunities for promotion or career advancement rather than because they thought the standards were unfair or not adhered to in practice. There are only three positions available to lecturers: ASL level 1 and 2, and principal lecturer. These were new positions created as a result of the VET Act and Certified Agreement in 1996. They were based on a quota system for each college. The Certified Agreement, while providing for the appointment of ASL1 and ASL2 and principal lecturers, did little to raise the status of these positions or ensure consistency of role across the TAFE system. In time, they became little more than an avenue for staff with 'advanced' teaching skills to be given a higher salary grade. The appointments, based on both a quota and criterion system, were ineffective in raising the status and influence of lecturers. The quotas imposed on the appointment of ASL1 and ASL2 personnel were over-filled in 1996 in the colleges in this study, and with no room to transfer or opportunity for promotion there were very limited opportunities for new appointments.

Our college appointed more than its quota of ASL1 and ASL2s in 1996 and as a result there has not been a lecturer appointed to that level for the last eight years. It is very difficult to explain to a lecturer that their skills justify their appointment at the ASL level but because of the quota system they have little chance of securing such a position. (Team Leader, SAFP5)

The system of quotas for filling the ASL positions meant that unless someone with an ASL position left the college no one else could be promoted. The quota system was roundly criticised by lecturers and program managers. In addition, there appeared to be ill-feeling amongst lecturers about the way ASL appointments were made and the lack of transparent process. Several of the dissenting lecturers claimed that the essential criteria for appointments were too often overlooked.

The appointment of ASL lecturers was based more on filling quotas than it was on rigorous assessment of lecturers to ensure they met the criteria. For example, not all newly appointed ASLs had degrees, and yet this was one of the essential criteria. (Lecturer, AMP7)

One very experienced lecturer, who was also a college union representative, stated that the ASL positions were not even promotional positions.

Technically, ASLs are not promotional positions. The reason is something to do with the lack of interview, panel selection and appeals. They are not promotions, they have no line authority and no allowance for management or co-ordination, you still teach 23 hours a week. (Lecturer, AMP7)
While being appointed as an ASL was not a promotion, several lecturers definitely saw it as a form of status and identity.

*Some lecturers put the title ‘Advanced Skilled Lecturer’ on their name badge. I suppose it’s a bit of an ego thing but if you are wedded to the classroom I think it’s a good thing.* (Lecturer, AMP6)

Perhaps it is a need to differentiate themselves in a flattened structure, as managers and administrative staff do, that inspired some lecturers to broadcast their title on their name badges. Bernstein (2000) claims that one way for people to cope in structures that conflict with their orientation and professional philosophy is to retain ‘symbolic control of identity’. Broadcasting their ASL title could be seen as one way lecturers were asserting their professional identity with teaching practice, and gave them an opportunity to differentiate themselves from their ‘tribe’ of colleagues. Bandura (1995) states that occupational structures play a large part of people’s everyday reality and provide them with a major source of personal identity and sense of self-worth. He suggests that beliefs of individual and collective self-efficacy play a key role in occupational development, career pursuits and organisational cultures. He suggests that it is imperative to provide opportunities for individuals to create a means for continual self-renewal and to construct identities for themselves.

The only promotional avenue available to lecturers who wish to remain in teaching is the position of principal lecturer. The union maintained these were to be mainly teaching positions but with responsibilities for academic leadership, mentoring and industry liaison. There were no specific time allowances given to principal lecturers to fulfil their leadership role, so that in some colleges principal lecturers taught very little whilst in others they still had a full-time teaching load. The incumbents could not transfer to another TAFE college and keep that title and salary. Consequently, very few principal lecturers left their college unless they moved into management. The limited number of positions and the inability to transfer to other colleges meant that promotional opportunities were extremely scarce for lecturers.

*How can you say the system is fair when an ASL1 or ASL2 has no chance of being promoted to principal lecturer no matter how outstanding they may be? And no lecturer can be appointed to an ASL in this college because we have exceeded our quota compared to other colleges. It will be years before there are any ASL positions available.* (Team Leader, SAMP2)

*There are several hundred lecturers in our TAFE college and only six principal lecturers’ positions, so there is not really a career path for lecturers as there was in the old days. I think the principal lecturer is an honorific but does not really represent a career path.* (Lecturer, AMP6)
The notion that the title of principal lecturer is an ‘honorific’ is important. It indicates that the principal lecturer is a form of identity that conveys high status, but little influence or power. Principal lecturers receive a salary greater than program managers and less than academic directors, but report to one or both in the organisation. The role of principal lecturer is to provide academic leadership, advice and information on current trends in VET and their area of speciality. It is also to represent their industry and college on departmental, state and interstate committees and working groups. However, these roles are similar to that of program manager and academic director, and it is they who determine the breadth and depth of principal lecturers' leadership and involvement in college, state and national projects. The role overlap between principal lecturers and program managers is a form of tension between professional teaching practice and administration, and is intimately connected with the micropolitics within the organisation. The ambiguous responsibilities of ASL1, ASL2 and principal lecturers and the role overlap between them and program managers is a structural weakness in TAFE colleges.

Lecturers who aspired to the position of principal lecturer spoke about practices that seemed to favour seniority rather than merit. The following account was from a lecturer who had just recently completed his MBA.

My goal in the last two years has changed. Once I saw how management operates, I decided very quickly that I didn’t want to go down the management road at all, not through the program management route anyway. Those positions are untenable. I would like to get a principal lecturer’s position but I find myself running into more obstacles. People here are being promoted on the grounds of seniority rather than meritorious backgrounds. I see it as inequitable and I’ve pretty much retreated in that sense. I have now formed my own company and have become a day trader and property developer to make up additional income by other means than relying on a typical salary based career structure. (Team leader, SAMC2)

This account is quite typical of men and women who found little opportunity for promotion in TAFE. They used their lecturing work as their day job and looked elsewhere to supplement their income or meet their career aspirations. The relationship between self-efficacy and outcome expectations (Bandura, 1995) is useful in analysing lecturers’ perceptions of fairness of the promotion system. Bandura suggests that expectancy-value theory assumes that human behaviour is a joint function of people’s expectations that a particular behaviour will bring certain outcomes and the value of those outcomes. Clearly if promotional outcomes are thought to be unattainable or worthless, then staff will not be motivated to pursue such paths.
Administrative staff faced a different climate to academic staff. Here the problem was that the reclassification system allowed a process of promotion or upgrading but it was largely stymied for staff at the lower levels. The system generally benefited managers and executives. Two academic managers stated that it was much easier for senior administrators to navigate the system than it was for administrative staff.

Administrative staff also asserted that the system of promotion and reclassification was gender biased. In particular, it was evident that it was very difficult for level 1 female administrative assistants to gain reclassification of their positions. During the 1970s and 1980s, feminist researchers drew attention to the gendered nature of administrative skill and challenged historically masculine derived definitions of skilled labour (Game & Pringle, 1983). Ryan (1983) suggests office work was denied appropriate recognition as skilled labour and consequently the training women received was downgraded:

> In workforce practices skill is what has been recognised as such by masters and men. Male gender decided... women in office work were denied their skill. We paid for training at business college where a good standard of spelling and grammar was required to learn typing and shorthand. When we worked in an office, every male was superior to us even if they had no training (pp. 7-8).

Similarly, Probert and Wilson (1993) contend that clerical workers have a wide range of skills but these are devalued because such skills are associated with women. Industrial relations researchers highlight the gendered process in which wage rates, award restructuring, training and market status are linked to the ability of workers to gain an industrial classification as ‘skilled’ (Buchanan et al, 2000).

Three administrative assistants commented that the promotion and reclassification system was very unfair. One woman described how she approached the human resources manager but was advised administrative assistants had little chance of success. She asserted that appeals by women were generally discouraged.

> I think the reclassification system at the college is crap. The level 1s here, across the college, applied for reclassification of their positions. Because each campus is slightly different to the others, they just looked at them all as one and said, ‘No’. That’s it. But if they had looked at them individually they would have found that a lot of them should have been reclassified or parts of their position taken away and given to someone else. But they haven’t. They then pile on as much work as possible and say, ‘you’ve got to do this and you’ve got to do that. It’s part of your job’. But it’s not in the job description. And when you say, ‘I’ll have a reclass,’ they say, ‘You can’t do that’. (Administrative staff, GFP4)
This woman explained that she had tried several times to get reclassified from a level 3 to a level 5, as her responsibilities in managing the college’s information systems had increased rapidly with the reliance on computer-based management systems. Her role had expanded to training others but she was still unsuccessful in her application. She was therefore dumbfounded when she was later told that her manager had gained a higher reclassification while her own job was to end. If you are a level 7, it seems you can prove your job has changed. They get reclassified just like that. Someone has just got reclassified as a director at Christmas. The timing is amazing! Yet I was in the same department being told, ‘Your job is going to end this month. We don’t need you anymore’. So it’s definitely not fair. When we got the new human resources manager a couple of years ago, the first thing they did was reclassify his job from a level 5 to a level 6. Now he is a level 7. They reclassified a couple of blokes under him too. That astounded me. I couldn’t believe it. Talk about feathering your own nest and bugger the ants on the bottom doing all the work. (Administrative staff, GFP4)

Several managers commented on the battle for justice for administrative assistants and some had put cases of reclassification to the executive, but all failed.

I supported my admin assistant in her bid for reclassification, but we were told that if she was reclassified it would mean all other admin assistants would have to be reclassified. She operates at a much higher level than the job specifies in the job description, but it seems impossible to get the description changed to truly reflect the responsibilities being done. (Program manager, SAFP6)

It is evident that female administrative assistants are under-classified for the duties and responsibilities expected from them. A comprehensive survey of women in administrative positions, conducted by the Women’s Adviser’s Unit at the South Australian Department of Labour (Lazenby & Poynton, 1992) identified administrative women’s inability to gain appropriate reclassification based on job evaluation as a common source of their disadvantage in the workplace. McLean (1996) reports similar experiences in her survey of general staff working at the University of New South Wales. She found that women perform their job at a much higher level than they are classified. She also found that often these positions were upgraded after the incumbent had left when it became evident that the job was at a higher level than classified.

In Summary

A masquerade of equality and fairness pervades employment and remuneration practices, and the distribution of workloads, benefits and rewards in TAFE. The social solidarity within TAFE colleges cannot be strengthened when earnings
inequality continues to widen between managers and staff. Findings from this study suggest that a four-tiered workforce operates in TAFE, resulting in divisions that exacerbate perceptions of inequity.

The first tier is the managerial elite, who operate from a central power base. Executives and senior administrators are largely sheltered from the prospects of redundancy or job insecurity and have the greatest access to permanency, rewarding, well-paid work and career advancement. They are better able to position themselves for further promotion or reclassification. The second tier is employees on permanent or fixed long-term contracts, operating within the core business areas of the organisation. Depending on where they were located in the occupational hierarchy, they may or may not be able to use the recruitment, promotion and reclassification system to position themselves in highly visible projects or business units. The third tier is those on short-term contracts, who face more precarious job prospects by operating on the periphery or in project-related areas, reliant on Commonwealth or contestable funding. Workers most anxious about their employment status are contract workers, particularly low-level, short-term contract administration and lecturing staff. The fourth tier is casual staff who face uncertain futures and the prospect of being the first to lose their jobs if the colleges do not meet training profile. They have the least access to well-paid employment, career prospects and staff development. They are the most vulnerable and powerless.

This study reveals that the four-tiered workforce is not gender neutral. Women are predominantly clustered in the lower levels of management, teaching and administration, and represent a higher proportion of casual and contract staff. They occupy jobs that are less well paid, have lower status and little power. The study exposes the gendered barriers to job security and career advancement, and reveals perceptions of unfairness and inequality between the way women and men are treated. For female administrative staff, their failure to gain reclassification was an important instance of gender discrimination. This particularly invidious form of gender inequity operated to block their advancement while being used to further reward those at senior levels.

These findings are consistent with research, which concludes that TAFE disadvantages women in its recruitment practices (Blackmore & Angwin, 1997; Blackmore & Sachs, 2003; Pocock 1987, 1988). Employment policy in practice (as opposed to theoretical rules set out in public sector standards or award agreements)
leads to levels of discrimination that appear to be neutral but in fact discriminate against women (Bacchi, 1996). Systemic discrimination is evident when women are disadvantaged by being clustered in specific jobs (such as low level administration). Within the TAFE workforce, the predominance of women recruited on contract and in casual employment (as their primary job) and employed at the lowest levels of the salary scales is evidence of systemic discrimination.

A key finding was that being in low-paid work or having the perception of being underpaid directly impacted on women’s and men’s sense of well-being and self efficacy (ACIRRT, 1999; Bandura, 1995). Lecturers, in particular, thought the organisation sent a loud, clear message that they were not valued, nor their work of teaching. They thought the organisation demeaned their qualifications, positioned them on the margins and viewed them as less capable than managers. Equally significant was the perception that the organisational structure and occupational hierarchy operated on a dual-track in which employees either pursued an academic or management route. Within the dual-track structure some people were apprenticed or mentored to find their way. Others operating on the periphery of the organisation, both metaphorically and structurally, were left to figure out the employment system on their own.

End Notes

1 The situation for contract staff changed dramatically in late 2002 when the Labour government was elected. Premier Geoff Gallop announced that the use of fixed-term contracts of employment would be changed in the public sector. It would be restricted to the Senior Executive Service and “those circumstances where a position is genuinely not of an ongoing nature or is subject to limitations associated with external funding” (Premier’s Circular, 2002, p. 1). The government’s policy enabled staff who had worked in the college for a period of five years to apply for tenure.

2 It is interesting to note that the human resource manager’s job was reclassified again to a level 8 director’s job in 2003, even though the government’s agenda was to downsize corporate services in colleges and pool them into a new ‘shared services’ organisation.
Chapter 9
Getting Ahead: Attributes for Success

Monitoring student enrolments against training profile targets consumes much of the daily working life in TAFE. Reference to ‘student contact hours’ (SCH) has almost become the organisational salutation: ‘Have you met your SCH target yet?’ Policy interventions, which use crude statistical tools as performance measures of the VET system, create pressure to achieve a narrow set of outcomes. Interventions which change the relationships and role of managers and teaching staff move the culture to favour compliance and accountability over innovation and professional judgement. As TAFE colleges adopt the procedures and tools of neoliberalism, they change the social relations in the workplace and create a new workplace culture which values different kinds of attributes in its staff. As such, those showing an affinity to the economic rationalist agenda and demonstrating characteristics aligned to corporate managerialism are rewarded in TAFE.

Schofield (2003), in her address at the Australian College of Educators Conference, stated that a focus on the bottom line has distorted the role of VET in Australia. She claims that educators, faced with relentless efficiency targets and measures, were contributing to the weakness of the VET system by losing their commitment to educative values:

> So-called progressive educators fail to understand the emancipatory benefits of some forms of VET. Educators have not pursued the concept of vocation education as active, reflective problem solving based on scientific enquiry and learning by doing. Thus they have left a vacuum in which narrow vocationalism without a liberal, critical dimension has prevailed (p. 5).

Many lecturers and some senior academic managers interviewed in this study would claim that Schofield is blaming the wrong people. It is not ‘educators’ but ‘managerialists’ who determine educational policy and define the scope of vocational training. In fact, many respondents claimed it was their ‘emancipatory orientation’ (Habermas, 1986) and belief in a broad liberal vocational education that
was making their working life difficult. It was a belief in the centrality of quality teaching and learning that was a major obstacle in their getting ahead in the system.

This chapter reveals that the language and practices of neoliberalism are seductive. It shows how the ground rules for recognition and a new type of success are conveyed. To some extent, it shows how individuals who adopt the rules assuage their conscience and limit their consciousness (Davies, 1996). It presents participants’ perceptions of ‘getting ahead’ and catalogues the attributes for success from the perspective of executives, senior staff, lecturers and administrative staff. Participants in the study were asked two successive questions related to who got ahead in the organisation, and the attributes and characteristics of those who did and did not succeed. Their responses illustrate that the language of success reflects the ‘hegemony’ of neoliberal discourse and the internal discourse of institutions (Foucault, 1982). The language of success circulated throughout the organisation with remarkable consistency.

**Executive Views**

A third of this chapter describes executives’ views on the essential capabilities and attributes required to get ahead in TAFE. Even though they were a small sample in the study, executives played a major role in determining the skills and abilities that were required for future success, and the types of people who were recognised, rewarded or promoted.

Executives were quite confident in the rationality, fairness and merit of the recruitment, selection and promotion system. Their responses indicated a self-assured assessment of the attributes and characteristics needed for getting ahead. Executives suggested that people got ahead because of their achievements, initiative, personal qualities and ability to fit into the organisational culture. Generally, executives defined getting ahead in terms of obtaining positions of power and influence and climbing the corporate ladder. The attributes endorsed most often by the executive fell into the following four broad categories: result orientation, taking the initiative, being ‘street-smart’ and strategic and having good communication skills. Table 9.1 illustrates the type of responses elicited. Most made more than one category of response. Some responses overlapped into more than one category, but were categorised based on the emphasis given by the respondent.
Table 9.1 Attributes Required to Get Ahead: Executive Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Executive Responses</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Result Orientation</strong></td>
<td>Solid track record/perseverance. Achievement focussed/target conscious.</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accountable/reliable and hard working.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Willingness to go the extra mile every time.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highly motivated/extra commitment.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Prepared to be accountable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Taking the Initiative</strong></td>
<td>Confidence/courage. Innovative and entrepreneurial.</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proactive/prepared to take a risk.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Forward looking, open minded.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Lateral thinker/look for new ideas.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Enthusiasm (with a sense of shared vision).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Creative, pretty imaginative.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Try something different/embrace change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Show leadership/drive change.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Street-Smart and Strategic</strong></td>
<td>Quick on their feet/adapt in order to survive.</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Knowing when and when not to speak.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Astute/look to the big picture.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Take a commercial focus.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Highly adaptable/responsive/flexible.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aligned to policy and prevailing ideology.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use political nous.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Envisage future trends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communicative</strong></td>
<td>Team player.</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Put the team ahead of their own ego.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Relate with external customers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Work across sectors.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Use others’ strengths.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>(53)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Result Orientation**

The most common criteria cited for getting ahead related to achieving results and producing expected outcomes (19 responses or 37%). Executives believed that a person’s track record was the most important element in their ability to get ahead in the organisation. They made a clear distinction between ‘putting in the hours’ and ‘getting the job done’. There was little recognition given to those who had the car parked at the campus at seven o’clock at night if they were only producing mediocre results.

*People who get ahead are performers. They get the job done and are willing to be on committees. I don’t think it is automatic that if you stay back till seven o’clock that people are going to notice or comment positively on that. There’s a certain bit of competition of seeing who stays back the latest but other people say ‘look, bloody hell, I got an email from so and so at seven o’clock at night,*
what on earth’s he doing there so late?’ So there’s a certain scepticism about working long hours. I think if you can give somebody a job and they do it without too much fuss, they can get ahead. (Executive, EM5)

Five executives claimed that a solid performance related to people being able to meet targets and being accountable over a period of time. One explained that performance needed to be coupled with enthusiasm and channelled to meet corporate goals.

I think one thing that is important is enthusiasm. That must be there. Enthusiasm that shares a vision, shares the focus of the college. A preparedness to be accountable for the goals of the college. Conscious of meeting targets. Looks at the bigger picture. Understands that we have to take a commercial focus. We have to think outside the traditional square of TAFE and be prepared to put the hours in to do that because you can’t compartmentalise the roles now. The difference is in performance and that is seen over a period of time. If someone has enthusiasm without corporate knowledge, they are like a chook with its head cut off, running around in circles and no use to anyone. Enthusiasm must be coupled with a sense of shared vision. I keep using that term, but I think it’s important and that vision keeps getting topped up and keeps changing. (Executive, EF7)

For the promise of getting ahead, individuals are required to cleave to the organisation’s vision and embrace the corporate goals. They are expected to play an active role in meeting set ends and to do so with enthusiasm. The stress on ‘sharing the vision’ is a hallmark of neoliberal imperialism, according to Gee, Hull and Lankshear (1996).

All executives made reference to getting the job done and doing more as a critical element of success. They believed that hard work and ‘going the extra mile’ would be rewarded by the system.

You are always looking for somebody who is going to do a bit more. The days have gone when you actually do a day’s job and that’s all. I think organisations can’t afford to operate on that basis anymore because you are always looking for somebody who is going to do that little bit extra. I don’t mean looking for somebody to do an extra ten hours. I mean we are looking for somebody who is prepared to put the hard yards in to make the job successful… It is the people who get things done and those who are willing to take on extra work, and tend to get into different committees, that have better opportunities. They then have better CVs and get the chances to get ahead… You have to be willing to step forward and say ‘yes, I’ll do extra, I’ll take on more’ even though there’s not an immediate natural gain in doing it. (Executive, EM5)

Executives were unconsciously expressing their expectation that people should work long, family-unfriendly hours without extra pay and show extraordinary commitment to the organisation. While executives condoned total commitment to the organisation, there was no suggestion that there should be reciprocal commitment
to individuals. In fact, they suggested that individuals needed to be eager to do more for the organisation even if there was ‘not an immediate natural gain in doing it’. This illustrates that surviving and advancing in TAFE relies on individuals voluntarily complying with the all-encompassing demands of the ‘greedy organisation’ (Coser, 1974).

**Taking the Initiative**

The second most common response related to people’s ability to think creatively, take the initiative and make things happen (15 responses or 28%). These attributes focus on conceptual abilities and proactive inclinations, to see opportunities in the mind’s eye and act. Confidence, courage and initiative were particularly critical elements in getting ahead. Confident people were able to make decisions and stick to them and create an atmosphere to inspire others to follow their decisions. The managing director of one of the colleges insisted that people who got ahead were “confident to make good, but sometimes unpopular decisions, and were not preoccupied with being liked” (Executive, EM20). Fourteen executives talked about ‘initiative’, ‘innovation’ or the willingness to ‘have a go’. The following three examples are typical.

*I think people who are willing to have a go get ahead. Now, I’m pretty pleased about that because in previous cultures, people who got ahead did so because they had been there the longest or were the most aggressive or the noisiest. I don’t think that happens now. Those that get ahead are pretty imaginative and are willing to try something different and they’re pretty sincere in what they are about.* (Executive, EF9)

*I think initiative is rewarded. People who are in a position where there is growth and change are given more opportunity to get ahead. Initiative is rewarded but it must be presented in a way that’s not confrontational. In my experience, perhaps a public service mentality, people do not like conflict and feel challenged if they are made to feel uncomfortable. I think that is true of most senior managers… people say, ‘I like a good argument and a good stoush’, but in my experience that is not what happens around here.* (Executive, EM5)

*I look for people who are innovative and work within the guidelines and frameworks, but who push the boundaries and say to me, ‘I reckon this is what we should be doing’.* (Executive, EM6)

Six executives asserted that people had to be prepared to ‘push boundaries’, ‘move out of their comfort zones’ and ‘take a risk with something unfamiliar’. Sungaila (1990) argues that new, second order changes can be achieved through small initiatives, fluctuations and vision. Five of the executives appeared to believe, as Sungaila asserts, that the creative initiative of a single individual who is prepared to
stand her or his ground can be enormously effective. However, as the following examples show, there can be a high price to pay for moving into uncharted waters.

People have to be prepared to take a risk, not a professional risk but an intellectual and emotional one by stepping outside of their comfort zone. I think the biggest issue is for people to be able to recognise that you can’t move into relatively uncharted waters, not only personally, but the college to some extent, and not make a few mistakes. A lot of these compliance requirements and regulations are all new to everybody, especially related to the commercial world, and you need to be prepared to make a couple of blues and learn from them and move on from there. (Executive, EM17)

This person was referring to the number of new regulations that have impacted on TAFE colleges in recent years, in particular, those which relate to the delegation of ministerial authority to college governing councils and college executives. Executives claimed that people must push the accountability and policy boundaries without overstepping the jurisdiction line in the sand. Four made references to juggling the need for enterprising and innovative behaviours with accountability and compliance.

You’ve got to be able to step outside of set boundaries, without actually overstepping the mark, and be careful not to tread on other people’s toes because there are boundaries of responsibility. But if you stay purely in your own JDF [Job Description and Function] boundaries, you would have trouble meeting some of the college’s needs and targets. (Executive, EM17)

The pressure to be entrepreneurial is manifest. Colleges must fund 20% of their operating costs with commercial activity. The difficulties of doing so within a complex accountability framework was illustrated by two respondents who described how executives from two colleges had been deeply embarrassed when faced with highly publicised non-compliance and adverse Auditor General reports. Lurking behind the new market-driven world of the TAFE college were confusing rules and regulations and a plethora of government acts that had tripped many of the early pace-setters and the unwary. Executives were well aware of the battle scars and falls from grace of colleagues in sister TAFE colleges.

Street-Smart and Strategic

Twelve executives placed a great deal of importance on being street-smart (22%). That is, those who got ahead were politically astute and could sense the mood swings, read the political environment and change according to government policy. Being strategic and street-smart meant having excellent analytical skills, tacit knowledge of the system and a ‘finger on the pulse’ to predict the next wave of VET
ideology and government priorities. People who had the ability to see the next wave of reform moved strategically to place themselves in the right place at the right time to take advantage of the new political tune or training ideology. They had an intuitive sense of key directions and an ability to read the winds of change.

*People need to be politically astute. They need to know who their clients are, both internal and external. They need to have good, what I would call, 'over the horizon' skills as part of being flexible. They understand future directions of policy and are able to contribute to those future directions.* (Executive, EM20)

Understanding the government system and looking over the horizon to the next wave of change were key attributes for getting ahead. The emphasis was on getting information about government policy directions before others to gain a competitive edge. There was no suggestion that individuals should filter and assess such information using the lens of educational ethics or social responsibility. A few suggested that those who hankered after the educative philosophy of the past were particularly unsuitable for getting ahead. Several executives stated that it was critical for aspirants to align themselves with the corporate goals of the organisation and behave consistently with its strategic direction. Those who ‘bucked the system’ were seen as mavericks who needed to be managed rather than voices with a legitimate alternative viewpoint.

*I think in all bureaucracies, the executive group likes to see somebody who conforms. If you are confrontational or make people uncomfortable, they don’t like working with you. I think conformity is a critical element in getting ahead… So I don’t think there’s as much of a glass ceiling operating but rather a ‘conformity ceiling’ and some people are precluded from rising up the ranks because of their inability to stay quiet.* (Executive, EM5)

Although executives claimed they admired people who were original in thought, they were critical of those that spoke their minds or openly opposed senior management. A contradiction begins to emerge when executives argue, on the one hand, that aspirants need to be risk takers, innovative and creative, but on the other hand, that they are not to rock the boat or criticise the system or management.

**Communicative**

Surprisingly, only seven responses (13%) suggested communication skills were important attributes for getting ahead. Considering the number of job applications stating communication skills as a key skill, and the courses and management books that debate the subject, the low number of responses relating to communication was
unexpected. Good communication skills included high-level interpersonal skills, such as negotiation and diplomacy, but emphasised the rules of engagement.

*I think you have to change the way you manage your interpersonal connections to be successful. You need to adjust your style to the situation you’re in, keeping at all times in your mind the overall goal or outcome that you’re trying to achieve for the organisation. I think you have to put the organisation first… I think that’s the issue. When you are in a situation of conflict or negotiation you sometimes have to push down your personal reaction to it and think it through and say ‘okay, it’s no good me getting angry about this, the organisation has a particular outcome in mind, what can I do as a tool of the organisation to make sure I get an outcome?’ At certain times you just don’t say anything because it will aggravate a situation and it’s not in the interests of the organisation; so it’s a matter of learning not to push your own values; it’s a matter of becoming more controlled in the way you do things.* (Executive, EM14)

This executive favoured people perceiving themselves as ‘a tool of the organisation’, subjugating their values and ‘becoming more controlled’. Implicit in his account is a politics of speech. He suggests that individuals need to carefully police their statements, crafting what to say and how to say it. This instrumental view on the process of contributing to organisational life is calculating and dispassionate. This same executive described the art of communication in terms of political astuteness.

*The attribute I think is important is political awareness and nous. I think this is increasingly important. I’ve had discussions with middle managers who aspire to level 8 and 9 directors positions, and what I always tell them is that it’s quite different at the higher levels and there needs to be a shift, not so much in thinking but a shift in how one conducts oneself in an interpersonal and diplomatic sense. So I think there needs to be political nous. The nous of knowing when to shut up, the nous of knowing when to speak, how much to say, how to deal with the flow of information and who to lobby, canvass and get support from prior to acting.* (Executive, EM14)

This executive is advocating general constraint and a veneer of compliance while suggesting using informal power to get ahead (as analysed in Chapter 6), and advises that to achieve this individuals need to network, cultivate mentors and understand how to play the power game. References to genuine care, authentic communication capabilities and interpersonal skills were uncommon. Whitehead and Moodley (1999) claim that executives engage in self-deception in their attempts to subjugate the personal for control of events and situations, and over others.

The least common response was in relation to teamwork. This was most unexpected, as the emphasis on ‘soft skills’ had been central to the work of the ministerial taskforce on leadership and management (Karpin Report, 1995) and had been espoused in the management literature, VET policy and NCVER studies, including such initiatives as front-line management. Only two responses suggested
that being a team player or being able to ‘fit in’ was important. The lack of references to teamwork was at first surprising considering the “paradigm shift to flatter structures, teamwork and empowerment as a critical means to achieving high performance” (Karpin Report, 1995, p. 4). Likewise, Callan (2001) analysed the attributes needed by senior and front-line managers, and found interpersonal relationships and liaising effectively were key characteristics. However, as pointed out by Wajcman (2000), the shift to a soft management culture was rhetorical rather than real.

In analysing the executive view, the language of success has a narrow range of behaviours that are condoned. The emphasis is on fitting in to the relations of ruling. There are no references to ethical or participatory decision-making, critical thinking or systematic evaluation. Individuals are expected to change by adopting new ways of thinking, talking, valuing, acting and being in the workplace regardless of the contradictions. This undermines the ideals of teamwork and collegiality, repudiates alternative viewpoints as naive and its focus on tangible outcomes obscures the long-term threats to career satisfaction.

Rooted in an eternal round of conquest and control, executives’ language of success is one of competition, takeover, thinking strategically and overcoming obstacles. Their responses affirm masculine values of task orientation, performance outcomes, pragmatism, strategy and political savvy. In this respect, the attributes of success reflect an entrepreneurial discourse of management and masculinity (Kerfoot & Whitehead, 2000). Such a goal-driven discourse conjures images of war or political tactics where the key attributes of the generals and foot soldiers alike must be an unswerving commitment to the cause. The underlying tactic is gaining compliance and minimising any countermoves to the main game.

**Senior Staff Views**

The attitudes of senior administrators, academic program managers, team leaders and principal lecturers were similar to that of executives. Their sense of identity was caught up in the process of pursuit and outcomes rather than with a way of being. Their responses highlighted the tensions and contradictions in trying to fit in and get ahead in TAFE. Table 9.2 captures the attributes of success from the perspective of senior staff.
Table 9.2 Attributes of Success: Senior Staff Responses  Percentages and (Numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Senior Staff Responses</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Peacock-like Performance</td>
<td>Adaptive/ability to change/flexible. Court and attract the right people. Confident/competitive. Persuasive/communicate well/prepared to have a go. Energetic/showy/highly-motivated performers.</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penguin-like Conformity</td>
<td>Conforming/compliant/accountable. Loyal to the organisation/supportive. ‘Toe the line’ when political to do so. Align themselves/agree with directions.</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careerist</td>
<td>Personal ambition/goal centred. Make their career ambitions known. Aspire for promotion/look for opportunities. Volunteer to do/manage projects. Self-promoters/determined to advance. Have clout/influence. Hang around the executive.</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perseverance</td>
<td>Record of performance. Thick skin/‘stickability’. Hard work/time and commitment. Quiet achievers can be recognised.</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Strategic Networker</td>
<td>Great timing: entrepreneurial/over the horizon outlook. Create your own opportunities/be proactive. Analytical/reading the wind/problem solvers. Curry favours/tit-for-tat strategy/intuitive. Align oneself to the powerful/or to priority projects.</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Knowledge of the system/corporate knowledge. Depth and breadth of experience. Length of service. Taking opportunities when they come up.</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team player</td>
<td>Supportive/encouraging/recognising talents in others. Delegate/mentoring/guidance.</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Percentages</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>100%</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Responses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>(66)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Peacock-like Performance**

Senior staff thought that the most critical factor for getting ahead was adaptability, flexibility and performance (14 responses or 21%). People who got ahead had the confidence and ability to transform themselves and to adapt to a changing political, social and economic environment. Successful people knew how to attract attention, knew when to turn on a show, and were capable of startling and captivating performances. Individual performances had to be at the right time and right place. Timing, style, and audience were crucial.
While a solid performance record was an important characteristic of getting ahead, senior staff thought that those who got the most respect were those who brought in external funds, regardless of the value of the work. Senior staff claimed that if individuals wanted to get ahead they had to attract large tenders and grants and increase the commercial arm of their study area. Several staff admitted being motivated by fear of ‘being in the red’ and feared being labelled a poor financial manager of their areas. Economic survival coopted senior staff into performativity and entrepreneurialism. This was reinforced by an organisational narrative that seemed to be circulating through the colleges that if a particular study area wasn’t economically viable, the state government would withdraw funding.

**Penguin-like Conformity**

Given the significance of performativity, it appears paradoxical that the next most common response was conformity (12 responses or 18%). Senior staff suggested toeing the organisational or policy line and keeping a low profile were critical. The paradox is resolved by one respondent’s suggestion that individuals need to know when to be a ‘peacock’ and when to be a ‘penguin’, with the former focussed on drawing attention to one’s own performance and the latter focused on keeping a low profile amongst peers. This respondent, a program manager, explained from personal experience how she had learnt to do both. She had tried to get things done and lobbied hard for support but felt she was being ostracized for her stance. She decided to lie low for a while to see how this would be interpreted.

> I’m a peacock. And the peacocks are the ones who like to do entrepreneurial things and creative things, and go outside the system. Penguins toe the line and fit the suit of bureaucracy. I’ve jumped back from being a peacock to being a penguin for a little while. So for the last three months I’ve toed the line and I’ve kept my mouth shut thinking it might make a change. And it has been amazing what a change it has made. As soon as I started conforming again, I was seen as alright, I was okay. The organisation wants you to do entrepreneurial things, but only when it suits them. As long as I don’t put my hand up for the accolades, I’m okay. As long as I don’t question their decisions or show that I disagree in any way, I’ll get ahead. (Program manager, SAFP6)

Covey (1990) claims that male and female managers learn to live with paradoxical situations, hidden agendas and contradictory rhetoric:

> [Executives] say they value democracy, but they reward autocracy. They say they value openness and glasnost, but they behave in ways that value hidden agendas and politicking (p. 168).
By adapting to executives’ expectations and value systems rather than just their rhetoric, senior staff were reacting to the informal power exercised by the managerial elite. Academic managers’ understood that to get ahead they had to understand the subtle, complex and confusing processes of positive and negative power. To succeed in TAFE, they had to understand the micropolitics influencing executives’ views and behaviours, and ensure they reacted to the minutiae of critical social relations.

**Careerist**

A similar resolution of the tension between performance and compliance was apparent in the third most common response. Senior staff thought it critical to be very ambitious, but more importantly to ensure one’s career ambitions were well known so that there was more chance of being coached, mentored or given opportunities to advance or broaden their experiences (11 responses or 17%). They felt that too many people had a reactive approach to their careers and failed to see the opportunities that change provided.

*People who don’t get ahead have great difficulty adapting to change and challenges, but that’s life these days. Some people don’t cope very well, and often they become casualties unfortunately. So inflexibility, being opposed to change will not help them advance their careers. Rather than looking for opportunities to contribute to new directions, they generally take a position that blames management… a ‘them and us’ attitude.* (Corporate manager, GMP2)

The recurring motif was that those who took a narrow, literal, technocratic or instrumental view of their job generally failed to get ahead. They operated within a restricted view of their obligations to the organisation and worked strictly to their role as defined by their job description or salary level. Senior staff stated that these people had rigid, traditional approaches to their work roles, rules and procedures, and failed to adapt quickly to changes in the system.

*People who don’t get ahead cling to traditional methods of doing things, hanker after the old days and have a negative outlook. They are often sticklers for the rules and that sort of thing. Because the new system moves too fast for that… they are left behind as the world rushes past.* (Corporate manager, GMP1)

Their responses suggest that the onus for adapting to change rests with individuals, and that the organisation does not have a responsibility to support the careers of people who are slow to adjust. Such an attitude reflects indifference to ‘the losers’ in the ‘new work order’ who are unable to adapt fast enough in a hypercompetitive world (Gee, Hull & Lanksheer, 1996). It reflects that the human costs of
neoliberalism in TAFE are similar to that of the private sector. This is illustrated by the following example where the CEO of Intel Corporation said to his staff:

You have no choice but to operate in a world shaped by globalisation and the information revolution. There are two options: adapt or die. The new environment dictates two rules: first everything happens faster; second anything that can be done will be done, if not by you, then by someone else, somewhere. Let there be no misunderstanding: these changes lead to a less kind, less gentle and less predictable workplace (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996, p. 155).

**Perseverance**

Both men and women managers thought that perseverance was rewarded (10 responses or 15%). One manager thought that executives looked for people with ‘stickability’, that is, the ability to stick with something regardless of the personal cost.

*In the short time that I’ve been here, I’ve had the chance to see that upper management has the perfect opportunity to see the people with ‘stickability’. What people have to do is prove to upper management that they’ve got what it takes… I think if you are fairly thick-skinned and you persevere at all costs, then you can get ahead. But I do think at a cost.* (Program manager, SAFC2)

Those with less tenacity or those who had a pessimistic or cynical outlook were viewed unfavourably. People who reacted negatively to suggestions for overcoming obstacles were dismissed as the example below illustrates.

*A typical response by some people is ‘We’ve tried that before and it didn’t work so we are not going to try that again’. Or they’ve had a go at something and didn’t succeed so they refuse to have another go. People who block good ideas or always react with ‘no, that won’t work’… People who are not open to change or suggestions don’t get ahead. People who are less optimistic, cynics don’t get ahead.* (Principal lecturer, SAF2)

One team leader claimed that a lack of perseverance at work reflected a person’s outlook on life and that such an outlook decreased their chance to get ahead.

*I think people who easily give up on something are the ones who are already disenchanted with life. In my experience those who get disenchanted have a negative outlook - I’d term it almost a self-fulfilling prophecy - they have a view that the world is against them, the workplace and management is against them. And you’ll find it is reflected in their behaviour and how effective they are in the workplace as well. So there are attitudinal things related to persistence and a positive outlook, and generally that is being optimistic about career opportunities.* (Team Leader, SAMP3)

Such an analysis reflects the views of writers of personal development. Covey (1990) asserts that a proactive approach to career planning and work, and a positive outlook on life are the habits of highly successful people:
Reactive people focus on the weakness of other people, the problems in the environment and circumstances over which they have no control. Their focus results in blaming and accusing attitudes, reactive language, and increased feelings of victimisation. The negative energy generated by that focus, combined with neglect in areas they could do something about, causes their circle of influence to shrink (p. 83).

Covey asserts that people’s attitudes to their work can account for their success. On the other hand, if people feel so alienated by the culture, disenchanted by management practices and cannot accept the ideology of economic rationalism as applied to education, then it is perhaps understandable (and perhaps a survival tactic) to withdraw.

**Strategic**

At the same time as demonstrating perseverance, being strategic in one’s alliances and judicious in choosing which projects to undertake was necessary to get ahead (8 responses or 12%). Senior staff recognised that while a record of performance was important, it was critical that they had participated in projects or initiatives that were high profile and successful. They understood that to be associated with failed or highly controversial projects would seriously hamper career progress.

> To get ahead you have to really push the boundaries of what you do. You have to manage entrepreneurial initiatives or proactively engage in state and national projects. Furthermore, you must network widely across the state, not just in the training sector, and be part of national committees wherever possible. I have made a conscious decision to move on from adult literacy projects and to engage in more strategic ones, such as pathways between the schools and TAFE colleges. (Coordinator, SAMP1)

This coordinator was reflecting the popular belief that strategic thinking could enable individuals to develop career planning strategies in the midst of change, while coping with an uncertain future.

**Experience**

Less widely mentioned, but still seen as important, was having appropriate experience. Women, more than men, thought having depth and breadth of experience was essential, while men thought it important to take opportunities when they came up (6 responses or 9%). Women managers understood that a ‘glass ceiling’ might inhibit their progress, preventing them gaining the ‘right’ kind of experiences, whereas men made no such comments. Still (1993) states the experience factor gives “credence to the fact that women managers not only have to
work harder than their male counterparts but regard their promotions as well-earned rather than the result of circumstances” (p. 93).

**Team Player**

While a solid performance record, adaptability and ambition were critical attributes for success, senior staff also acknowledged that being a team player was highly desirable in most instances (5 responses or 7%). They suggested that those who did not get ahead were too individualistic. One team leader stated that while lateral thinking, independence and initiative were highly commendable traits, there was a fine line between innovators and mavericks. He claimed that some people were too unconventional to get ahead.

*I think people who don’t get ahead are those that are seen to be a bit eccentric. You never quite know what they are going to do. Too often they go off with some hare-brained ideas.* (Team Leader, SAMC2)

Like mavericks, territorial people were unlikely to be good team players. Territorial people keenly sought the protection of organisational silos. They became aggressive as structures or policy changed, as it disturbed their sense of place or power. Some used the context of competition to aggressively undermine teamwork and organisational cohesiveness.

*Some people have a very narrow view of the organisation. They operate with a compartmentalised view of the world and have a constricted idea of teamwork. They keenly protect resources in their own section but do not engage others or share resources or expertise. They often undermine or actively sabotage other section’s plans, activities or projects. Sometimes I think they are jealous.* (Program manager, SAFC2)

She stated that people who operated negatively to ‘outsiders’, spoke belittlingly of others and tried to develop collusive environments would not get ahead.

In reflecting upon the attributes for getting ahead, most of the senior managers and all the principal lecturers commented that they were confronted, at a fundamental level, with the issue of personal goals and ends, of culture and core values. They had to decide to what extent they were prepared to sacrifice their personal values and beliefs in order to succeed.
Lecturer Views

ANTA (2004) policy makers suggest that lecturers must take on new attributes, roles and ways of working as VET ‘practitioners’ in order to be relevant in the new century:

The reforms have fundamentally transformed the orientation of public VET providers away from education and training towards business and service and markedly shifted the roles of managers and practitioners in the process... they are asked to work in new, more integrated and flexible ways, and undertake tasks not previously associated with their role (p. 2).

Some researchers and the AEU challenge the assumptions behind ANTA pronouncements and its views on the role of practitioners (Forward, 2000; Mulcahy, 2003). They suggest that moving away from education and training towards business deprofessionalises the role of lecturers as VET educators. Others attempt to reflect the specialist role of trainers or lecturers by referring to them as “specialist learning facilitators”, “knowledge management specialists” or “assessment and credentialling specialists” (Kell et al, 1997, p. 5).

Some describe the skills required by VET educators outside of the actual context of educational practice (Callan, 2001; Falk & Smith, 2003). For example, Childs (2000) emphasises communicative and negotiation skills (such as understanding the culture of workplaces, engaging in small business enterprise-focussed development that is responsive to community and regional development needs, developing risk-taking behaviours, and working across a diverse range of seamless educational and organisational contexts). More recently, researchers and others have renamed lecturers as ‘VET professionals’ in an attempt to reflect their role as educational and vocational experts (Dickie, 2004). Forward (2000) claims that there is no strategy in place to specify the attributes and skills required in the recruitment or professional development process of VET professionals. Similarly, she asserts that there is no strategy to remunerate them appropriately for their new roles.

Interviews with 34 lecturers garnered 64 responses on the attributes required to get ahead. These were grouped into four categories. The first attribute was being ideologically attuned to VET policy and embracing the competency based approach to training and assessment. The second was understanding how the training system worked and what employers valued. The third was to become entrepreneurial and display commercial skills. Lastly, they had to be dedicated to students and use innovative teaching and learning strategies.
Table 9.3 Attributes of Success: Lecturer Responses Percentages and (Numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Lecturer Responses</th>
<th>Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ideologically Attuned</td>
<td>Show excellence in using training packages. Accept the discourse/pedagogy of</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>competency training. Speak the new training language. Get the required training</td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>qualifications.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems Savvy</td>
<td>Do administration work. Understand the systems and what is required. Be familiar</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with the structures and policy directions. Adopt the ethos of management. Keep up</td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>with industry developments. Be involved in industry associations.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial Skills</td>
<td>Become involved in commercial activities. Trial new technologies (on-line learning)</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Write and win tenders.</td>
<td>(14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dedication</td>
<td>Energy/passion/commitment/work long hours. Keep afloat/meet strenuous expectations.</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transform students’ lives/put students’ needs first.</td>
<td>(10)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentages</td>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td>(64)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Ideologically Attuned to VET Policy**

Predominantly, success was framed in terms of the ability to work within the ideological framework of industry-led training and be recognised by peers, managers and employers as an outstanding, well qualified lecturer (22 responses or 35%). Eight lecturers claimed that there was pressure to gain more qualifications (certificate and diploma in workplace assessment) just to be able to do their jobs. Many lecturers were completing a degree in vocational education to improve their professional standing. Lecturers, unlike the other cohorts, questioned the definition of 'getting ahead' and rejected the associated connotations of promotion and climbing the rungs of the hierarchy. The term 'getting ahead' meant completely different things to satisfied teachers.

*I think I’m successful. I love teaching and go out of my way to help my students. I know when I was planning my career, I wanted to get ahead, but not get to the top. I wanted to get ahead in terms of teaching expertise, which is why I went off to do my degree.* (Lecturer, AFP2)

Lecturers, like senior academic managers, stated that it was fatal to speak one’s mind and openly oppose the national training strategy and its associated reforms. If they publicly contradicted senior management’s view of the training world, then they knew that they committed career suicide.

*The reason that two program managers did not get their contracts renewed was because they questioned. They questioned policy and they spoke up. I know*
this is true because I was there. One of them was very articulate and knowledgeable and he actually moved on and got a level 8 director’s position [in another organisation], so that just shows you that he was appreciated. He had to move completely out of TAFE to get somewhere. (Lecturer, SAFP3)

Lecturers who speak out don’t get ahead. And the brown nosing that goes on. You’ve got to be doing and saying the right things. (Lecturer, AFP8)

System Savvy

Getting ahead meant being ‘system savvy’ and understanding what was valued in the organisation (18 responses or 28%). This meant that it was important to do additional work to teaching, predominantly administration and working with employers. All conceded that management favourably viewed those who contributed to the organisation beyond their teaching duties. Although lecturers understood management expectations, they were very frustrated by the way increasing workloads and demands for greater productivity eroded teaching practice, quality of life and career satisfaction. Lecturers stated that they faced increasing demands to be involved in administration and non-teaching activities just to stay in favour, and that they had to do excessive amounts of this to get ahead.

Contract lecturers, more than any other group, knew that the price of a renewed contract was meek acceptance of the strategic direction of the college and being involved in non-teaching activities. They felt pressured to contribute to the organisation, not through dedicated teaching or quiet achievement, but through projects that cast the college into the limelight.

Contract lecturers don’t get ahead unless they do something to get noticed. People say, ‘okay my contract’s going to be up in six months, so I had better start putting myself out there’. So they do nothing for the first two and a half years. They don’t volunteer. They don’t do any outside work. They know all they have to do is get in everybody’s face in the last six months. That’s all they have to do. So you know, they go on cruise control for two and a half years and then do all this stuff in six months and whack it into their resume. (Lecturer, AFC3)

It’s really difficult for contract lecturers to get ahead. You have a one or two year contract if you are lucky and you know you have to do something out of the ordinary to be noticed or to have a chance of a new contract. I guess laziness or ordinariness are characteristics of those who don’t get ahead, and people who speak their mind as well. People who speak their mind generally get ostracised. You learn to have a ‘shut up’ attitude in front of the powers that be. They don’t want people who will ‘ra-ra’ at union meetings. They don’t want people who want to know everything that is going on. They don’t want people who ask questions. They want lots of people like me who just come in, love their teaching, do the admin without moaning and then go home… I’m the perfect staff member because I do want to teach. I am willing to do extra outside teaching and don’t ask for much, and I don’t get involved in office politics. (Lecturer, AFC2)
In this focus group discussion, Lecturer AFC2 explained that she had been in the college for three years and was satisfied with teaching and TAFE. As the discussion progressed and she listened to the stories of her colleagues (only some of whom she knew), she became less certain in her answers and qualified her statements. She commented on the culture as isolationist and was quite amazed at her lack of knowledge of the ‘hidden’ cultures and agendas. Her colleague, who had been involved with TAFE for many years in Victoria, but was a relative newcomer to TAFE in Western Australia, thought management had eroded staff’s sense of belonging and had purposefully dismantled communicative and collegial structures in order to keep people ignorant and production-oriented.

_The words ‘mushroom management’ come to mind. It’s about who gets kept in the dark, who sees the bullshit and who gets fed the crap._ (Lecturer, AMC8)

The discussion continued with comments about the tactics used to keep people ignorant of what was happening in the college and TAFE generally. Several lecturers commented that they were unaware of the committees that existed in TAFE and how to get involved in them. It became clear that one of the characteristics for not getting ahead was ignorance of the communication channels and power networks. Lecturers, as a group, were the least informed about their own organisation and appeared the least knowledgeable about how to succeed and what tactics to use to improve their chances. Their lack of interest or inability to access information, penetrate networks and participate in high-level committees reinforced the technologies of control that existed to perpetuate the divide between academics, management and administration.

**Commercial Skills**

Lecturers accepted that those who wanted to get ahead had to be involved in commercial activities (14 responses or 21%). This involved writing (and winning) tenders or grants, being involved in fee-for-service courses or consultancies, or working in a new, high-profile project team.

_There is no doubt that to be a successful TAFE teacher you have to be committed to your students, but more importantly, you have to be involved in high-profile commercial projects and bring funds or grants into the college._ (Lecturer, AFP1)

Lecturers who were able to access external funds could ‘buy their time’ to do the coordination, workplace liaison or planning for the next semester. Those who could not find appropriate funding had to do the extra work as unpaid overtime. Lecturers
who became involved in the commercial and entrepreneurial side of the college increased their chances of getting ahead but also increased the probability of falling out of favour with their academic colleagues. Four senior academic managers had moved from lecturing positions into short-term project management or study area portfolio management. They spoke about the negative attitudes from some lecturers who saw their move as a betrayal of the teaching fraternity.

There is an unfair perception amongst some teachers that people who want to move into project management are trying to escape teaching. (Lecturer, AMP1)

There was generally a lack of support from teachers for colleagues who wanted to do more than teach, and a sense of disbelief when one of their peers aspired to change career direction or accept a management position.

The general feeling in my department was one of shock horror when I took on the acting role of program manager. They said you can only live to regret it. And so I think that the majority of lecturers, certainly in my department, actively do not pursue a career as a program manager. My staff have told me that the position of program manager is an untenable, impossible position. The quote I heard two days ago was 'I wouldn't do this job because it would take at least 90 hours a week to do'. (Academic manager, SAFC4)

Other lecturers commented that they did not aspire to be program managers as they saw the position as a poisoned chalice. They saw the long hours and work loads as totally unacceptable, and the unattractiveness of the position compounded by the need to change values.

I don’t think the position is attractive at all. The hours are horrendous, it’s all paper work and putting out scrub fires and massaging egos. I get more money than my program manager by working a few hours overtime which I thoroughly enjoy. (Lecturer, AMP6)

Teachers don’t leave the classroom unless they have an orientation to the new ethos of management and speak the new language of training. One of the difficulties the college faces is that when they advertise the position of program manager, they get almost no takers, no applicants from the academic staff, particularly no takers from the senior staff in that teaching area. Program management is the most unattractive position to start off on and it is probably a dead end position. It appears very hard to move out from program manager to somewhere else. (Academic coordinator, SAMP1)

A few lecturers who tried academic manager roles didn’t enjoy the work and opted out of it, preferring teaching positions. Some commented that managers saw their switch back to teaching as a character flaw. Senior lecturing staff generally agreed that management positions were unfulfilling in comparison to teaching and unrewarding in terms of conditions and pay.
Dedication

Lastly, although managers rarely spoke about the attributes of ‘good teachers’ (such as dedication, energy, passion or innovative delivery styles), teachers themselves believed these were the attributes that gave them the edge in their jobs (10 responses or 16%). They understood that dedication would bring them satisfaction and a sense of quiet achievement. Being successful was transforming student’s lives or helping them on their career path.

*Making a difference to students’ lives is getting ahead. I am very proud of my achievements and never want to leave teaching.* (Lecturer, AFP1)

Five lecturers, on the other hand, thought that dedication and teaching excellence were not the attributes required to get ahead. They explained that no matter how much time they devoted to their students, no matter how innovative their teaching practice or how cleverly they ‘unpacked’ a training package, they would not progress. They claimed that dedication to teaching and a student-centred approach to work were attributes not valued by the organisation.

*You would like to think that TAFE Australia is attracting highly skilled professional men and women to pass on knowledge and skills to the up-and-coming members of our society. But this is not happening. Colleges are not looking for excellence in teaching - that appears to be a last consideration. They certainly don’t value or insist on teaching qualifications.* (Team Leader, SAMC2)

It was TAFE teachers’ enthusiasm for teaching and their commitment to their students that drove them in the system. Those who were dedicated to teaching considered themselves highly successful, but these had become more personal rather than organisational criteria.

Administrative Staff Views

The 12 administrative staff who were interviewed gave 23 responses about the attributes for getting ahead. They described four main variables that enabled individuals to succeed: conformity to management expectations, length of service and contacts in the training system, confidence, and ambition.
Table 9.4 Attributes of Success: Administrative Staff Responses  Percentages and (Numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Descriptors</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Conformity            | Reflect peak management ideas.  
                        | Say the right things.  
                        | Agree with what is being done. | 35%     |
|                       |                                                                            |          |
| Length of Service and | Aligned to somebody who has power.  
                        | Be mentored and supported.  
                        | Hang around the executive.  
                        | It’s not what you know, it’s who you know.  
                        | Be part of the boys’ club /helps to have a beer gut. | 26%     |
| Contacts              |                                                                            |          |
| Confidence            | Be prepared to have a go.  
                        | Accept ‘acting’ positions.  
                        | You need to have balls to get ahead in the system. | 22%     |
| Ambition              | Be competitive/Push their own cause the most.  
                        | Loud/Self opinionated.Make the most noise.  
                        | Selfish/ambitious/aggressive/ruthless. | 17%     |
| Total percentage      |                                                                            | 100%     |
| Total responses       |                                                                            | (23)     |

Conformity

As Table 9.4 illustrates, the most common response was that individuals needed to conform to the prevailing ethos and reflect management ideas (8 responses or 35%). People were generally skeptical about being able to advance without conforming to the system. Some believed that the new recruitment strategy, based on merit selection, led to homogeneity and exacerbated a monoculture of management style.

*In the seniority selection system of years gone by, you had a lot more individualistic approaches to management. You got ahead because you had done your time and you knew the system couldn’t get back at you as it can now. It meant you had a lot more diversity. Of course, you had some people who weren’t performing well, but the majority performed in different ways. Under the merit system, by writing the selection criteria, you pre-select the type of person you want.* (Administrative staff, GMP1)

The respondents claimed that on many occasions ‘expressions of interest’ were called for from staff for short-term relieving or acting positions when someone went on leave or took a temporary position elsewhere. Participants believed these positions were generally already earmarked before the ‘expressions of interest’ hit the email system.

*The grapevine is very strong in TAFE. You hear a lot through the grapevine and it does seem as though people know who is going to get a job. Once a job or expression of interest comes out, people already know - through the grapevine - who is expected to get it. It always appears predetermined, so you think ‘Why bother to apply? So and so is going to get it’. (Administrative staff, GFP2)*
Both men and women stated that managers tended to select people who reflected their own qualities and conformed to their values. They stressed that ‘comfort cloning’ ensured replication of conventions and norms.

*I think the people who progress tend to be of the same type as the executives in the organisation. People tend to choose workers who are similar to them and I think it’s a feature that you tend to interview someone and if they seem to have very similar interests, then you tend to make decisions about them that you probably shouldn’t. You select people who mirror the manager all the way down.* (Administrative staff, GMC4)

*You need to conform I think to the ideas and strategies and the directions that have been sent down. You have to commit to those. There’s no room for diversity here. You need to comply.* (Administrative staff, GFC3)

Administrative staff thought too many managers were aping the practices of business and using the language of commerce to appear more knowledgeable than they really were. This supports Kerfoot and Whitehead’s (1998) assertion that attributes tend to fluctuate depending on what is fashionable at the time.

**Length of Service and Contacts**

Some administrative staff thought that length of service in the public sector system and having influential contacts or mentors played a critical part in getting ahead (6 responses or 26%).

*I still think that longevity plays some role in getting ahead. If you’ve been in the area, or have been in the college for a while, you can get ahead. Of course, there are people who have gone well on their own merit, but I think there is still - even though we are moving away from the public service line - a factor of length of service.* (Administrative staff, GFC1)

**Confidence**

Some staff thought that TAFE still operated as a ‘boys club’ with a macho culture that advantaged those with more masculine attributes, such as confidence and aggression (5 responses or 22%). Of these staff, three thought that men were more likely to be mentored than women.

*It’s not what you know, it’s who you know. If you have the right friends at this college you’ll get ahead. You have to have some push. You have to have some balls to get out there and have a go. If you haven’t got the balls, forget it because you are going to find a lot of knocks along the way. So you have to be able to stand up to that, and I think I’ve only discovered that over the years. You certainly have to be competitive to get anywhere.* (Administrative staff, GFP2)
I agree that if you want to get ahead then it’s really important to be in the ‘boys club’. In TAFE, things like the old boys club are alive and well. I am not being cynical here, I have actually observed it. (Administrative staff, GFP1)

By definition, it is very difficult for women to be accepted into a ‘boy’s club’. These women discussed how it was much more difficult for them to exhibit and be rewarded for masculine traits such as overt confidence and risk taking.

**Ambition**

Some staff thought that ambition was crucial for getting ahead (4 responses or 17%). However, two staff described ambition as a negative attribute.

> The people who get ahead in this college are the people that make the most noise. What attributes do they have? They’re loud, they’re opinionated. They’re usually men. They can be extremely nice people, but they are the ones that push their own causes the most and the loudest. And to me, and I think you’ll find a lot of people will agree, that’s the only criterion you need to get well ahead in this college. (Administrative staff, GFP4)

Such answers indicated the deep-seated beliefs about the gendered attributes of success, and the norms and attributes that are valued in the organisation. They reflect an aspect of the organisational subculture that is based on traditional hierarchy and seniority. They show that staff perceived low levels of organisational tolerance for difference and believed that well-connected, confident, aggressive and ambitious people get ahead. These individuals are usually male. Therefore, women believed that to get ahead, everyone had to display stereotypical attributes and work practices associated with macho men. Such beliefs are evidence of an organisation using the process of ‘masculination’ to ensure the attributes associated with typically masculine ways are entrenched (Morley, 1999).

**In Summary**

In an economic climate of job insecurity and hypercompetition, individuals need to conform to a narrow set of norms. The attributes of success reflect neoliberal rhetoric and are the symbolic representation of managerialism. They reveal the organisational underworld of micropolitics where individuals use personal strategies for survival, dedicate considerable time to impression management and exploit their political savvy to influence, network and form alliances in an attempt to get ahead. Those who adopt this course understand the cultural norms and expectations of the organisation and share its values. They know how to acquire and exercise their informal power.
These attributes reveal the way micropolitics is used differently by individuals located in different positions in the hierarchy. Once individuals understood organisational expectations and the subtleties of the culture, it was easier for them to compete for positions. It was clear, however, that only those in executive positions had enough power to change structures, directions, and in turn, the values of an organisation. Senior staff thought that to get ahead individuals needed to reflect the dominant culture and rhetoric of the day.

In this study, women and men outlined how power and success is relayed through social relations and daily transactions. Executives thought that those who get ahead use strategic thinking or ‘canny’ intelligence to read the culture and understand the norms and expectations of the system. They are ‘street-smart’, ‘system savvy’ and ‘intuitive’ in reading the culture. Managers recognised that the rhetoric about openness, teamwork and risk taking was not to be taken literally. They understood that they needed ways and means to influence others, to protect themselves or resist the culture. Astute respondents recognised that there were critical times when compliance and conformity to hierarchical orthodoxy was crucial. They recognised that getting ahead was about power relationships rather than structures, knowledge rather than credentials, self-promotion rather than quiet achievement. Lecturers understood that they were expected to increasingly assume managerial and administrative roles and work in an array of different contexts. All respondents recognised that confidence and ambition were essential to get ahead, but acknowledge that it was easier for men than women to display and be rewarded for such attributes. Importantly people had to make distinctive contributions to their organisations rather than rely on a solid track record.

Overall, the study revealed a gendered picture of success based on economic rationalism, overlaid with the idea of the macho superhero. Both men and women, who held equivalent status, thought that they had to behave in masculine ways to get ahead. Waldroop and Butler (2000) claim “the new economy is a macho culture in so many ways. Sleep is for wimps. You’re supposed to work hard and play hard - but mostly work hard” (p. 5). This culture exploits people’s desire for success, and places men and women in competition with one another on every platform. The cultural codes of masculinity rather than femininity are legitimised and affirmed. The notion of complicity with the establishment, testosterone, power and collusion are accepted attributes for getting ahead.
Organisations seek to create core values to guide social relations and power dynamics within the workplace and to facilitate goals in “highly indoctrinating ways” (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996, p. 7). This indoctrination may be a specific expression of a general version of neoliberalism, with the ‘moral universe’ being the distinction between espoused goals and values, and those that actually emerge in the workplace. Questions of morality involve whether individuals make a conscious choice to compromise professional or personal values in order to build careers, and if so whether they justify or regret making such choices. The issue of values and consequences is particularly important in analysing organisational culture and is one of the central concerns of this thesis.

When analysing organisational, professional and personal values, it is important to be aware of variations in value positions and to understand that the ‘problem of values’ is based in competing motivations (Begley & Leonard, 1999). Given the complex nature of values, the disparate variations in value orientations embedded in competing ideologies and the multiple choices that confront individuals, it is no wonder that ambivalence or value conflict is a normal human condition. As values are socially defined, Habermas (1978) argues that faith and a set of norms underpins the social contract between individuals and organisations, which guide and justify conduct. Thus, the ‘merit principle’ guides an individual’s aspirations in getting ahead and justifies their expectation that the organisation will use it objectively in its decision-making. Similarly, the ‘sacrifice principle’ motivates individuals to compromise values, endure stress and work overload in the expectation that the payoffs will be worth the price paid.

As pointed out in Chapter 2 and 3, TAFE colleges have been marked by the competing value systems underpinning training and education cultures. Emerging from the Kangan period was strong support for the liberal values of vocational education, resulting in the pedagogical relationship between students and lecturers.
gaining greater attention (Ryan, 2002). Academic knowledge and educational leadership were highly valued. Such attributes underpinned the career and organisational structures that enabled educational administrators (such as senior lecturers and heads of departments) to succeed. However, since the advent of managerialism and the ascendancy of neoliberal values, vocationalism rather than education has dominated the reform agenda. As a result career structures in TAFE have changed and different attributes are rewarded. This significant change provides an opportunity to examine the way individuals react to issues of sacrifice and interests, compromise and values.

Within TAFE, individuals had to determine if, and to what extent, they would sacrifice their personal or collective interests and professional ethics. They had to decide what values they might compromise to get ahead. While it is interesting to know what people say they value, their actions revealed that they were actually committed to other values, which were associated with self interest or deep-seated sociocultural assumptions about gender and work. Self-justification for compromising a particular value suggests there is a hierarchy of values that represent core motivations. This chapter shows that both men and women operate in a general climate of sacrifice where the dominant values of neoliberalism are rarely challenged and resisted by only a few. Increasingly, people sacrifice aspects of their personal life and compromise the integrity of their work. Since issues of compromise affect the well being of individuals and that of people close to them, it is critical that everyone engages in value inquiry (Begley & Leonard, 1999).

The first half of this chapter explores the gendered nature of sacrifice, the constraints and competing interests on men’s and women’s careers. The second half analyses the types of sacrifices that were made to get ahead or survive within the TAFE system. Participants in the study were asked whether staff had to sacrifice certain things to get ahead or compromise values and interests. They were then asked whether they saw any barriers placed in the way of individuals. They were invited to describe the barriers and the things that were sacrificed.

### A Question of Sacrifice

Table 10.1 shows that participants’ answers generally fell into three categories. The first category included those who agreed that a general climate of sacrifice existed where staff had to sacrifice certain things to get ahead. This category garnered 44%
of the responses with most participants accepting the need to sacrifice aspects of personal and work life, and to a lesser extent some values. The second category consisted of those who stated getting ahead was about making strategic choices or juggling competing goals. About a third of responses (34%) were in this category and centred on the notion of circumstances dictating limited options rather than people having wide choices. The third category comprised those who questioned the semantics of ‘sacrifice’, engaged in acts of resistance or denied any need for compromise (22% of responses).

Table 10.1 Do Staff have to sacrifice certain things to get ahead?  Percentages and (Numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A Question of Sacrifice</th>
<th>Executive</th>
<th>Senior Academic</th>
<th>Lecturers</th>
<th>Admin</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fem N=3</td>
<td>Male N=16</td>
<td>Fem N=14</td>
<td>Male N=9</td>
<td>Fem N=16</td>
<td>Male N=8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For getting the job done</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For promotion or career advancement</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For promise of payoff</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Juggling Act (Depends on circumstance and choices)</td>
<td>Strategic choice</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Circumstance</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Semantics of Sacrifice</td>
<td>It is not a sacrifice</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refusing to sacrifice</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial No need</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentages</td>
<td>Total Responses</td>
<td></td>
<td>100% (241)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
advance their careers (17% or 40 responses). With only two exceptions, executives did not regret the sacrifices they made as the losses or tradeoffs were outweighed by the satisfaction of the job, the breadth of opportunities they had and the measurable success in the status of their position. Executives were comfortable with the notion that people had to sacrifice to get ahead (10 responses). Their responses indicate an acceptance of a climate of sacrifice as if it were a normal part of the job.

Do staff have to sacrifice certain things to get ahead? Yes, if you wish to seek promotion and again, if that's what is meant by getting ahead, then you need to show flexibility in the workplace. In the past, there has been a willingness to move about. That means not only in an organisational sense, but sometimes in a geographic sense. (Executive, EM20)

I think personal time is the biggest sacrifice, particularly on this campus as we are renowned for trying things differently. We are great believers in trying to implement different methods and to be able to bring sources of revenue into the campus. To do that people have to sacrifice personal time because you can't get everything done that you want to get done in just an ordinary workload that you've got. You have to do above and beyond. (Executive, EF11)

Although staff were appointed to particular campuses within a TAFE college, there was an expectation that if individuals wanted to get ahead they must be prepared to move to another campus or between campuses. Such an expectation entailed sacrificing time for travel, which could be quite considerable as some campuses were 60 kilometres apart. The following responses occurred at a regional campus.

There is very little opportunity for me to get ahead and I would probably have to travel to another campus. This would mean I'd have less time for my family. I think I'd be prepared for that sacrifice, but I don't think there is much hope - the opportunities are not there. Any higher jump [in promotional level] is almost impossible. (Administrative staff, GFC2)

I do not think it is worth sacrificing an extra hour to travel. I need that hour in the morning to make sure the kids have done their homework and to get them to school. Less time at home in the evening means more stress for me. (Administrative staff, GFP2)

Revealed in such responses is the masculine structure of work. Successful careers require total commitment, mobility, flexibility to work long hours and mechanisms to reduce family and domestic responsibilities. Such neoliberal values make women’s lives even more difficult and entrench the notion of the divide between personal and working lives. In a similar vein, Marginson (2000) points out that neoliberal values are rarely mutually beneficial to management and workers alike. For example, values, such as flexibility, appear benign but usually result in exploitation of workers. Flexible workers are prepared to embrace mobility, self-management and risk. This
is the archetypal, high-level professional with choices about what to do and where to work, underpinned by good job prospects and good remuneration. However, it also refers to workers who have limited choice and need to sacrifice more with greater job insecurity and reduced benefits.

Those who accepted the climate of sacrifice for the promise of the payoff, in terms of renewed contract, promotion or career advancement, spoke about the inevitability of compromising values (10% or 24 responses). Upon reflection some questioned whether the sacrifice had been worth the benefits.

"I guess because I am contract staff, I sacrifice my time and energy, and compromise certain things. For example, I might get heavily involved in projects, especially in the year that is leading up to my contract renewal. I might do things which are purposefully aimed at my getting the contract rather than things I really value or would normally do within TAFE. I have to stretch out and compromise that bit further because I want to make sure that I get my contract. Is a contract worth such sacrifice? I really don't know." (Lecturer, AMC5)

As this account illustrates, contract staff admitted to subordinating ideals or compromising their values on the basis of self-interest (a renewed contract). In Deetz’s (2000) view such subordination of interests and values points to the relative powerlessness and passivity of workers in the neoliberal era.

In other responses, men and women compromised their family values or ideals. Women particularly reflected the pain of trying to apply themselves to a ‘superwoman’ ideal. That is, fully committed and competent in all spheres of career, family and lifestyle. One woman, a single parent, regretted sacrificing time with her son for her career. Her self-recrimination and sadness were palpable in her account.

"I spent a lot of time in a job that I really now wish I’d spent with my son. I think it was a sacrifice that probably wasn’t a good one to make, plus stress and that sort of thing. Sometimes I think you sacrifice your family or your social life or your equanimity. You don’t realise at the time that you are making a sacrifice. You think it’s going to pay off. You don’t realise that you can’t get some things back." (Lecturer, AFP2)

Others suggested that to get ahead people changed their values.

"Maybe people’s values change as they go up the ladder rather than they compromise, and I don’t think they perceive it that way. But I have been in TAFE long enough to see people go from lecturer to managing director or other positions high up, and I have noticed in some cases, not necessarily every case, their values changing. In other words, some people seem to always have values that were consistent with the position they were aspiring to, while others have aspired to the position. At the time they seemed to have a value system that resembled the lecturer next door who wasn’t ambitious, but over the time..."
they climbed the ladder their values seem to change. I have noticed that. Maybe they have the idea of changing the system, but by the time they get the job near the top they tend to feel different. (Team leader, SAFP5)

As many individuals derive their psychological identity from positions within an organisational hierarchy, they may unconsciously adopt the values of the roles. They may “leach our individuality, our wills and our very consciousness into the roles provided by the organizational forms” (Begley & Leonard, 1999, p. 13).

Some claimed that people compromised values, integrity and frankness. They described how individuals learned to be judicious, circumspect and wary if they wanted to succeed. “To get ahead people have to compromise their values at times by not speaking out” (Executive, EF11). Such comments reflect the attributes listed by respondents in Chapter 9.

You do get a sycophantic approach by some people. You know they are not outspoken. They will just go along with the flow of the tide, which is always a worry. As soon as a new leader comes along, they have a sudden change of heart. Their values change. They’ve got a new direction. Yes. So it might be something to do with integrity. (Administrative manager, GMP2)

I was just reading a book on emotional intelligence, and I realised that you often make career limiting statements and that your emotions can take over any plan. So if you need to express a counterview you need to understand the potential consequences. If you do it too often you would be branded as always negative. And I think that is limiting career wise. (Campus manager, GFP6)

I guess I wouldn’t go around upsetting the apple cart. If I need to reapply for my contract, then that’s common sense. So I overlook certain things that I think should happen in TAFE, although I don’t want to be complacent. I feel like I’m saying less than I normally might because within my section we have had some changes and there is a bit of uncertainty, so that’s reflected in me, in what I do and don’t do too … I just feel a bit insecure at the moment. (Lecturer, AMC2)

These accounts provide evidence of the indoctrinating ways institutional activities alter individual thoughts and behaviours, and culminate as ‘common sense’. They reveal that choices and compromises are made to accommodate the interests of dominant groups and organisational goals. Conscience is weakened by self-interest.

Several senior staff (6 responses) and lecturers (5 responses) stated that those who aspired to get ahead compromised values in relation to working conditions, unionism or industrial relations practices. Three senior academic staff stated that they often sacrificed the interests of their staff in order to meet management requirements.
I do think people have to sacrifice some things. One thing that really surprised me was our principal lecturer. I always thought of her as being a good unionist and I know she’s always been very good when we have had strikes and things. I am surprised that she’s sort of letting all of the union stuff, about workload averaging, go by the board. She wants everyone to do their 460 hours over 20 weeks regardless of course lengths and student needs. (Lecturer, AFT1)

Sacrificing active unionism was certainly one aspect of program manager’s lives (4 responses). Three academic managers had been given an ultimatum by senior management to abstain from union support or resign from their positions. Those who upheld the union cause to promote the profession of TAFE teachers and the ideological commitment to educative pedagogy were not only compromising their chances of getting ahead, they were in real danger of losing their jobs. While union members saw that the union’s role was not only to protect their conditions but was also the professional voice of TAFE teachers, they were mindful that management frowned upon such allegiance and that they might pay a heavy price for activism:

Changes to management and unionism since the 1980s have not increased job satisfaction or worker’s control over work processes and in many cases have made matters worse. Insecurity and the greater effort expected over longer or broken shifts have intensified displeasure, lifting levels of stress. Any waning of Fordism has not ended the degradation of labour (McQueen, 2001, p. 3).

The respondents were acutely aware that the decline in unionism in TAFE resulted in a lack of industrial democracy in the workplace and further encouraged the formation of a compliance culture.

A Juggling Act
Numerous participants in the study (34% or 82 responses) commented on the difficulty of balancing the desire to get ahead and its associated sacrifice with the need to meet their personal and family obligations, and the desire for a work-life balance. Some respondents made a strategic choice to get ahead and made the required sacrifices (17%). Others stated that personal circumstances, relationships, and to a lesser extent personal preferences and personality limited their career opportunities and the extent of sacrifice they were able to make (17%). Those respondents trying to juggle career aspirations with quality family life spoke earnestly about compromise or limited options. “You need to juggle family and work commitments, and so if something has to go then it has to be work” (Lecturer, AMP2). Five men recounted how they had sacrificed their prospects of career advancement to ensure they contributed their fair share to raising children.
For me it’s been a compromise of making sure that family responsibilities and work commitments can be juggled. I’ve tried to balance them. It’s not easy to do all the time, but certainly trying to find that balance has meant that I haven’t pushed on to try to achieve a higher level within the system. And I am quite happy about that. It’s been good for me. (Lecturer, AMP1)

For employees with dependent care responsibilities, the balancing act of maintaining some degree of acceptable combination of work and family was packed with internal conflict. There is extensive literature that documents this tension and the impact it has on career aspirations, personal lives and communities (Glezer & Wolcott, 1997; Pocock, 2003; Probert & Murphy, 2001). Research suggests that work-family balance involves reconciling the multiple, conflicting demands placed on individuals:

Ultimately, the concept of balance is a perceptual phenomenon characterised by a sense of achieving a satisfactory resolution of the multiple demands of the domains of work and family. The conflict which employees seek to balance is related to the extent to which work and family roles exert incompatible pressures on them. Ultimately, the psychological experience of ‘balance’ is shaped by the level of demands individuals face at home and at work, and the meanings they attach to their participation in the work-family system (Thornwaite, 2002, p. 4).

Other researchers comment that the concept of ‘balance’, so dominant in public policy debates, is a poor metaphor for what is really happening to women and men in the workplace (Pocock, 2000). Policy that attempts to engineer family-friendly workplaces, improve gender balances or encourage men to embrace an equal share of family responsibilities and housework, do not appear to have made much headway in the division of labour. Legislative attempts to instil better work and life balance do not seem to change gender segregation. Using the French experience as an example of social engineering failure, Watson et al (2003) stated that France legislated a 35-hour working week in 2001. Early results showed that many women reduced their working week to four days so that they could spend more time with their children. French men, however, were not doing the same and continued to work paid or unpaid overtime.

Pocock’s et al. (2001) study indicates that individuals, families and relationships are suffering from the effects of constantly juggling work, family and other responsibilities. The researchers claim that the disadvantages for Australian workers who are overworked in organisations are understated. They found that males as well as females are sacrificing their marriages and family time, and suffering feelings of regret, sadness, guilt and frustration:
In almost every house, we had grumpy workers, with implications for intimacy and relationships, sex lives and quality of parenting really severely affected for most of the people in our study. Parents of children under five hoped their kids wouldn’t notice they weren’t there. There was a deep sense of loss expressed by a lot of workers (many of whom were men) about the loss of relationship with their kids. Many partners of long-hours workers also complained they had effectively become single parents (Pocock et al, 2001, p. 18).

They assert that workers need more of a statutory standard and a culture of change to back up their choice to be a spouse, parent, a volunteer, a citizen as well as a worker. Similarly, a ruling by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission (AIRC) in July 2002 acknowledged that Australian workers had some of the longest working hours in the world, but it rejected the ACTU’s demands in its reasonable-hours test case. The AIRC would not set a reasonable hours limit to a working day or week, nor would it force employers to give workers paid time off for working long hours. The AIRC, however, did give workers the right to refuse overtime. It seems that individuals are expected to manage the tensions between the time demands of work and family life. Putting the onus on individuals to manage work and family balance is the prevailing neoliberal ideology behind the lack of public policy in this area and results in a deteriorating quality of work and family life (Buchanan & Thornwaite, 2001). Researchers and social critics in Australia suggest that the current situation of overwork and family life erosion are likely to continue in organisational life if there is continued reliance on market mechanisms rather than robust public policy (ACCIRT, 1999; McQueen, 2001; Pocock, 2003).

In this study, women and men talked of being torn between their desire for satisfying careers and their need for more time with their families. They were constantly trying to juggle work-family life and for many this struggle was largely shaped by the opportunities that staff had available to them, their ability to use these options and their understanding of the consequences if they availed themselves of what was possible. Relative autonomy and high self-esteem seemed to be a precursor to making such choices. Others knew what their personal preferences were but felt constrained by societal pressures. The following account typifies the internal struggle expressed by women juggling career aspirations and family responsibilities.

*I went back to lecturing rather than staying in management because I could balance my family and my work life well enough so that I didn’t become absolutely burnt out. I can pick my kids up from school. I can take them to school. I can get time off to go and see swimming carnivals or special events. Whereas, if I was in a management position, especially in the city, I wouldn’t be able to do it. So I made a conscious choice. I was offered another job only three months ago and it was in the city. I thought of the extra $5000 and the additional ten hours of travelling time, and compared it to the things I was going*
to lose and decided it wasn’t worthwhile. But it was a really hard decision. I had to say no, family came first. I want to be there for my kids, but I also want my cake and eat it all. I want the job that takes me to South Australia or Tom Price and if I have to stay back ‘til six o’clock I can, but my life and my family didn’t allow that. So, if I had two bodies I would be right. (Principal lecturer, SAFP3)

As this example illustrates, conflicting demands and desires make it difficult for people with family responsibilities to seize opportunities or to get ahead in organisations. The inter-role conflict between work and family is so great as to render it nearly impossible. This conflict or role interference includes family interference with work and work interference with the family (Probert & Murphy, 2001). Juggling work and family involves affordable care arrangements or flexible patterns of work that more closely match children’s school times or family members’ needs. This study reveals that it is still predominantly women who are faced with the constant juggling act and the price they pay for this is guilt, persistent adjustment and readjustment, and internal and external conflict.

The Semantics of Sacrifice
The concept of ‘sacrifice’ in the interview question presented quite a dilemma for some. Several suggested it did not ‘fit’ with the way they viewed their work (8 responses) while others resisted any form of sacrifice as an act of challenging the dominant organisational ethos (29 responses). A few denied they had any need to sacrifice (16 responses). The highly-charged responses to the language of sacrifice suggested it was a competing discourse to that of neoliberalism or that it jarred with the projection of their self-identity. Five executives and three lecturers (3%) claimed that sacrifice was a ‘biased’ term and should have been changed to a less emotive one. The executives appeared irritated at the notion and language of sacrifice.

I wouldn’t call it sacrifice. I think it is a matter of reprioritising. If it’s important to the person to get ahead, and they’ve got the skills and the support, and if they’re prepared to make the adjustments to themselves then I don’t see it as a sacrifice. They’re reprioritising their lives. (Executive, EM14)

I wouldn’t use the word ‘sacrifice’. Certainly they have to change. You don’t have to work harder, you just have to work smarter and you have to work differently. Those that see that as a sacrifice are going to have a problem. I don’t think you have to compromise values. (Executive, EM15)

Do staff have to sacrifice certain things to get ahead? It’s a loaded question because the word sacrifice is there. It’s obviously value-laden. In any workplace decision or life decision there are options. I would question the word ‘sacrifice’. There are opportunities. In commerce we call it an opportunity cost, and for every decision you take there’s an opportunity cost. There is something that you forgo because you can’t do both. So every time we make a decision, there is an opportunity cost. I have personally made one or two sacrifices when I was trying
to get to a position. I had a career goal and so I was happy to make those decisions. But the benefits outweighed the cost; otherwise, I wouldn’t have made the decision. So the opportunity cost was less. (Executive, EM20)

These executives took exception to the emotive language embedded in the notion of sacrifice and preferred less emotive phrases like ‘reprioritising’ or ‘opportunity cost’. Changing the concept of sacrifice to a more rational and economic concept was typical of those who minimised the real hardships or glossed over the personal cost to individuals and the social costs to the community. Cliched phrases such as “you don’t need to work harder just smarter” (Executive, EM15) are typical of executives who have the power to impose their will, delegate work loads and redesign their own working days. Such comments deny the reality of heavy workloads and the inability of people to squeeze any further efficiencies from the processes of their work.

A few people denied that people had to sacrifice anything to get ahead (7% or 16 responses). Three lecturers who worked excessively long, unpaid hours denied they were making a sacrifice as they loved their work and did not perceive forgoing pay, relinquishing family or community interests or forfeiting personal time for work as sacrifices. The following response is from one man, married with five children.

I love what I do, so I don’t consider it a sacrifice. I work 18 hours a day, yeah I do, not lecturing, but preparing stuff and doing stuff at home. I would suggest that 18 hours would be a sort of minimum … I wouldn’t consider what I do sacrificial because I just like what I do, and in the preparation there’s the learning that takes place as well. (Lecturer, AMC2)

In other cases people denied they made sacrifices in their initial responses. However, as they discussed it in the focus group, some came to a realisation that they were making sacrifices. Several respondents seemed unaware of the nature and extent of their and others’ sacrifice to the organisation.

I guess I don’t think about it so much as a sacrifice. But there is an effect and it does affect my family … it is a sacrifice I guess, but it is just something I don’t sort of consciously think about. I spend a lot of time at work purely by the nature of it, purely by the position I am in. There are not many people that I could hand something over to and say ‘here, do this’, usually it’s me. It rests on my shoulders. To give you an example, over the last three weeks I have spent three nights - all night here at TAFE and worked thirty hours straight. And when the work still piled up, I worked Saturdays because you could. There is always more and more to be done. (Information systems manager, GMP1)

In this case, thinking about the distinctions between working long hours and sacrifice as a metaphor for his working life led to shifts in his thoughts and consciousness. Reflecting upon his working life and the language he uses to describe it may lead
him to reassess his actions. Bethanis (1995) suggests that changing the language
or mental modes used to describe actions can transform attitudes and challenge
depth held assumptions. This manager, while conceding his wife and young
children did not like it when he worked such family-unfriendly hours, justified his
commitment to his work by stating that no one else could do the work and that he
enjoyed it because it gave him control over his working environment.

Four executives were adamant that people did not need to compromise their values
or change them to be successful.

I don’t think people have to compromise any of their values to get ahead. I think
they might have to change - but I’m not suggesting that they have to change
their value base. I think each of us needs two or three things we sincerely
believe in and we should work with that. What I think you do have to change is
the way you manage your interpersonal connections to be successful … But I
strongly believe that people shouldn’t compromise their values to get leadership
roles and if they do, they are going to get into a position of internal conflict. I
think you can be successful and still maintain your core values such as honesty,
integrity and all those sort of things, but it may be that at certain times you just
don’t say anything or do anything. (Executive, EM14)

This executive appears unaware of the paradox of holding a value position but
acting in a contradictory fashion. Executives, more than any other group, claimed
that organisational values were congruent with their own personal values and that
there was therefore no need to compromise. Two others claimed they would not
expect other people to sacrifice anything but admitted to sacrificing aspects of their
own personal life to get ahead.

I read the question last night and I have thought about this, and I guess this is a
personal view because I’m not sure that I would require other people to sacrifice
anything in particular. But I have aspired to the position I am in and my previous
management roles simply because I have sacrificed time, worked extremely
hard and put in long hours in order to ensure that the job was done correctly. I
don’t think that we can avoid that in today’s society. The pace of work and the
nature of the funding of organisations means that they are now much leaner
and meaner than they have ever been in the past. (Executive, EM16)

While denying that individuals are expected to sacrifice their time for an
organisation, this response illustrates that economic restructuring (‘the nature of
funding’) and work reorganisation (‘the pace of work’) forces people to boost
productivity if they wish to get ahead. Another executive claimed that there was not
an expectation that people would sacrifice their personal time for the organisation on
a regular basis but only in peak periods or for special projects.
I don’t think people have to work more than their seven-and-a-half hours or eight hours a day … all we’re asking them to do is to do a good job while they are here, and put the time and effort in to make things better. At certain times you might ask them to sacrifice their time, stay back and do four hours, and therefore it might affect their family life and so on, but I don’t think it’s a consistent thing. (Executive, EM1)

His underlying logic is that workers must not only work hard each day, they must also ‘make things better’. The emphasis on improving the quality of output and extending the working day ‘at certain times’ to meet tight deadlines are examples of work intensification (Watson et al, 2003). One of the fundamental problems associated with work intensification is executives’ denial of the significant sacrifices required to meet these new expectations.

Some staff refused to compromise their personal values and resisted demands that conflicted with their professionalism (12% or 29 responses). Most acknowledged that such a stance would result in not getting ahead.

I am satisfied that I made the decision not to go any further. I find the political aspects of being a senior manager distasteful. I also saw my mentor being crucified and I found that distasteful … Hugh McKay [an Australian social commentator] has commented that women have contributed an element of choice in the workplace by setting limits on what they will do in line with their values. (Campus manager, GFP12)

This invoking of differences in values is a form of resistance, which while small-scale in nature, challenges the normalisation of the organisational culture. The work of Foucauldian feminists has drawn attention to this type of resistance by analysing its situated and contingent forms (McNay, 1992; Thomas & Davies, 2005). As the following account illuminates, individuals made value judgements about themselves and others in terms of an appreciation of micropolitical resistance.

Some people don’t want to get ahead because they are not prepared to sacrifice their time. Their time is a valuable commodity and they are not prepared to give it away for free. We have many permanent TAFE lecturers who refuse to do anything beyond the call of duty because they don’t get paid for it. They resist the culture and management expectations. I can’t help but admire them sometimes. (Principal lecturer, SAFP2)

This account suggests that permanent lecturers, more than any other cohort, were resisting the neoliberal edict to do more for less. They were resisting compliance expectations and disengaging from management’s requirements to subordinate their teaching practice for other ends. Such resistance, however, did little to challenge the dominant values of the organisation.
Types of Sacrifices

When it comes to sacrifice, the cases in this study demonstrated two important types. First, they revealed that the personal costs of working in TAFE took a toll on personal and family time, and also entailed some loss of health, lifestyle and community engagement. Second, the legacy of reform and restructuring caused dysfunctional work practices and outcomes. The most common were related to compromising aspects of quality, collegiality and ideology.

Table 10.2 Types of Sacrifice Percentages and (Numbers)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Sacrifice</th>
<th>Executives</th>
<th>Academic Managers</th>
<th>Lecturers</th>
<th>Admin staff</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Fem N=3</td>
<td>Male N=16</td>
<td>Fem N=14</td>
<td>Male N=9</td>
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<td>Personal Costs</td>
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<td>(8)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
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<td>(52)</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(7)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(5)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health &amp; well-being</td>
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<td>(5)</td>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>10%</td>
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<td>(2)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Grappling with quality</td>
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<td>(2)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
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<td>(4)</td>
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<td>15%</td>
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<td>(27)</td>
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<td>(4)</td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>(22)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wrestling with ideology</td>
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<td>(1)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(16)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Percentage</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(4)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>100%</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(175)</td>
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Personal Time

A major finding of this study is that the tension between competing time demands of work and family or social life is viewed as a personal conflict and is therefore not being addressed as a critical issue in the workplace. According to Begley and Leonard (1999) how we perceive time and how we use it reflects who we are and what we value. Respondents explained that ‘time’ was the most valuable and yet most sacrificed commodity in TAFE. Participants referred to sacrificing personal time for the sake of getting the job done and sacrificing huge amounts of time if they wanted to get ahead (30% or 52 responses). Staff also talked about sacrificing time with friends and colleagues, and missing out on social functions.

Women in this study appeared to make more sacrifices to do their jobs than men. They were caught between two greedy institutions, their families and TAFE. Three administrative women reported that they worked exceptionally hard to support their
colleagues and clients, even at personal expense. They spent time counselling students and doing the little things that made a difference. Some men recognised that women spent more time being supportive, communicative and looking after the collective good, but there was no suggestion from men that the institution should reward women for these extra tasks. Women in administration claimed that their ethic of caring resulted in sacrificing more time and energy for the common good.

At meetings, it is usually the women who make sure there are refreshments available even if they have had to buy them in their own time and with their own money. It is usually the women who will go the extra mile and help students or volunteer to help organise functions. So, yeah, they sacrifice their personal time more for the common good than the men do. (Administrative staff, GFP3)

In exhibiting values and behaviours that are an extension of their role within families, women’s sacrifices are less valued. Feminist theory is useful in explaining why women’s work, sacrifice and abilities are less valued than men’s (Friedan, 1981; Game & Pringle, 1983). Occupational segregation by gender is extensive in its inequity and pervasive in its inefficiency, and is “one of the most important and enduring aspects of labour markets” (Anker, 1997, p. 315). Human capital theory is unable to explain why work is segregated by gender in such a manner that women’s work is trivialised and their career prospects lessened in comparison with men doing similar jobs. Similarly, Benschop & Doorewaard (1998) assert that feminist theory helps explain women’s disadvantage in the career stakes. They claim that much inequality stems from the influence of gender and power relations in shaping organisational structures and practices. Likewise, Burton (1987) argues that society’s evaluation of women’s work as less important than men’s is a reflection of organisational cultures where women’s place within them is marginal.

Family Life
The second greatest sacrifice was time with family, particularly with their children (17% or 29 responses). Both men (12 responses) and women (17 responses) felt torn between work commitments and family responsibilities. They expressed deep concern that time spent trying to get ahead was impinging on the quality of relationships.

You certainly have to make sacrifices if you want to get ahead, even to get qualified. You have to do all your studies in your own time. Nobody gets anything unless they do it in their own time. That obviously impinges on your social life and family lifestyle and I think we probably have a few rocky marriages because of the implications of having to do that. I know at least a couple of staff members who finished up having marital problems. I think that’s quite a sacrifice just to get teaching qualifications. (Principal lecturer, SAMP2)
Even those without children commented on the problem of coping with a hectic working life and a demanding family life.

*I don’t have children. I can’t work out how you manage a working life when you have family responsibilities. I can’t imagine how people cope if they don’t have a partner. By the time you get home it’s six or six-thirty and by the time you have done tea and cleaned up you’re not sitting down until nearly eight o’clock, so how could you possibly incorporate children into all that, I have no idea. Someone has to be minding them. Someone has to get them from daycare or whatever. I don’t know how you interrupt your working life to have children. I’ve worked with mainly women and I have two staff who have reduced their hours because they need more time at home to look after their children. That’s the decision they had to make. They are not working greatly reduced hours, just an hour shorter each day. I don’t know how career women with children manage it all.* (Corporate manager, GFP14)

Both women and men believed that the combination of excessive work demands and an increasingly competitive work ethos produced a family-unfriendly and anti-social environment that was deleterious to people’s wellbeing. In such an environment women are disadvantaged as they still carry primary responsibility for meeting family demands. Men are advantaged in that they can work harder and longer, often at short notice, knowing that there is ‘back up’ at home and their partner will shoulder their load.

*There is an expectation that if there is a job to be done, then you stay back and finish it. To some extent females are disadvantaged in that because their family demands are stronger than the male’s family demands. The male can stay back knowing there is back up at home, whereas a female can’t. They are disadvantaged in that respect, and to some extent they don’t have the psychology of actually taking that extra step and going the extra distance. You might say that’s not a correct or right thing to do, that you shouldn’t have an expectation … but the fact remains that if you’ve got two people doing exactly the same job and you know that there’s work to be done, and one person will get up at four o’clock and leave because of whatever reason, and another will stay back and finish the job. When you have a situation like that, it sets people’s attitudes and sets people’s biases, and so that creates different images for people. I’d like to say, before I get too far, that there are women in this organisation who will stay back, who will sacrifice their family demands and go the extra step … but by and large, it is reasonable to say that those people who get ahead are able to put in the extra hours required.* (Executive, EM12)

To some degree, respondents acknowledged women’s disadvantage in relation to family obligations. However, to a larger degree, it was dismissed or glossed over, or women were blamed for “not having the psychology of actually taking that extra step” (Executive, EM12). Maushart (2001) claims that men are more deeply connected to paid work (or unpaid overtime) than to family relationships or obligations. They have more choice to work extra hours and their attachment to work can become irrational:
There is no doubt in my mind that the decision to work less threatens a man’s sense of identity. How could it be otherwise, given what we know about the centrality of the provider role to our social construction of masculinity … I have no doubt that working longer hours for pay still makes a man feel ‘pure’ in an almost visceral way (Maushart, 2001, p. 8).

For many men, the old ways of gender segregation and unequal sharing of the family and domestic load are still available as a means of managing their working lives. The traditional masculine imperative to seek identity through work while leaving domestic responsibilities to others still has the power to seduce. Research published by the Australian Institute of Family Studies found that working inordinately long hours often improves a man’s happiness score - especially among high earners. The opposite effect, not surprisingly, was found among their wives. The research reveals that some men gain such addictive pleasure from work that it is hard for them to give up working long hours irrespective of the detrimental repercussions on family and marriage (Weston, Qu & Soriano, 2002; Wolcott, 1999).

**Health and Well-Being**

Some feminist writers are pessimistic about changing the masculine norms in Australian organisations, which result in the deteriorating physical and mental health, and emotional well-being of workers (Maushart, 2001; Pocock, 2003). Britton (1995) asserts that because management is predominantly male, and because it is usually separated by two or three rungs from the staff, they are dismissive of claims of stress by workers. Several participants in the study described the toll on health as people tried to climb to the top or stay afloat in the system (10% or 17 responses).

*I don’t know whether people actually realise what the toll is on their systems when you become focussed on getting ahead in an organisation. I can think of a number of staff at our college, both in management and lecturing, whose health has really suffered, and have even left the college … I’ve got health problems at the moment and it really interferes with getting ahead.* (Lecturer, AFP1)

*Those who take their job seriously enough put too much mental and physical effort into it basically. It stresses the rest of their system. I mean we all know lecturers who are burnt out just from teaching. So it’s not confined to those who want to get up the corporate ladder.* (Lecturer, AMC1)

The intensification of work and other alienating aspects of the culture fail to support the rhythms of life and pay scant regard to the physical and emotional health of workers. Brewer and McMahan (2003) claim that job stress and burnout among technical teachers is related to lack of organisational support and is much more
stressful than the job itself. Four senior staff claimed that there was an ‘epidemic of work-induced stress’ and resultant physical symptoms in their colleagues and staff.

*I have had to sacrifice basically my health and my time to get into the senior lecturer position. There were certain things I didn’t do anymore. I didn’t play squash because I was staying late at the office.* (Team Leader, SAFC4)

*Executives have any idea of the epidemic of work-induced stress in TAFE. Program managers, like myself, are constantly stressed and far too many admin assistants get sick from overwork. Contract lecturers are probably the most stressed, constantly worrying about their jobs.* (Program manager, SAFC5)

Deteriorating physical or mental health and unacceptable stress appear to have become intimately linked to work, particularly contract work. Multiple personal sacrifices, study and role overload are taking a heavy toll as illustrated in the following response from a contract lecturer trying to complete a doctorate.

*Most lecturers, if they want to get the job done, have to work very long hours. Obviously that means other things get sacrificed. In my case I know my health’s running down and I’m not getting nearly as much exercise as I should. I mean you know that is an interest, it’s also a basic necessity. I’ve got a lot of outside commitments. I’ve had a study program that I’ve been trying to finish over the last eight years. I’m just getting no time to put into it, very little time. There is also considerable pressure on us to take on more professional commitments related to the organisation.* (Lecturer, AMC4)

In all, contract staff expressed a sense of stress related to insecurity. They described feeling coerced into working long hours and working harder than was good for their health and well-being.

**Lifestyle and Community Engagement**

One of the most obvious and severe effects of the mismatch between the demands of greedy institutions (family and work organisations) is the declining participation rate in lifestyle pursuits and community engagement. A handful of respondents alluded to sacrificing such aspects, such as reading for pleasure, personal hobbies, sport, physical training or socialising with friends (7% or 12 responses). Others confessed to disengaging from volunteer organisations, community events and political activism. Those living and working in regional campuses sacrificed some of the critical aspects of their rural lifestyle, as illustrated in the following example.

*I think you sacrifice your lifestyle. Yep. You have got to be prepared to put in more time. I don’t have enough time to enjoy my property or spend time on my goats.* (Campus manager, GFP6)
Others struggled to balance work with their lifestyle and found it very difficult to juggle the time demands of work with their sporting interests. Some found work so consuming that they completely abandoned their community interests.

_Lifestyle does get sacrificed, more in terms of time … I try to make an effort not to take work home on weekends because I only have two days off out of seven. I do a lot of other things in my spare time, a lot of training. I used to be really involved in helping run our Little Athletics club but it all just got too much. That’s a big compromise for me because I think it’s really important to have an outside life and contribute to community things._ (Administrative coordinator, GFP5)

On the other hand, some staff were adamant that they would not put in the extra hours demanded to get ahead if it compromised their lifestyle.

_I think I am quite clear about my values. I certainly put in hours at work and when I need to I will stay longer, but weekends are my time. I’m quite careful of that time because it is the only free time I can utilise. So I’m very careful in making sure that the time I do have is well used outside of work otherwise you can get consumed by work and it can be quite a drain._ (Career adviser, GFC1)

Social researchers claim there is mounting evidence that Australians are hungry for better lifestyles that balance work, family, social, community and personal interests (Pocock, 2000). MacKay (1997), an Australian social commentator, reflects on the difficulties in maintaining a lifestyle beyond work and family duties. He suggests that businesses must play an increasing social role to ensure that community cohesion is preserved and social capital built in concert with meeting the bottom line.

A sense of dissatisfaction or guilt pervaded these responses. Women particularly described feeling short-changed, as though they had not experienced the planned for lifestyle or accomplished a successful balancing act. The study revealed that it is increasingly difficult to create work-life balance. The long term results of personal sacrifice and constant pressures are quite detrimental. They lead to a situation where people are increasingly treated as ‘human resources’ or disposable, renewable marketplace commodities rather than as humans requiring the basic needs of security, affiliation, health and well-being (Rees & Rodley, 1995).

**Grappling with Quality**

Several people commented that the quality of their work was sacrificed due to unrealistic timeframes, work intensification or from other pressures that competed for their attention (15% or 27 responses). Some suggested that despite the rhetoric on ‘quality’ management and customer service, common in TAFE, real standards and attention to detail had deteriorated due to time and efficiency pressures.
Lecturers suggested that quality teaching was sacrificed for entrepreneurial activity if individuals wanted to get ahead (8 responses). Academic managers expressed concern about the lack of recognition of the unique role that lecturers played in ensuring quality, in both delivery and student support (10 responses). The following conversation between two lecturers and their team leader illustrates the concerns for the quality of learning, and the devaluing and lack of support for teaching.

*I think you have to compromise your values and interests. You have to sacrifice being involved more widely in the college if your attention is on the major core business, which is to teach students. That’s what the business is about and I can’t see why that should change.* (Lecturer, AMP2)

*I think it’s pretty obvious to everybody who’s lecturing that the colleges in general have lost sight of their core business.* (Lecturer, AFP3)

*The core business, the students, bring the bread and butter into this college, and it is the delivery that the lecturers do on the ground floor, at the coal face, that is important. No one seems to recognise that. Even the IT people seem to think that teaching is less important than computers. As soon as there is a problem or a change, another layer of bureaucracy goes in, which doesn’t seem to achieve anything. From my perspective, I get the work pushed up from the lecturers and the students and more and more comes down from the top … and you are out there trying to get more and more students in. So you spend time interviewing the students, doing that correctly.* (Senior lecturer, SAFC4)

*The funding doesn’t seem to be there to support the teaching, not only for lecturing staff, but also facilities and equipment. There is constant whittling away, even the money for consumables in applied science and horticulture is not there … Students can’t even get pots and seed trays to grow their plants or do their experiments, which they are supposed to do as part of their course.* (Lecturer, AFP3)

*Consumables should come out of student fees, but there is not enough money. Where is the money going? It is going to support this massive bureaucracy that the college now seems to think it needs to have in order to continue functioning in this brave new world.* (Lecturer, AMP2)

Underlying this conversation, and threaded through many focus group discussions, was the theme of under-resourcing to the detriment of teaching and learning practices, and at the expense of quality working lives. This finding is similar to that found in an AEU study, where respondents stated that funding cuts were detrimental to the quality of their work, and impacted negatively on their personal and professional lives. As stated, “The stress and exhaustion that teachers experience as a result of these pressures, and the impact it has on their personal lives is, or should be, a public outrage” (Kronemann, 2001, p. 90).
Principal lecturers commented that teaching quality was compromised, as staff put in extra hours to complete work previously done by WADOT or support staff. Team leaders wrestled with prioritising activities and determining what would remain in their over-flowing in trays. Increasingly, the teaching part of their work, which was most meaningful and intrinsically satisfying, was displaced as working days were occupied with administrative tasks and managerial requests for extra activities.

*In the senior lecturer and team leader’s role, I think that values have to be sacrificed in the lecturing situation because you don’t have the time to put in. You know you don’t have time, you are so busy and you know that’s not what is valued in the organisation. What’s important is doing all the paper work and it always seems to be ‘COB [Close of Business] by tomorrow’ and you are meant to be in class. I mean something has to go, and unfortunately it’s what you do in the classroom.* (Team Leader, SAFP4)

Senior academic staff, charged with excessive administrative tasks, were sacrificing their expertise and passion for their subject in order to survive in the organisation. Speaking of team leaders and principal lecturers, one participant commented.

*We have to pick subjects to teach that are dead easy, walk in and deliver off the top of your head. Teach things that if you are interrupted you can just pick up again and off you go. I used to teach diploma level, quite difficult botany-type subjects that I thoroughly enjoyed. I mean this is my patch. This is what I love to do. But I was finding that every time I was interrupted, one of my students would lose their way. I’d lose my place and it was so hard to get back on track again. Eventually I gave such teaching to other people even though it was my favourite thing to do. Now I teach absolutely the basics. So that’s a professional sacrifice.* (Principal lecturer, SAFP3)

Teachers preferred to be accountable to their peers and students for the quality of their teaching practice. However, today accountability for input (every hour of the working week and particularly the non-contact time) is closely monitored by management, and quality output is increasingly being assessed by third parties. The introduction of the ARF, in 1997, led to colleges being audited against set standards and the cost of compliance rose. The ARF was replaced by the AQTF in 2001, and while new standards were welcomed by most practitioners, accountability for quality shifted dramatically away from teachers and students to third person auditors.

*I spend too much time grappling with quality assurance paperwork. It has got out of hand. I worry about compliance rather than ensuring my students are learning and having fun.* (Lecturer, AFP3)

Teachers despaired at the compliance and ‘bean counting’ culture that dominates teaching, learning practice and TAFE organisations. Kronemann (2001) suggests
that “teachers often perceive their management as focussed on bean counting rather than education and are disinterested in the issue of quality provision” (p. 91).

Executives also found the standard of their work was compromised by unrealistic timelines and regulatory frameworks (4 responses). They reported that unrealistic timeframes were imposed upon them from WADOT, government agencies, the auditor general’s office, parliament or the minister’s office. Too often executives were asked for reports or submissions that involved complex data collection and extensive analysis, but were given unrealistic deadlines to complete the task. Many were cynical of such requests and felt the Department had already decided the policy and was asking for the data retrospectively to support their policy position.

Sometimes you have to sacrifice the quality of your work. It is the difference between getting a job done perfectly, getting a job done well or just getting a job done. The time constraints forced upon you affect the standards of your work. There are usually external constraints to meet certain conditions. You do not have the opportunity of being a perfectionist like you want to be. Sometimes it is more important to get the job in on time than the job itself. (Executive, EF11)

Overall, staff saw that compliance requirements, particularly increased record keeping and reporting, were dominating the nature of the relationship between teachers and students, and managers and government agencies or their proxies. In relation to the AQTF and auditing generally, Noonan (2002) suggests that VET practitioners favour a move away from documents and processes to a more holistic evaluation of outcomes.

Lack of Collegiality

Highly individualised cultures, common to Anglo-American countries, including Australia, inhibit team approaches, reduce the scope for trust-based devolution and increase feelings of alienation (Marginson, 2000). In this study, 12% of responses provided accounts of alienation that had arisen from neoliberal practices in TAFE. Many participants (22 responses) sensed that teamwork and collegiality were not attributes valued highly by management, and in fact witnessed their erosion as the accretion of power and access to influential networks became restricted to management. The lecturers in the study claimed that their teaching professionalism was undermined through business practices of demarcation (9 responses). Some teaching areas sacrificed collegiality, expertise and quality delivery to protect jobs and maintain barriers between sections.
Trust and collaboration are being sacrificed as study areas compete against one another for market share and organisational kudos. Instead of opening areas up to new ideas and new people, sections are closing ranks. They’re protecting their people’s jobs and their hard-earned resources. Competition has built up barriers. We have boundaries and barricades within the college and throughout the system. This is building up in contrast to the purpose of moving into new and emerging fields. (Lecturer, SAMP3)

The barriers that arise in sections become apparent when you look at the structure of business units. If you have five staff and you would normally get a person from another section to teach a specialised subject, you now don’t because the mentality is to maintain as many hours, including overtime, in the section as possible to protect people in the section. The fact that someone has to teach a subject that they are not expert in is inconsequential. A siege mentality is developing as people compromise teaching quality for fear of losing their jobs. (Team leader, SAMP4)

Competition and ‘turf battles’ between sections, rather than collegiality, arose when each study area was treated as a mini enterprise that had to record a positive bottom line. Such practices treated staff as a cost to be managed rather than as an asset to be developed, and resulted in staff having less access to professional networks.

We used to have a really strong network of teachers in our study area across the state and would meet regularly, at least every six weeks, and would always be phoning each other. With the axing of study area networks and the rise in competition, we no longer meet. There are now turf battles between colleges and my colleagues in other colleges are now competitors. I have been told not to share information with them. This is very difficult and has reduced our access to knowledge about what is going on in other colleges. (Lecturer, SAMP3)

I get to meet colleagues at work functions but I have to give up my personal time to go. I certainly don’t go for the function but to catch up with people. I think it is really important. Networking is really important as it’s the way things happen, but we lecturers always have to do it in our own time whereas managers do it as part of their hours. (Lecturer, AMP3)

Experienced lecturers felt bereft of collegiality and experienced a loss of their networks, as access to the latest information was restricted to managers. They mourned the loss of an ability to be altruistic, creative and reflective about learning and teaching. Reflective practice or communities of practice, although highly prized in educational literature, is mere rhetoric in an environment that devalues quality teaching and learning or denies the required time and effort for its practice. Inexperienced or casual lecturers, without access to professional networking, were unable to increase their tacit knowledge and felt marginalised in the organisation.
Wrestling with Ideology

The critical tensions between the ideology of corporate managerialism and a Kangan-like philosophy of education were keenly felt and described by a number of respondents (9% or 16 responses). The tensions of this relationship emerged as a central and critical issue in this study. The economic forces and political pressure brought to bear on TAFE colleges resulted in many staff compromising pedagogical expertise. Lecturers (6 responses) and academic managers (7 responses) expressed anxiety about compromising their professionalism in the face of major changes to courses, curriculum and the introduction of training packages.

Our teaching activities are increasingly becoming fragmented and diversified to the point where, over the last two years, we never teach the same thing twice. It is change, continual change and problems. Training reforms deny or devalue the necessity for spending time on developing materials and learning resources. The concern is exclusively with standards and assessment procedures. The one thing that's obviously been sacrificed is the minimum level of stability that's necessary to develop sound quality training programs. The problem is an increasingly short-term focus. The virtues of flexibility and responsiveness are emphasised. But I think together with flexibility and responsiveness there must be recognition that the development of skills and training need to address longer term needs as well, and, yeah, that's what has been sacrificed. Basically, training is being reduced to a short-term, reactive type of model that must react to immediate conditions. (Lecturer, AMC4)

Lecturers were most concerned that the training agenda of the 1990s had led to superficial or surface learning rather than deep learning that prepared people for lifelong learning and career change. Their responses reflected the way TAFE colleges had been heavily subjected to technocratic management and processes of rationalisation. As a result, those who tried to maintain a humanistic, educative focus in their work and a professional service orientation to students (rather than a business or entrepreneurial orientation) did not get ahead or became disenfranchised within the system. The following responses capture the critical tensions and conflict faced by educators.

I remember a turning point in my career. I was talking to a senior woman about what I should do with my career and I remember her words. She said, 'if you think being a great teacher’s going to get you anywhere, forget it. Nobody’s interested in how good you are in the classroom. It’s what you do outside the classroom’. I found that astonishing, that here we are in an educational institution, and my manager was basically telling me she didn’t give a rats how well I did in that classroom and that it wouldn't help my career. I found that amazing and the sad fact is, she’s right. (Principal lecturer, SAFP2)

There is a natural concern to clarify standards and ensure the quality of training. But at the same time, there seems to be this denial or unwillingness to consider that training or education doesn’t happen spontaneously. They require hard work and motivation on both the trainers and the students. It’s not an activity
that can be looked at purely in financial terms. Some of us feel that education and training is a service, and the people who provide it should be motivated by a genuine service ethic rather than a commercially-motivated approach. It is difficult to see that the relationship between a lecturer and a student or a trainer and a trainee can be looked at in purely commercial terms. There are tensions there, a sense that commercial and bureaucratic processes are intruding excessively into an activity that is not understood. (Team leader, AMC2)

The second example highlights the way the language of the business world and practices of the bureaucracy have colonised the ideals and practices of vocational education. Bates (1995) argues that teachers need to resist market-driven notions of education and educational administration. He also suggests that teachers should resist system imperatives that try to dismantle pedagogical values and practices. However, as the following responses illustrate, it is very difficult for contract lecturers to ignore system imperatives for visible and immediate outcomes when the incentives to improve pedagogical practices are not there.

**Contract lecturers know that when their jobs come up for renewal, they have to be able to say what they have done. The flashy things and promotional stuff will be far more important than doing a good teaching job.** (Principal lecturer, SAF3)

**The quiet achiever never gets ahead, the ones who have done great programs, taken students on excursions and are really popular with students. They might even lose their jobs because they didn’t do the promotional stuff. They weren’t being seen to bring in money and grants. When you start thinking about it, it’s pretty sad.** (Senior lecturer, SAMC1)

**In Summary**

Most people interviewed in this study accepted that individuals operated in a climate of sacrifice to get work done and to get ahead, and that it included sacrificing some values, ideals and principles. The greatest sacrifice was personal in terms of time with family, friends and colleagues, and time for lifestyle pursuits or community engagement. The changing nature of work and patterns of long working hours to get the job done is testimony to a major shift in the power relations in the workplace. Management has been able to either coerce workers to accept sacrifice because of job insecurity or seduce them with the promise of rewards and promotion. Organisational downsizing and restructuring, against a backdrop of high unemployment, has fostered extreme job insecurity, and this in turn has given management much greater bargaining power. The ACIRRT (1999) research that examined the impact of change on peoples’ lives in Australia asserts that people are expected to work harder and longer, and accept such sacrifice as part of the changing nature of work. Such research illustrates that organisations impose open-
ended time demands on managers and workers alike, as work is task-oriented rather than time-based. The focus on getting the job done exacerbates the vulnerability of white-collar workers to do more and to achieve planned outcomes:

In many respects we are witnessing the managerialisation of the workforce. A situation where ordinary workers are expected to behave like managers: to work long unpaid hours, to negotiate salary packages, to plan their careers and to become competitive with other ‘managers’ (ACIRRT, 1999, p. 4).

It is also clear that gender constructs patterns of success and sacrifice. The economic rationale behind current work practices, such as the intensification of labour, the accent on productivity, and commercial and tangible outcomes, means that many women and men will find the price of sacrifice too great and will opt out of the race to get ahead. The costs to women are particularly acute as they, more than men, face the constant struggle to meet work and family expectations.

The apparent lack of concern about the magnitude of sacrifice, particularly from the executives, smacks of complacency and acceptance of a dehumanising organisational culture. It is disheartening to conclude that people believe and accept that personal and work sacrifice is an inevitable accompaniment to change and career progress in the TAFE sector.
Chapter 11
Limited Access: The Normalisation of Male Advantage

Feminists view workplaces as sites of gender politics (Acker & Van Houten, 1974), and analyse the structured patterns of organisational design, rules and procedures that enable men to maintain positions of power and prestige (Pringle, 1995). Some also analyse the social relations and cultural norms of workplaces noting the sexist attitudes about women and men that maintain male power (Halford & Leonard, 2001). A feminist examination, not only highlights the disadvantages faced by women, but the advantages bestowed on men and taken for granted (Burton, 1991; Cockburn, 1991; Connell, 1987). Feminists oppose exclusionary practices where women’s work is used to support a male social hierarchy, and contest industrial relations and social policies that regard men’s working lives as the norm (Eveline, 1994; Eveline & Hayden, 1999).

In the 1970s and 1980s, feminists focussed on breaking down the more overt structures and practices of gender inequality and discrimination that held women back from utilising their skills and talents (Burton, 1991; Game & Pringle, 1983). Feminist intervention policies, such as affirmative action and equal opportunity legislation, aimed to curtail discrimination and disrupt traditional ways of thinking (Bacchi, 1996; Still, 1993; Yeatman, 1990, 1993), although some would argue that these interventions have not resulted in gender equality and that the women’s movement has stalled1 (Aveling, 2002; Probert, 2002). Some interventions evoked backlash (Faludi, 1992), raised suspicion about a lack of accountability to the women’s movement (Yeatman, 1990) or induced cynicism in core bureaucracies (Summers, 2003).

In the 1990s, policy analysts claimed that neoliberalism magnified aggressive masculine working cultures, which exacerbated gender inequalities and further subverted social policy interventions (Bacchi, 2001). Some male sociologists
suggested it enabled male norms of aggression and single-mindedness to be accepted in the neoliberal era resulting in work practices that neglected the human costs on families. These norms exacted physical and psychological tolls on workers who tried to balance career advancement with family and personal relationships (Collier, 2001; Connell, 1987). To some degree, this explains why very few women with family responsibilities reached senior levels in organisations, but “this was not necessarily the same for men who could rise to the top, whether married or single, with or without children” (Currie, Thiele & Harris, 2002, p. 2).

This chapter continues to explore perceptions of equality with a focus on career advancement opportunities and the barriers to getting ahead. It focuses on the functioning of TAFE colleges as a gendered culture, where gender is done in specific ways, with the result that women are subordinated in structural and sociocultural ways (Benschop & Brouns, 2003). The study first focusses on the opportunities for career progression and explores the way respondents account for the paucity of women in senior management. It then examines the way a male norm operates in TAFE to subvert gender equality. Lastly, it investigates men’s continuing position of relative advantage within the context of “a battle for democracy” (Giddens 1994, p. 72) where women have not yet broken free from their clustering at the lower levels of the organisation and their traditional role of supporting men.

**Women at the Top: Why so few?**

Of the 19 executive positions in the two TAFE colleges, only four were held by women. Less than one-third of senior academic positions were held by women. Similarly, only one-fifth of corporate management positions above level 6 were held by women. All participants were asked to explain why there were so few women in senior positions. In addition, executives were asked whether they considered this to be a problem. In constructing the question in terms of a ‘problem’, executives were being challenged to consider issues of gender equality, and to use the number and status of women compared with men as an indicator of the extent of the problem. The mindsets that establish and preserve the normalisation of males in senior positions is then explored.

Table 11.1 ranks the five main explanations provided for why there were so few senior women in TAFE. The most common explanation offered was historical. Respondents suggested that past discrimination, events or traditional cultural norms
accounted for the small number of senior women (29% or 40 responses). The second most common explanation suggested that women chose not to pursue careers (25% or 34 responses). The third pointed to structural factors and gender barriers that were labelled discriminatory (23% or 32 responses). The fourth explanation blamed women’s lack of experience or skills deficit (15% or 20 responses). The fifth denied that there was a problem with the number of women in senior positions, and by way of evidence pointed to atypical examples (8% or 11 responses).

Table 11.1 Women in Senior Positions in TAFE: Why so Few?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Explanation</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Position</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Historical</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A matter of choice</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural and cultural</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deficit in skills, training, experience,</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>attitude</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denial of a problem</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Response</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Respondent</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the analysis was organised around these five categories, many respondents, particularly managers and executives, cited more than one explanation, sometimes even contradicting themselves. For example, several suggested that the lack of women in senior positions was historical and intimated that with time women will swell the senior management ranks. At other times, the same respondents used the historical privileging of a male culture and the pervasive nature of patriarchy as evidence that time will not change the status quo. Responses were also differentiated by gender and rank, as the discussion below reveals.

Historical Explanations

TAFE’s own distinctive historical culture and tradition of technical education has shaped the social relations of gender and the positioning of women in the organisation. TAFE has an institutionalised, trade-oriented culture, ”closely
associated with a masculinist culture of work and management practices marked by hierarchy and skill” (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000, p. 12). Therefore, it was not surprising that the major factor given to explain the lack of women in senior positions was cast in terms of TAFE’s history of sociocultural discrimination. Forty respondents (29%) gave permutations of such explanations. Men, compared to women, were more than twice as likely as women to point to the historical background of TAFE as a key factor (28 and 12 responses respectively). Supplementing the references to the technical tradesman background of TAFE colleges were references to the historical features of gender discrimination. It was claimed that the traditional segmentation of social labour, which placed greater responsibility for child rearing and domestic work on women, coupled with a lack of childcare, discouraged married women from working or pursuing careers. Historical accounts easily slipped into sociobiological reasoning, articulated by one woman when saying the obvious ‘Men can’t have babies, can they?’: Table 11.2 provides a montage of responses from men and women suggesting that history and past discrimination account for women’s relative absence from the senior ranks.

Table 11.2 Historical Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why so Few Women? Responses by Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia is more like the ‘wild west’, more paternalistic and gung-ho than other states.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women had to resign when they got married.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE got a lot of male redeployees from the Education Department.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All sorts of reasons made it easy for males to get a ride to the top.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s never going to change is it? Men can’t have babies, can they?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Most of the men who stated that the structure and management of TAFE colleges was historically dominated by men, claimed that it is men’s technical interests and the sheer number of men that explains the absence of women from management (28 responses).

*Most of industry is male-dominated and TAFE is a reflection of that reality so that’s why there is an unequal number of men and women.* (Lecturer, AMC7)

*A lot of jobs, government organisations in particular, are traditionally male-dominated. You’ve got corporate services, lots of areas, and resource directorates that control the money and the budgets ... I haven’t seen any*
Nineteen of the 40 ‘historical’ responses (48%) pointed to biological reasons and associated cultural expectations. They spoke of women who left the workforce to have families or women being expected to commit to motherhood and family, and of men’s freedom to ‘go country’ to gain promotion and seniority. Historically, time served, rather than merit, determined who got promoted. Often such accounts pointed to the past, implying that such factors no longer discriminate against women but that the legacy still hampers them from getting ahead.

*I think it's still hereditary to some extent. A lot of it was based on willingness to go country and do those sorts of things. Promotion was based on the amount of time you'd spent in the organisation and I guess traditionally women went out of the organisation to have families and do other things, again because of their husbands having other jobs, and they didn’t take the country service up, and so I guess there was always a bigger number of men who were able to do those things and hence they seemed to gravitate to the top. Now there's a male ethos that has developed and it's difficult for women to break that down. I think by bringing managers from outside that it's starting to happen.* (Executive, EM5)

Seven executives gave similar explanations, although few of them could explain why a critical mass had not been reached when the historical nature of TAFE had changed significantly over the past 15-20 years. Historical accounts are comforting, laying responsibility for gender inequality on past rather than present practices and allowing proponents to ignore how “androcentric institutions transform male-female difference into female disadvantage” (Lipsitz, 1993, p. 177). In this context, exceptions to the rule are used as further evidence that the fault lies in the past. These executives pointed to the small number of women in management positions as evidence that it is possible for women to reach the top.

*TAKE has come from essentially a ‘blue collar’ trade background - a very male dominated background. I think that over time it has changed and we are now seeing a good representation. Of course, it’s by no means equal at this stage, but it’s developing. I don’t know what the exact figures are, but it’s changing and it’s a time thing. I believe it’s changing quite rapidly, relatively I mean. We’ve just had a woman appointed to the most senior position in the whole training sector, the head of ANTA ... I don’t know her name. And a friend I was working with a number of years ago has got the most senior job in the biggest TAFE institute in Australia, she is the managing director of the Sydney Institute which is an enormous college and bigger than the whole training system - all the TAFE colleges put together of Western Australia. So we are definitely seeing more women moving into very senior positions.* (Executive, EF9)
The above respondent points to atypical cases of women rising to senior positions as evidence that women are making it to the top. Eleven managers echoed similar sentiments to those expressed by the executives. These respondents appeared confident in the pipeline argument,\(^2\) which predicts that as more women enter the TAFE pipeline, then more women will be available in the recruitment pool for senior management positions. Many feminist researchers claim the pipeline argument is flawed as it is built on a simple human capital approach to labour markets, and ignores systemic and cultural gender discrimination (Allen & Castleman, 2001; Husu, 2001). As there has not been a comprehensive gender analysis of employment shifts or equal opportunity trends in the TAFE workforce in Australia, it remains to be seen whether more women in TAFE will result in more women in senior management positions (Shah, 2000). Against the notion of a simple pipeline still waiting to flow freely, one program manager provides an example of how the managing director’s gender can have an enormous influence on the pace of change.

There are so many men in TAFE, but I never did believe in the glass ceiling. When [name] was the MD here she would encourage women to apply for management positions, and there was quite good representation of women in executive and middle management. But since she left we definitely have a glass ceiling. Women now don’t get a look in. Women aren’t good enough to them [males], when in fact most of the women managers in this college don’t believe the men should be there because they are not good enough. But it’s the old boys’ network and it’s the way the TAFE system works. A new director has just been appointed and he’s an old friend of people on the panel. So it’s the old boys’ network still working. (Program manager, SAFP6)

The male hierarchy is not so entrenched that it can’t be changed if a progressive managing director is at the helm. However, the account also shows how easily the practices of the past, and the rhetoric of tradition, can be reinvented when management lacks commitment to changing the structure. Within two years of the female managing director leaving, only one female was on the executive. Sinclair (1998) points to the dangers of tokenism and the fragility of the change initiated by a handful of women. She warns feminists not to be “seduced by a masculinity which softens itself at the edges, which learns the language of care and consultation but uses this to strengthen the status quo” (p. 74). She argues that organisations are more likely to entrench the subjugation of women and strengthen the status quo of a certain kind of masculinity by admitting token women into the senior ranks, but will resist any attempt to fundamentally change masculine management culture.
**A Matter of Choice**

The second most common explanation for the under-representation of women in senior positions and management rested on a rhetoric of ‘choice’. This suggested that women made a conscious choice not to seek promotion for personal, social and psychological reasons (25% or 34 responses), but the meaning given to ‘choice’ was very different depending upon who was speaking. The 14 female responses suggested that women were making strategic choices, mindful of the toll that structural barriers place upon their health and wellbeing. While the 20 male responses suggested women’s choices were more straightforward, reflecting a general unwillingness ‘to put in what it takes’. Men, more than women, suggested that women do not desire promotion, rather than being less able to get promotion.

**Table 11.3 A Matter of Choice**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women are tired of hitting the glass ceiling and give up.</td>
<td>Women don’t want to work that hard and put in what it takes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It’s too uncomfortable and lonely for women at the top.</td>
<td>Women don’t want the responsibility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women balance family and work.</td>
<td>Women balance family and work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women wake up to the harms of a high-powered career and opt out.</td>
<td>Women are happy just to stay at the base grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There’s more to life than being burnt out by a career.</td>
<td>Women self-select not to apply for promotion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Women weigh up their skills or chances of success and make an internal judgement not to pursue promotion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Women suggested that they decided not to pursue a career from personal choice and often gave accounts of their own, or a colleague’s, experience of weighing the cost-benefits of a career. Some spoke of women making conscious life stage choices to move sideways, downshift or opt out after experiencing the costs exacted on their mental wellbeing and relationships from being in senior positions. A few respondents claimed women chose to postpone careers to concentrate on studying or satisfying personal interests, or that they preferred to change careers and invest time in training for the new career rather than stay on. Crucially, these decisions about career were still regarded as choices, despite an acknowledgement of their contingent nature, and for this reason such ‘choices’ were subject to a different, more derogatory, interpretation.
Three executives suggested that women did not want promotion and were ‘just happy to come in and work’. One relied uncritically on some dated research to explain why women are responsible for their concentration in low-level administrative work.

*About 15 years ago when I was in the Public Service Commission, they did a survey of all the female workers in government. From my recollection about 60 or 70% of them were very happy women, were happy where they were and that was basically in level 1 - the base grade position. They were very happy just to stay there. So that's a fairly big base across the board in terms of the amount of females who just want to stay there. They just want to come to work, do their job, go home and that's not denigrating or anything, that's just exactly what they wanted.* (Executive, EM1)

More commonly, this ‘happiness’ was linked to claims about the investment of women in family. Equal numbers of men and women mentioned that women choose to make compromises to career aspirations for the sake of balancing work and family responsibilities. Four of the executives in this group explained the lack of women in senior positions in this way, or more strongly still, spoke of a desire to put family life ahead of career aspirations.

*I guess we’ve got a lot of females in the administrative band and a lot of that’s by choice because some of them are bringing up families and some are part-time and it suits them, and it's what they do best. It's what they like to do and feel comfortable to do.* (Executive, EM8)

*It is a question of what people want to do, both males and females. Some people don't want to work as hard as I work. Some people want to organise their life differently. Some people's priorities are not to work a long day and get to the top of the promotional tree. I know one guy who drops his kids off at school and comes in quite late and leaves early, and no way in the world does he want to be in a job like mine. And some women, probably more women, are like that as well.* (Executive, EM3)

These accounts present women’s and men’s choices to pursue a career as unproblematic, free and equal. They can either choose to work long hours and put themselves in the race for senior management, or work less and ‘bring up families’ and ‘drop the kids off at school’. The suggestion is that men and women can only pursue a career if they abrogate family responsibilities, and that the different choices of men and women are merely personal preference. There is no suggestion that sharing the care and nurture of children is a vital expression of social responsibility that ought to be shared by women and men, or that they themselves neglect such responsibilities in favour of career advancement. Nor is there any suggestion that organisations have a responsibility to structure the workplace to enable these responsibilities. The rhetoric of ‘choice’ masks the structural and gendered
constraints (Cass, 2000), and limited opportunities that are embedded in labour market and social policy (Probert, 2002). Cass (2000) argues:

It is inaccurate to separate families into two mutually exclusive groups: those where the women are in the labour force and allegedly abrogating their family responsibilities; and those where women are outside the labour force and fully engaged in household activities. This is a mischievous separation, calculated to embed the policy debate in conflict and to result in regressive policy outcomes ... which women and men within their family relationships attempt as best as they can to negotiate (p. 148).

Maushart (2001) suggests that instituting family friendly work policies at all levels is a precondition for achieving more women in senior management. She suggests, however, that it is the movement to a fairer and more equitable division of labour in the home where the real change has to happen, in order for women to be able to pursue careers on an equal footing to men. Morehead (2002) is less optimistic that family friendly work policies will help more women to achieve promotion or career advancement. She argues:

Women are not choosing to have babies at all these days because it jeopardises their working life and career aspirations. If women are indeed being that careful about protecting their job prospects, it is easy to understand the reluctance of some working mothers to take up family friendly policies if they feel it is the wrong thing to do in the context of their future at work (p. 171).

Morehead (2002) points to the difficulty of getting fathers to take up family friendly policies and suggests that they do not take up policies that result in the loss of any pay, status or future work prospects. She cautions that the public service generally has a plethora of family friendly policies, but that men do not use such options as a result of non-supportive workplace cultures. She argues that unless senior managers are convinced that they have strategic advantage in retaining talented men and women who have family responsibilities, they will not actively promote or implement their policies.

**Structural and Cultural Explanations**

The third most common explanation for women’s absence from positions of influence and power were grouped as the male culture (23% or 32 responses). Women, compared to men, were three times more likely to identify systemic structural factors (24 and 8 responses respectively), such as the gendered division of labour and the substructures of the hierarchy. Women also noted that men had greater access to certain benefits in the workplace, such as the use of college cars, mobile phones and overtime. They claimed that they were confronted with
stereotypes and expectations that were based on socialisation, tradition and unconscious preconceptions of what women should and should not do and say. Their accounts of barriers illustrate that social and organisational structures are far from gender neutral and are formed to suit men’s interests rather than those of women. Feminist commentators suggest that the main factor that prevents women from occupying senior management positions is men’s reluctance to either hand over or share the reins of power with women (Marshall, 1993a; Probert, 2002; Still, 1993). The lack of access to power through strategically placed positions within the organisation and membership of influential networks is considered the most significant barrier to women’s career advancement (Smith & Hutchinson, 1995).

Still (1993) claims that even when women have ‘done all the right stuff’ they still face discriminatory barriers, both overt and covert. Hede and Ralston (1992) found that while there were no gender differences in career satisfaction, men and women managers had different expectations in regard to their career paths. They found that men expected to be in the same organisation for the next five years but in a different and more senior position, while women expected to make a sideways move to a different organisation as they expected to hit the ‘glass ceiling’. Table 11.4 summarises the responses concerning the structural barriers and gendered nature of the TAFE system.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why so Few Women?</th>
<th>Responses by Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>Men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Societal bias and therefore organisational discrimination of women.</td>
<td>It’s much tougher for women: they have to be twice as good to be considered equal to men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workplace is hostile to women.</td>
<td>Redeployment favours men.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The workplace ignores the needs of women with family responsibilities.</td>
<td>The managing director is anti-affirmative action.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The old boys’ network favours men.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The macho culture favours aggressive, self promoting men.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women who are not too threatening get ahead.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no role models of women that women like.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women encounter the glass ceiling.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are not encouraged or mentored the same way as men.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Twelve respondents, eight women and four men, indicated that the ‘glass ceiling’ operated to exclude women from accessing powerful positions and networks. They made references to women facing tougher hurdles than men in getting ahead.

*It’s harder for a woman to get a manager’s position. It doesn’t mean women can never get those positions or are never appointed to them. It’s just my perception that they probably have to have a stronger application and interview much stronger than perhaps a comparable male candidate. I don’t think the glass ceiling or ‘old boys’ club’ actually prevents women getting those positions, but it is so much more difficult.* (Senior lecturer, SAMP1)

The ‘glass ceiling’ refers to the invisible barrier that stops women at a certain level from advancing further, although formally and in principle both men and women have similar chances to proceed to the top. The reference to the ‘old boys’ club’ highlights the perception that a masculine culture and value system dominate TAFE recruitment and promotional practices, making it more difficult for women to progress within such a gendered system. As organisational cultures are essentially male formed and dominated, “the very maleness goes largely unrecognised by organisational members who see no reason to analyse or change a given” (Still 1993, p. 153). Male domination in the hierarchy is taken for granted as though the organisational structure were objective and gender neutral. The lack of effort to redress gender imbalance is partly explained by one executive who stated that the state government’s ‘Two Year Plans for Women’ had been used to increase women’s representation in senior management but not to improve their representation in lower management or supervisory positions.

*There have been major inroads made in the last ten years to make processes less discriminatory by allowing females or males to apply for positions. There is a lot more focus on women’s careers. When Carmen Lawrence was premier, she had some sort of KPI [Key Performance Indicator] that there would be 40% of women in senior management by 2000. That’s a pretty tough ask to get that. All I’m trying to say is that at the premier’s level there has been a huge push to get women into senior management.* (Executive, EM1)

While granting the government’s direction to appoint more women to senior positions, this executive conceded the college has no strategies in place to meet the government’s target. In fact, he goes on to explain that redeployment and merit selection, and not affirmative action, is used in the college and that these processes tend to result in the appointment of men.

*Women do suffer in terms of getting senior positions and do not get enough opportunities to get the sort of experience needed to win expressions of interest or act in senior positions. Opportunities are limited and you could argue that at the end of the day, the criteria of actually getting a job at the senior levels is
experience in middle management, so it's still a problem in terms of how they do that … the majority of people that get sent to us from redeployment are male, so the competition is very tough for women. (Executive, EM1)

The rhetoric of merit and the renunciation of affirmative action is a recurring theme that pervades all but a few responses in the study, and will be expanded upon later in the chapter. For now, it is interesting to note that this executive sees women as having a problem gaining access to the experience required for senior roles, rather than the organisation having any responsibility in providing such experience or putting strategies in place to assist them to gain the skills required. It is also interesting to note his directorate has no women in senior positions.

After 1999, all public sector agencies, including TAFE colleges, had to provide data on their management profile and report to the OEO. The number of women in senior management roles in TAFE colleges became a key indicator of gender equity and a measure of organisational performance. Managing directors were compelled to redress the gender imbalance in the three tiers of management. The management profile of one college illustrates the low numbers of women in each of the tiers of management.

Table 11.5 The Management Profile of TAFE College A

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 1 Total No of employees</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of women</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(% of women)</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 2 (Senior Executive Service)</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(% of women)</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tier 3 (Level 6-8)</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of women</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(% of women)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Total Management profile: Tiers 1-3</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No of women</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(% of women)</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The management profile shows there was no change at the senior executive service level in three years at the college and this was representative of all TAFE colleges in the state. In 2001, women made up 20.3% of the state’s Senior Executive Service and this was nearly 4% lower than for the Australian Public Service (OEO, 2001, *Diversity in the Public Sector Yearly Report*).
Table 11.5 also shows that at the third tier of management, women represented 21%-27% of managers. What this figure fails to reveal is that only one of these women held a level 8 or director level position. That the appointment of women to middle management did not make significant changes to the maleness of the TAFE culture was attributed to its deeply entrenched nature.

*The boys’ club is very strong in TAFE colleges in Western Australia. It isn’t as strong in the private sector or in other parts of Australia. I think it’s quite entrenched here. I think it’s because Western Australia has been like the ‘Wild West’, heavily resource-based and traditional male-based industries. Like Queensland, Western Australia has been frontier country and very male-driven. It’s a beast that still needs to be tamed. I think it’s a very male environment here. Managers are fairly gung-ho, get out there and show them how to do it. Very male. Whereas if you look at Victoria or New South Wales there have been significant people talking about equality of the sexes and women achieving in male areas. Queensland and Western Australia stand out as being paternalistic societies and the last bastions of the boys’ club.* (Executive, EF10)

This executive explains how uncomfortable this climate can be for senior women. She claims that women receive lukewarm and token support.

* I have witnessed the way the managing director has interacted with females and how he interacts with males. There was not the tête-à-têtes with the females, and given the three very different female personalities there, he acted differently with each as well. I think under his regime there was definitely a glass ceiling. I was aware he thought highly of me, but I knew that I would not get any further. In fact, I know that there are going to be two new appointments at the college above director and neither will go to women. In the name of restructuring, we are going to get another layer of management. These are going to be senior executive service positions and there is already one male name being bandied about for one of them. In my experience, when there are senior executive positions up for grabs, the women miss out.* (Executive, EF10)

The ‘chilly climate’ experienced by senior women underscored their perception that they were a peripheral rather than an integral part of the executive. Some women were clear that the organisational culture was unreceptive to women and intolerant of their needs, but they found it difficult to point to specific practices and policies that discriminated against them as a group. They had a general feeling that procedures for appointment, promotion, and distribution of work and benefits appeared to be neutral and fair, but were convinced that in reality such practices were subtly subverted. Some women were frustrated by their inability to provide concrete examples of systemic discrimination and were perturbed by its invisibility. They struggled with the idea of the culture being hostile, knowing that such a charge went against the organisational rhetoric of fairness and equality, diversity and equity. However, they had a suspicion that such rhetoric masked an unconscious hostility
towards women who wanted to change the culture to better suit their needs and aspirations.

Five senior women contended that men were threatened by the prospect of more women in the senior ranks. They claimed that men were happy with the ‘token’ female senior manager, executive or managing director, but did not want the numbers to increase to such an extent that would threaten the established order. When more than token female representation was present in the senior or executive ranks, they reported more intense hostility towards women. Three women at College B claimed that they had heard sexually offensive and derogatory comments directed at women in senior ranks. They explained that their college was once the most proactive in mentoring and getting women into promotional positions, but that a change of managing director returned the college to the male norm.

I don’t think the executive is pro-women at all. They make token gestures now and again to allow one or two women into the ranks, usually some ineffectual non-threatening woman or one that strokes the male egos, and that is the sum total of their intention. (Program manager, SAFP6)

Some people think that women are more favoured than men. You know this place was once called the ‘Petticoat Place’ when [name] was managing director. Her most senior general manager was a woman and they made an effort to increase women in the senior ranks. (Lecturer, AFP5)

Two women executives from College A suggested that a former managing director was openly hostile to affirmative action and was not committed to making any changes to the organisational culture of the executive, just superficial changes to meet the minimum equal opportunity reporting requirements.

Under the old managing director there was a very strong boys’ club in the college generally. Talking about my appointment, it was affirmative action to even up the gender balance. I was told at an executive meeting shortly after I was appointed that the MD was really happy that there were two females to balance the gender. However, I don’t think there was a great sincerity in that position. I think there was a commitment to even up the gender a bit for the sake of appearances, but gender equity was not his priority nor was working with women a part of his comfort zone. (Executive, EF10)

The extent to which the culture is accidentally or actively hostile to women is difficult to state. However, it was certainly evident that the attitude of the managing director was pivotal in making either cosmetic or substantive changes to the senior ranks. The hostile culture extended throughout the organisation. Women lecturers in male-dominated trades and study areas, such as maritime, management and hospitality, understood that they operated in a male culture that tolerated women within its
ranks, but acted antagonistically to those who tried to change the status quo. Female-dominated study areas were regarded as less important. One male lecturer, for example, was quite hostile to the concept of feminising the culture and found the practice of affirmative action unacceptable.

Sometimes there are internal promotions from teaching staff to program manager. Because they are temporary promotions, even though they may go on for more than a year, there is no selection panel or union representation in the appointments. Some of these promotions are very dubious. One that springs to mind is about a long-serving, highly respected lecturer, who stood in several times in the past and was passed over for a woman who had been in the college just two years, from a minor area. The section had several areas and she came from one of the minor areas, whereas the guy overlooked came from the major area. Now one female director was said to have remarked to one of the lecturers in the major area ‘this place is a boys’ club and I’m going to sort it out’. I’m reliably told she said that. I was quite upset by it. There’s nothing you can do about it as there’s nothing you can prove. (Lecturer, AMP7)

This response illustrates the gendered nature of the culture in TAFE. The code for ‘minor area’ is that the study area is small, and therefore a talented lecturer coming from that area, who happens to be female, cannot possibly be of the same calibre as someone coming from a major area (code for ‘bigger has to be better’). In this case the ‘minor area’ was also a traditionally female area and the major area was traditionally male. This case illustrates how the masculine norm can gain strength through being invisible (Eveline, 1994). He was upset about the remark that ‘TAFE is a boys’ club’ and worried about the implications.

A structural response that went beyond organisational bias pointed to women’s disproportionate share of domestic work and family responsibilities, and its impact on workforce participation and career. Rather than the language of sacrifice (see Chapter 10) or the rhetoric of choice as described earlier, structural accounts of women’s double load or extra burden were understood as a societal bias against women. A female executive sums up the double bind.

I think it’s frightening that there are so few women in senior positions. It gets lonely … There’s a different way of operating when there are no other females on the executive. I have to say there’s a difference and yet there shouldn’t be, but there is. I think probably to get to this particular level it takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of commitment and it takes sheer hard work to get there. A lot of women, the majority, have got other commitments. They have their children. They have their commitment to get their children to sporting organisations, making sure they do their schooling properly, and if there are any problems it is usually the female who has the responsibility to sort it. I’m generalising but the majority of time, it’s women who have these duties. (Executive, EF11)
This account of the psychological conflict and physical bind that women find themselves in does not suggest that the organisation should accommodate such needs. While identifying the wider social structure as fundamentally problematic, the executive expresses her belief that the solution to the barrier also lies outside the organisation, with a change in the partner’s behaviour.

Only six men pointed to wider social structures and practices that define women’s and men’s roles, and acknowledged that ‘men have a great time compared to women’. However, admitting men’s advantage did not translate into taking responsibility for changing the status quo. Somehow these men still manage to blame women.

To the extent that women allow themselves to have their role in society dictated by men, they will always be subservient to them. I’m not suggesting that they get out and have a fight for the streets over the issue, but I think women have got to start dictating the role that they will play. They are starting to do that. You know in the schools and in the community there’s a strong emphasis on trying to establish for themselves the role they are going to play. Until women actually stand up and say ‘I’m not going to stay home and look after the baby’ or ‘that’s going to be shared between the two of us’, until that actually happens women will always be locked into the role defined for them by men. I mean men have a great time compared to women. Until women generally, more than just the few that are doing it now, start to dictate within society what role they will actually play, they will always be subservient to the master - the men. That’s the issue and I think they’re going in the right direction, but they’ve got a long way to go. (Executive, EM12)

The barriers to equality encountered by women have their roots deep inside the structure of patriarchy (Acker, 1994). Unfortunately, even when legislative barriers have been removed, structural barriers remain highly resistant to change (Aveling, 2002). The ‘glass ceiling’, which itself is a symbol of the deep-seated values of patriarchy, is clear evidence of the highly resilient nature of male norms and values. Gender equity in employment and promotion has not therefore been achieved in TAFE colleges, or more widely in the public sector and corporate Australia. While gender, power and culture remain a social rather than economic issue, talented women will continue to be a minority in senior positions (Still, 1993).

**Discourse of Deficit**

The fourth explanation for why women are under-represented in senior management or slower to advance in their careers is based on structural approaches and liberal perspectives on the assessment of women’s attributes, skills, qualifications, working styles, experience and knowledge. As illustrated in Chapter 8, a focus on the
qualities associated with success reveal a close relationship with distinctive macho attributes. These included ambition, ruthlessness, determination and political nous. Many of these attributes are based on aggression and outwitting others.

Table 11.1 shows that some respondents believed that women do not gain senior positions because they lack ‘male’ attributes, skills, experiences and knowledge (15% or 20 responses). Intimated in these responses was that women had different sets of skills, but that these were inferior to those of men. Table 11.6 summarises some of the accounts that reflect how women’s differences are changed to deficiencies.

**Table 11.6 Discourse of Deficit**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why so Few Women? Responses by Gender</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women are denied the opportunity to gain exposure and experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women put career satisfaction ahead of getting promotion at all costs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women lack confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women won’t keep fighting and give up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women don’t self promote enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women’s skills are undervalued or ignored.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Seven executives suggested that women in organisations do not possess the required characteristics to be good managers or that they may lack the self confidence to believe they could be managers and thus do not assert themselves on the management stage. They claimed that ‘lack of merit’ or insufficient depth and breadth of experience prevented them from competing on an equal footing with men.

_There’s a thing that there should be more females in senior management positions, but the sort of restrictions, for want of a better word, is that there is open competition. When you advertise a position, you pick the best person and picking the best person means exactly what it says. It could be a male and if it’s mostly males, then you end up having more males in senior or executive positions. It gets back to my point earlier, which is that women need to get the experience and learn how to become more competitive. (Executive, EM1)_

This executive articulates equal opportunity objectives rather poorly, ‘there’s this thing that there should be more females in senior management positions’. However, like six of his peers, he quickly quashes the idea by suggesting it is incompatible
with merit selection. He does not consider that merit selection may be already contaminated by gendered organisational culture and employment practices. Instead he intimates that women themselves are lacking, ‘they need to get experience and learn how to become more competitive’. Three executives suggested that it was women’s fault, as ‘they don’t put their hands up like men do’. Women were perceived as different from men and deficient in comparison.

_ I don’t think women step forward or put their hand up as often as men do. They are not as career-driven or focussed._ (Executive, EM3)

_ I think women choose to perform their jobs differently. Women tend to be more person-oriented in the job, more process-oriented than men._ (Executive, EM4)

_ Yes, having fewer women in management is a problem. Some women are not tough enough. Assertiveness training and mentoring would help those who want to get up._ (Executive, EM6)

The discourse of deficit is related to the pervasive nature of various masculinities that are associated with managerial styles such as authoritarianism, paternalism, careerism and entrepreneurialism (Halford & Leonard, 2001). The failure to recognise and value women’s management styles, attributes, skills and experiences is well documented (Burton, 1991; Cox & Leonard, 1991; Currie, Thiele & Harris, 2002; Probert, 2002). Presenting these differences as deficiencies is a form of backlash against women in the workforce (Faludi, 1992; Still, 1993). A range of nuanced performances, interpersonal skills and team management strategies go unrecognised, unrewarded or devalued in ways that render them invisible (Lazenby & Poynton, 1992).

A lack of a broad-based experience and visibility is a key barrier faced by women (Still, 1993). In TAFE colleges, one way to gain broad experience and to operate at a higher skill level is through secondments and acting positions, while gaining a profile or better visibility is often achieved through managing special projects. Both these opportunities, if advertised, are managed through ‘expressions of interest’, which do not require an interview or formal process. People can also get these opportunities by being tapped on the shoulder or through recommendations. Men, more than women, appeared to be the ones tapped on the shoulder.

Six female administrative staff commented that they saw very different treatment and encouragement being given to lower level males than to females at the same level. They suggested females found it difficult to gain experience in challenging
projects or in acting positions. Some stated this was a very covert means of gender discrimination. Acker (1990) suggests that the deeply embedded substructures of gender difference are used to construct jobs for the boys and jobs for the girls. Burton (1990) suggests that conceptions of merit, affirmative action and industrial relations law need to be clear to ensure that managers make the link between unintended discriminators and invalid gendered assumptions.

Four women in administration suggested that even when women gain secondments or act in senior positions this experience does not translate into promotions to the same extent that it does for men. Many of the female administrative staff gained great satisfaction from their work when given the opportunities to act in senior positions. However, it appears that few of these acting experiences led to permanent promotions. Two female program managers also claimed that women not only find it difficult to get acting experience in senior management, but they have seen the selection process hijacked by executives.

> Our MD keeps talking about succession planning, but it’s all lip service. They don’t do anything about up-skilling program managers. I think they are fear-driven. There’s a program manager on another campus who continually gets put into senior management acting positions, and every other program manager at the college thinks she’s the worst one. Now the reason we believe she keeps getting asked is that they don’t fear her, she’s no threat. So she keeps getting asked. (Program manager, SAFP6)

This manager continued to give other examples where the merit selection process was ignored and explained how all the program managers banded together to come up with a strategy to gain the depth and breadth of experience required for senior management positions.

> When one of the directors was promoted to acting MD, we thought there would be a flow-on effect of opportunities, through expression of interest and merit, to get an acting chance. We thought, ‘wonderful’. Then this person was appointed with no expression of interest. We complained and the MD said that the position had to be re-advertised. The same person was appointed and we heard on the grapevine that the MD was alleged to have said, ‘I don’t care if there’s an expression of interest or not, I’ll appoint who I like’. (Program manager, SAFP6)

As a result of this incident, the program managers campaigned for all acting positions to be given out on a rotational basis. The executive replied that they would ‘consider the suggestion’, but three months later they had not been given an answer. The same program manager gives her own attempt at promotion as evidence that the system is biased against women in acting positions.
I was acting campus director for six months, and when the position was advertised I applied and wasn’t successful. I was very, very disgruntled about that. The person who got the job was the same generation as me. He had done teacher training the same as me and had been doing project work at another college … I had been managing one of the largest sections in the college. I’m sure he’s very good. He was able to sell himself better than I did. Maybe it’s the lack of training I’ve had at this college. (Program manager, SAFP6)

She found it hard to believe that her skills and experiences were deemed inferior to the appointee’s and tried to find reasons, such as her lack of self-promotion or insufficient training. There is no easy means of verifying the assertions of female respondents that women find it more difficult to gain and convert acting positions into permanent appointments. The college’s database and its equal opportunity reports do not provide data on the conversion rate from middle management acting positions to gaining senior manager promotions. In the absence of hard evidence women are surmising that it is their lack of self-promotion that may be holding them back. Similarly, two male senior managers suggested that being a good worker and people-oriented was not enough. They argued that without self-promotion or some other way of being recognised women do not get ahead.

Too often women sit back hoping that someone will recognise their talents and offer them challenging work or give them an opportunity to extend themselves. Women don’t understand that quiet achievement and modesty are not rewarded. They need to make it known that they want projects or to take on acting positions. (Corporate manager, SAMP3)

Quiet achievement or passivity is rarely considered an asset and is often mistaken for a “lack of fire, guts or ambition” (McKenna, 1997, p. 51). Still (1993) suggests that mentoring or training programs for aspiring women rarely teach them how to self-promote and increase their visibility, and usually teach peripheral skills, such as how to power dress or act professionally. She claims it overlooks teaching women the critical points about how to get ahead:

Few mentors ever seem to inform women that this is how business is done. Instead, their advice is couched usually in terms of career focus, career goals, how to dress and behave in a professional manner and other peripheral information (p. 165).

Still (1993) suggests that women are rarely taught the rules and subtleties of corporate gamesmanship, and fail to understand that most senior men operate by deals. The following account is from one female senior manager who thinks deals are brokered in the college, but rarely provide favourable outcomes for women. She thinks the skills of women managers are overlooked in the promotion stakes and relates her story by way of example.
I have been a manager at level 7 now for five years in this college and I report directly to the general manager. I have received numerous compliments from directors and the executive about the positive improvements I have made since I came. I have never received any complaints about my work. On the other hand, I have never been mentored either or given any opportunities to act in a director’s position. I have just come back from two weeks’ leave to find a new director’s position has been created in the college that is an amalgamation of my work and that of a current director who is on contract (which is about to expire). Of course, the position has been earmarked for my male colleague to ensure he gets it. The job has been so designed to prevent any outsider or redeployee from having the skills to compete for it. I feel so insulted that it is assumed that I will not question this strategy or apply for the position. It is expected that I will now work for this director and pretend that the ‘new’ job is a strategic positioning of the college when the reality is this is a job on a platter for one of the boys. This is a perfect example of mates looking after mates and women having to grin and bear it. (Corporate manager, GFP15)

It seems that managerial women have a severe impediment, as by definition they cannot gain admittance to the ‘boys’ club’. They must learn the artful game of corporate mateship, strategic job design and establish their own networks. Still (1993) claims that deal making underpins the male managerial culture by oiling the wheels of progress and leading to reciprocity and obligation. She argues that if women wish to crack the organisational culture, then they must learn how to lobby and make deals or at least understand the process. Still concludes by asserting that although organisations are changing, the art of deal making is so inbred into the male culture that she doubts that it will ever be eradicated by legislation or other forms of intervention: “Deal making is instinctive with men along with football analogies and reciprocity (the art of looking after your mate)” (p. 166).

Denial of a Problem
Eleven responses (or 8%), eight male and three women, suggested that gender imbalance was not a problem in senior management. They used the ‘merit’ argument to explain why they were against affirmative action to correct imbalances. Although only a small number of responses actually denied there was a problem, they provide the clearest illustration of how the male norm is rendered invisible.

Those who gave denial responses were endorsing the status quo and suggested that there was nothing wrong with the situation. The male responses suggested women’s lack of equal or critical mass representation was not a problem. Women were far less likely to deny there was a problem with their representation in supervisory and management positions and senior ranks, but denied there were barriers preventing women getting to the top.
Table 11.7 Denial of a Problem and Using the ‘Merit’ Argument

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Why so Few Women? Responses by Gender</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Women</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are no barriers preventing women getting to the top if they are prepared to do what it takes.</td>
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Four respondents, acknowledging that the managing director in one college was quite hostile to the concept of affirmative action, nonetheless denied there was a problem with the number of women in senior management. Not surprisingly this same group also denied the masculine nature of TAFE colleges and its impact on women as workers and aspirants. Three males denied that a masculine culture operated, and intimidated or disadvantaged women aspiring to get ahead. Six senior males admitted to a culture that made sexist jokes, but denied there was any real antipathy towards women. In their view, ribaldry and sexist jokes were ‘just the nature of men’ and didn’t translate into a culture that consciously or unconsciously excluded women.

*I am comfortable working with women and I think people are becoming more comfortable with it, but there is still a bit of a bloke thing where jokes are made about females and mothers-in-law, and all those usual jokes and comments get around the place. I don’t think they’re cruel or anything, it’s just one of those things. It’s just the nature of men to tend to rag each other. So when jokes are made, I don’t think there’s any great antipathy to women.* (Executive, EM5)

Denial is a way that people protect the illusion of equality and fairness even in the face of overwhelming evidence to the contrary. Both men and women take refuge in ‘pseudomutuality’, where they affirm that people are equal but continue to behave in contrary ways. Such refuge in semantics allows people to ignore the sexism embedded in everyday jokes or comments and to discount evidence of inequality, and therefore justify inaction or resist change. When male executives were asked if there was a problem with the number of senior women in the TAFE college or were asked to explain why there were so few women in executive positions, some of their
answers suggest they retreated to the semantics of pseudomutuality. Five out of 19 executives stated that they could not see a problem with the number of women in senior positions, especially in areas that were traditionally male (such as engineering, maritime or science) even when provided with evidence that showed women accounted for less than 20% of management positions.

A key theme that emerged in analysing the responses in this category was the rejection of affirmative action, with many respondents viewing it as an undeserved ‘hand-up’ rather than a strategy of organisational change and social justice. Opponents of affirmative action claimed that it contravened the merit principle. They viewed the merit selection process as gender neutral and did not acknowledge that it resulted in ‘comfort cloning’ and ‘homosociability’ (Burton, 1990), where the dominant group actively or subconsciously recruits those candidates most like themselves in the selection process. Instead, the merit principle has normalised the ‘boys’ club’ phenomena. The fact that there has been no significant shift in the dominance of men at the senior level of TAFE colleges, despite the introduction of equal opportunity legislation and mandatory reporting of the management profile, suggests that they are not gender neutral organisations. It shows that merit is defined by the profile of incumbents and that the selection process is based on the values and behaviours of men in power. Far from being objective, “the application of merit is associated with typical masculine characteristics and is defined by the prevailing values and behaviours within the organisation” (Smith & Hutchinson, 1995, p. 78).

Opponents of affirmative action were likely to label it as ‘reverse discrimination’ and claimed that it was incompatible with equal opportunity legislation. They suggested that it was inconsistent for women to ask not to be discriminated against in the workplace and then to ask for discrimination in their favour for career advancement.

We’ve had two senior women leave the organisation. If you wanted to try and achieve a gender balance, then you really have to say you are going to positively discriminate in favour of women. In other words, part of your selection process then becomes not just open competition by merit, but you’re going to introduce a bias in terms of if two people are close or reasonably close, we’ll go for the woman in effect. That’s something in terms of fairness we are reluctant to do. (Executive, EM12)

Bacchi (1996) claims that there is a morally significant difference between using legislation to reduce harm from discrimination and in using it to help redress gender inequity. She suggests that affirmative action acknowledges the complex nature of
women’s oppression. By aiming to empower them through better access to power and status, she claims affirmative action addresses some of the factors that oppress them as a group.

One male lecturer asserted that men would feel alienated if affirmative action was used to speed up the number of women in management, as this would appear to reward women who did not merit the promotion.

*If you are going to indulge in positive discrimination, then you are going to alienate all these men who were more qualified and on a level playing field would have got the job. I think if you are going to be fair, you have to be completely fair.* (Lecturer, AMP3)

Implicit in the argument is that if men feel alienated by affirmative action then it is counterproductive, adding another form of discrimination that is anathema to the values of equality, and insulting to those males who would be disadvantaged by it. He does not acknowledge that men as a group benefit from systemic, structural or social arrangements. His argument misrepresents the intention of affirmative action and is developed in the context of market competition (Bacchi, 2001). Such arguments reflect the discourse of neoliberalism, which subverts any attempt to socially intervene in market competition.

Executives, too, rejected concepts of affirmative action to redress gender balance as ‘something in terms of fairness we are reluctant to do’. The application of merit to find the ‘best person’ is deemed to be an objective rather than subjective measure of qualities and abilities. The fact that women continue to miss out on appointments to senior or executive management is taken as evidence that they are less meritorious. None of the executives or male senior managers suggested the selection process or deal making might be part of the problem in limiting women’s career advancement. They said they believed in equality and merit selection even in the face of evidence that suggests there is biased assessment of women’s capabilities and systemic discrimination, which excludes them from gaining the required skills or experiences (Todd & Eveline, 2004).

As Bacchi (1996) suggests, the hostile and deliberate attempt to misrepresent affirmative action indicates its potential as a vehicle for change. Aveling (2002) believes that efforts to swell female numbers in the senior ranks through affirmative action were undermined in the public sector and in large corporations. Perhaps this is the core reason that it was disregarded in TAFE colleges before it was ever given
a chance to work. It will not be easy to change this situation (Bacchi, 2001) because women are so scattered by tokenism that their vulnerability is high and their political potential low. In the existing economic climate, reform campaigns are unrealistic and individuals cannot risk their own job chances to become martyrs of feminism (Acker, 1994; Blackmore & Sachs, 2003).

**Supporting Male Social Hierarchy**

The last section of this chapter investigates men’s continuing position of relative advantage in TAFE, and the way women’s work is used to support a male social hierarchy. The normalisation of male culture is most evident when the low ratio of women to men in management is accepted as a given and considered unproblematic. It operates to concentrate women into the lowest levels of the organisation and least powerful positions. The college becomes resistant to anything more than token representation in middle management and executive ranks. Men were more likely to deny that this culture operated, and while some admitted that there was a societal bias against women they did not consider that organisational bias operated to disadvantage women. The male norm is at its most powerful when invisible and especially when “the masculinity of the culture is invisible to those who operate within it and benefit from it” (Currie, Thiele & Harris, 2002, p. 76).

Female administrative staff were the most vociferous in claiming the male norm operated as an invisible hand that upheld men’s position of power and maintained women’s subordination. Gender bias not only devalued their skills and prevented them from getting ahead, but apportioned responsibilities and workloads in a highly gendered fashion. They described a persistent and resilient male culture that assigned women to supporting the organisation rather than running the workplace. In addition, they claimed the culture unfairly distributed work and rewards. The following accounts point to the ‘invisible woman syndrome’ (Burgmann, 1995) where women’s skills, knowledge and ambitions are rendered invisible and their objections to their treatment trivialised and marginalised. Administrative staff claimed that managers bypassed incompetent or unwilling male colleagues and instead sought out the willing and ever helpful who usually happened to be female and on contract.

*I think the benefits don’t exist for females at level 1 and 2. And as far as duties being evenly distributed, well if the males actually did the duties they were supposed to do, you could almost say yes. But they don’t do them, not on this campus. They just walk away and leave them. I suppose it’s our maternal...*
instinct to come in and pick up the pieces. Well I have tried to stop doing that.  
(Administrative staff, GFP3)

The women in this particular focus group discussed the difficulty of saying ‘no’ to more work. Asked whether it was ‘maternal instinct’ that prompted them to ‘pick up the pieces’ their male colleagues had left, they replied it was ‘a sense of loyalty’, ‘a sense of duty’ and about ‘business ethics and standards’.

I think it is a sense of duty, but also a maternal instinct, because quite often I’m dealing with students who are saying ‘how am I going to get home?’ or ‘I need a bus pass’ or ‘how am I going to do this?’. You can’t just leave kids standing there. It’s not my maternal instinct to look after the blokes I work with, but it’s more that I try to help the customers with their personal problems.  
(Administrative staff, GFC2)

And I think it is also something to do with what was said earlier. You get a certain business ethic too from running your own business, and I think women have more of those business ethics than a lot of their male counterparts. Their ethics are higher. The standards are higher.  
(Administrative staff, GFP2)

Redistributing work from the incompetent or indolent to women, because they cared more about standards and the organisation, appeared to be a common practice.

I think good people who work hard and do good work, and prove that they can do it, will get more and more and more work. It happens all the time and it’s actually been an active policy on campus. Work has been taken away from poor performing areas and given to women who can get the job done. So some sections are overworked and other sections get off lightly and it’s very obvious that it is the women who are burdened with the extra work. They flog the ‘good girls’ who don’t like to say ‘no’ or who are not in a position to say no because they are on contract.  
(Administrative manager, GFP10)

Other women complained about having work ‘dumped on them’ at short notice with managers expecting it to be completed as unpaid overtime.

I think the level 1, 2 and 3 admin assistants are very badly done by. The whole organisation depends on them but they get a lot put on them by their managers. The other day I observed a manager of a level 2 admin say that he needed this PowerPoint presentation for tomorrow. Although it was 5 o’clock, she was expected to stay there and do it. I think that is very unfair. They do tend to get dumped on. That’s been my observation.  
(Administrative manager, GFP12)

These women are describing a long-standing dynamic of male domination and female subordination in the gendered substructure of office workplaces. Their accounts also illustrate how the gendered metaphor of ‘care’ positions women differently from men in the organisation. The discourse of care constructs good women as nurturing to students, and caring about staff and standards. Women find they are expected to care and invest their emotional labour into student and staff
welfare, whereas it appears optional for men. In a similar way, constructing caring as emotional labour allows men to opt out of such responsibilities, as caring or nurturing behaviour is seen as an extension of women’s natural maternal instincts or attributes (Jarzabkowski, 2001). When some of the women tried to redress the inequities in the distribution of duties and accountability, they felt that their claims of gender bias had been discounted and were dismayed that their issues were trivialised by management. The following responses are given by women who suffer from structural and hostile sexism. “They look at you as if you are just being a bitch” (Administrative staff, GFP4).

We tried to address the issues at a meeting. Someone from senior management was brought in. We had asked for someone else to come to the meeting [a male], but then the males got together and said ‘we want that manager as our male counterpart’, and he tried to trivialise what we were saying. It really put a downer on the whole meeting. We were not allowed to say that this is about TAFE being a boys’ club. We really felt that we were going to get nowhere if we said it’s about male power. It was a boys’ club. So we tried to keep it on duties, and what wasn’t getting done and what we were not happy about. (Administrative staff, GFP3)

And if you say too much some of the time, you are perceived as being a bitchy female. It’s a problem. (Administrative staff, GFC2)

It made one female in particular appear as though she was getting her revenge. She was justified in everything she had to say but it made her out to be the main culprit. And this person had been brought to the attention of other managers before. It was as if it was a case of ‘well she’s trouble’, which is not fair. She was just standing up for her rights and for the rights of all women at this campus. (Administrative staff, GFP3)

Another woman complained that males at all campuses often hijacked meetings and trivialised women’s issues. One respondent claimed meetings became heated with men making snide comments about their complaints.

Burgmann (1995) advocates that women fight for formal meeting structures. She suggests that informally structured meetings exacerbate the “invisible woman syndrome” and advantage men who understand the unwritten rules about who gets to be heard and how decisions are made (p. 87). The women in this study expressed concern about the way female administrative staff were perceived and how their issues were treated by management. That the administrative staff workforce is feminised, particularly at the lower levels, might explain why the nature of women’s work overload is unrecognised, since research indicates that work done primarily by women is valued less than that carried out by males (Burton, 1991).
The sexist culture was understood by these respondents to mean that women had to perform their duties and more without complaint. They also understood that any complaints would be met with hostility. Many of the lower level administrative women were angry that they carried greater workloads and shouldered more responsibilities than their male counterparts. They claimed they performed more tasks and had more onerous and various roles placed upon them. Several women stated that when work had to be done quickly, it was more often than not given to women to complete as unpaid overtime. They claimed the complexity of their workloads and multiple skills were devalued when they sought redress, reclassification or promotion. The workplace stress articulated by these women was compounded by management’s insistence that this was not a gender issue. Management tended to deny that organisational practices were embedded in a male culture. Neither managers nor the executive recognised the manifest advantage held by men within the organisation, or admitted that women in administration were regularly overworked and denied reclassification or promotion. The invisibility of the male norm camouflaged injustice, concealed persistent inequities and rebounded on women’s experience of marginalisation. The intangibility of systemic discrimination enabled male managers to dismiss women’s accounts of sexism, exploitation and unfair treatment as mistaken and trivial.

In Summary

These findings help explain the gendered nature of barriers to getting ahead in TAFE. The concept of ‘the normalisation of male culture’ (Eveline, 1994) assists in understanding how it operates in TAFE to advantage men and how the normalisation of male advantage in society is reproduced in the workplace. Concepts of gendered social divisions and hierarchies also support the argument that women’s concerns and issues are not acknowledged in TAFE colleges, and are trivialised by men in senior positions. The social relations between administrative women and male managers pointed to dominant groups subordinating and exploiting others. The social hierarchy, which positioned many women at the bottom of the organisational structure, was largely denied. Instead, historical factors, personal choice, and lack of ambition, skills and experience were given to explain the paucity of women in powerful positions.

The concept of micropolitics also reveals the manifestations of the masculine norm in the TAFE culture, which operates to marginalise women’s position in the
organisation. It was a useful tool in analysing the gendered nature of TAFE college management and administration, and helped explain the “ways in which some women are marginalised, undermined in the workplace and excluded from positions of influence” (Morley, 1999, p. 4). Micropolitics also helped to explain the resilience of the masculine norm to the driving forces of feminism, equal opportunity interventions and government imperatives. These findings reveal the way explanations for the paucity of women in senior management positions camouflage systemic barriers, perpetuate injustices and maintain men’s advantage in the career stakes. Such explanations reveal the subtle ways in which women are disadvantaged and men advantaged in the distribution of workloads and rewards, and in gaining senior management positions.

End Notes

1 Aveling (2002) asserts that women were encouraged to ‘have it all’, such as motherhood, careers and satisfying relationships. From the good intentions of social policy, the concept of superwoman emerged, resulting in many women feeling inadequate as they ‘failed’ to juggle the demands of children, the pressures of work and the frustrations of unequal domestic workloads. Far from providing women with equal opportunities to pursue satisfying careers by restructuring workplaces and men’s role in the home, equal opportunity discourse resulted in exhausted and frustrated women. Probert (2002) is more emphatic that “progress towards gender equality has stalled in Australia” (p. 7). She argues that effective policy development has run aground on submerged ideas about motherhood and domesticity, and the failure to sustain the family is a fundamental flaw of social and economic policy.

2 Equal opportunity research, in 2003, showed that the pipeline effect has not been realized. Only 8.4% of women are CEOs in Australia and 50% of large corporations have no women in the executive or board.

3 The Western Australian government introduced several policy measures in an attempt to improve women’s representation in society, in public sector management positions and to meet the objectives of equal opportunity legislation. It introduced a series of social workforce policies, outlined in the ‘Two-Year Plans for Women’. These plans mapped strategies to address systemic discrimination in the workplace, increase women’s representation in senior management and improve women’s participation in strategic decision-making.

4 The Office of Equal Employment Opportunity in the Public Sector ensured agencies acted in accordance with the government’s Building on Success Plan (1999-2001) by requiring them to report against the objectives in the performance management of CEOs. The objectives included:
   - Improve the representation of women in the Senior Executive Service (public sector).
   - Address systemic discrimination in the workplace.
   - Recognize and increase women’s skills in decision-making and management.
   - Use EEO best practice in recruitment, appointment and promotion.
   - Improve women’s access to a broad range of skill development.
   - Address job security issues arising from a growth in part time and casual employment.
   - Promote flexible work practices to better integrate work and family responsibilities.

5 Following the revised Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Act 1999, Australian employers with more than 100 employees are obliged by law to report annually on the profile of their workforce.
Chapter 12

Conclusion: The Complexity of Organisational Culture

It is clear that both structural and poststructural analyses of gender, power and identity politics converge to contribute to an understanding of organisational culture in TAFE colleges. From a structural perspective, the study suggests that the implementation of VET policy reforms based on neoliberalism changed the tenor of the culture. Neoliberal discourses and institutional practices constructed a masculine culture that perpetuated gender inequalities and developed new systems of control. These findings mirror other Australian research, which shows that once educational organisations (irrespective of whether they are schools, TAFE colleges or universities) adopt the ethos of neoliberalism, it shifts the dynamics of power, significantly alters the nature of work and exposes competing versions of reality (Blackmore & Sachs, 2000, 2003; Currie, Thiele & Harris, 2002; Marginson, 1997).

From a poststructural perspective, the study illustrates that the culture of TAFE colleges is unstable and ever changing as individuals and groups respond to a complex combination of political and economic forces, social interactions and negotiations. From the perspective of executives, managers, lecturers and administrative staff, there are multiple cultures in TAFE colleges, which are continually being constructed and contested, reflecting different attitudes and ways of working. Therefore, different gender cultures and diverse patterns of gender relations are performed every day by individuals depending on their situation, interests, motivations and disposition.

Key Themes

This final chapter identifies the key themes that emerged from this study to describe the impact of neoliberalism on TAFE colleges. The managerialist theme is most clearly demonstrated through executives using restructuring, financial control and
top-down decision-making to implement the ideology of neoliberalism. The legitimacy of managerialism placed executives in structural positions of unparalleled power and authority. The fractured identity theme is most evident in the way lecturers perceive themselves in relation to others in the organisational hierarchy. The perceived attacks on their professionalism created identity fractures in individuals as they grappled with change. The corporate gamesmanship theme exposes the way academic managers adopt different personas and construct a particular form of visibility to juggle competing demands in the workplace with self-interest. The masquerade of fairness theme depicts the human costs of competition, efficiency and job insecurity. It illustrates how the commodification of workers’ skills is achieved, particularly through the use of core and periphery workers. The ideal worker theme illustrates the gendered ways of working and how neoliberalism tends to support traditional male privilege and masculine attributes.

Managerialism and the Executive Elite

The managerial nature of TAFE colleges and the divisions between executives and managers, lecturers and administrative staff goes to the heart of its organisational culture. A focus on the exercise of formal and informal power exposed the multifaceted nature of the culture and highlighted core differences in mindsets, values and interests.

The restructuring of these two TAFE colleges was the result of multiple layers of control and was achieved through objectified forms of knowledge, such as the policy positions of the national government. The control mechanisms included the NTRA, ANTA national strategy, funding agreements with the states, the AQTF and training packages. At a state level, executives used the VET Act 1996 and iterations of the Certified Agreement for TAFE Lecturers to justify retaining hierarchical layers of managers and administration, but flattening academic structures. They were able to stamp their interpretation of the policy agenda to restructure colleges along corporate lines, claiming they had a mandate to change orientation from education administration to business management. This gave executives far greater control of strategic directions, finances and decision-making. Unconstrained by collegial and educational values, they adopted aggressive, top-down reforms. Using executive prerogative, they implemented insensitive employment practices, indifferent to the human costs of these changes.
This study found that throughout the period of restructuring and VET reforms, essential differences between executive management and staff emerged. Executives were perceived as a distinct group, a managerial elite separate from 'the troops', with a culture that clashed with the values of a significant number of staff. The group culture of the executives exuded entrepreneurial masculinity, marked by a focus on supplying training as a product rather than providing a public service. With little interest in academic issues and scant regard for the benefits of collegiality, they rewarded entrepreneurial behaviour and promoted competition between study areas and among individuals. They stressed the need to blend a market-bureaucratic approach to the administration of vocational education, but distanced themselves from dealing with issues of regulatory compliance, and the difficulties of reaching contradictory efficiency and performance targets (such as building local diversity and meeting national consistency). This finding reflects Exworthy and Halford’s (1999) claim that fundamental and unresolvable differences occur between managerialism and professionalism, which are rooted in the distinctive values and practices of management and professions.

Chapter 6 illustrated that the growing power differential within TAFE colleges is a key marker of the organisational culture. Executives exercised their power by asserting their interpretation of the policy agenda and demanding changes to work practices. They pushed hard to achieve national and state imposed objectives and targets, which attempted to measure and quantify college performance, but were largely unmoved by the unintended consequences, not least of which was a loss of staff morale.

The culture that separated executives from mid-level managers and staff exemplifies perceptions of inequality in the distribution of workloads, resources, benefits and rewards. Gaining central control of college resources, executives diminished staff’s access to professional networks and reduced expenditure on activities directly related to teaching and learning. As an elite they controlled the flow of information and made most decisions with little input from their governing council or academic directors. Their search for greater efficiencies, drive for new forms of income and appropriation of resources away from the teaching staff were major factors shaping the employer-employee relations.

They adopted the language of neoliberalism as a mode of ruling to organise and reshape organisational practices, shifting the reference point away from workplace
reality and local needs to those aligned with abstract national and state government agendas. They used the rhetoric of VET policy and training reform as a means of asserting their authority within the colleges, but often resorted to using simplistic terms to express its implications, such as ‘we need to seize opportunities, search for niche markets and find a competitive edge’. They promoted managerial orthodoxy with cliches, such as ‘you need to work smarter, not harder’. They justified economic rationalism with comments, such as ‘the college needs to be fitter and leaner to survive’. They were insensitive and largely unaware of the impact on those lower in the hierarchy. The resultant divisions that emerged between executives and staff dramatically affected perceptions of power, fairness and quality of working life.

Having ready access to political and business leaders, they aligned themselves with the political and economic elites of the state, and hence with the policies and strategies of these individuals. Their interests were political and economic. Their focus was outward-looking. They adopted the coercive machinery of managerialism to implement the state’s economic rationalist agendas and neoliberal employment practices. As political functionaries, they produced a panoply of positive images of the TAFE colleges and provided symbolic assurances of an industry-led training system, aligned with national VET policy. Each college produced glossy brochures of ‘strategic plans’ and ‘capability statements’, and magazines highlighting their alliances and projects with government agencies, industry and local business. Executives’ focus on image management put them in opposition to staff who focussed inwards on professional and organisational interests, such as attempting to maintain quality teaching practices and addressing students’ interests under difficult economic constraints.

As executives concentrated on strategic matters and external relationships, they largely ignored the work of teaching and learning, academic management and student support. They rarely wandered the corridors of teaching blocks or shared their morning tea or lunch with teaching staff. As they rarely shared spaces and services with lecturers and students, they became dismissive of their concerns. Lecturers complained that executives had little interest in the civic obligations of vocational education or to academic, moral and ethical issues (such as the psychological services required to assist students to succeed in TAFE). They asserted that executives were increasingly blind to their deteriorating working conditions and frustrations. As teaching and learning areas were poorly maintained, they became symbols of the shabby Cinderella sector and places for executives to
avoid. Blind to the reality of teaching and learning conditions, they exempted themselves from a responsibility to improve the conditions of students and teachers.

**Lecturers: Fractured Identities**

One of the themes emerging from the study is the fractured nature of TAFE teacher identity and the debate about their professional status. The study found that individuals, on the one hand, are active agents in constructing, protecting and legitimising their work identity. On the other hand, they constructed a new professional self as a consequence of structural change, new expectations and different work roles. The process they used was varied and included adaptation, negotiation and resistance as well as straightforward adoption.

An analysis of lecturers’ experiences and feelings showed an uneasy internal jostling and mixing of old and new work identities within individuals, and key differences between individuals. It revealed that the intersection between work and self-identity, in a rapidly changing organisational context, is complex. It highlighted that identities are constructed in terms of reflecting on past experiences, grappling with current feelings and foreshadowing the future. This finding is echoed in Australian studies of lecturers, which found that identities are transformed through changing discourses and that points of fracture occur within people’s identities (Chappell, 2001; Harris, Simons & Clayton, 2005; Hyland, 1998; Seddon, 1997).

This study found that restructuring and reform in TAFE had a substantial effect in creating identity fracture as individuals grappled with the changes. Award restructuring in the mid 1990s, coupled with contractualisation and casualisation, changed employment mode and work roles. Many lecturers struggled to accommodate the expectation of ‘doing more with less’ and the pressure to ‘be something different’. The fragility of identity was most evident in those who expressed insecurity with their employment prospects and dissatisfaction with their careers. It was more marked in those who expressed uncertainty with their work role, anxiety with their status and self-doubt about their contributions.

However, other staff responses suggest that reforms and change did not significantly alter work or personal identities. Some staff strongly resisted organisational change and aggressively confronted any attempts at re-engineering their roles. There were also cases of lecturers keeping a cognitive and emotional
distance between their work role and self identity, who saw their job as ‘just’
teaching and refused to invest any more of themselves in their work.

For some, the training reforms were empowering and were welcomed as an
opportunity to broaden their identity beyond that of ‘teacher’, expand their roles and
gain power in the system. These lecturers were comfortable in working outside the
traditional boundary of the classroom and embraced the opportunity to work more
closely with industry and business. They were developing a new professional
identity and culture that accepted the changes. For others, the reforms were
disempowering. Some lecturers felt de-skilled and deprofessionalised. They felt that
their profession was increasingly fragmented and commodified, and that imposed
internal and external compliance procedures were fundamental to their demise.
Their work identities had contracted in line with a reduction in their role, causing
feelings of alienation and resentment. To maintain a sense of dignity, these lecturers
found consolation in social relationships and external interests.

Others felt guilty about adding another facet to their sense of professional self (such
as being a workplace assessor, entrepreneur or training service coordinator). They
described feeling shame-faced about becoming entrepreneurial and business-like.
Principal lecturers, with a mandate to maintain professional standards and help
colleagues, found it difficult to explain the awkwardness of their position and
struggled to maintain a positive and legitimate sense of self. They feared being
ostracised by other lecturers for working within the cultural boundaries of
management and feared rejection by senior managers for not assimilating staff into
the new work order. The continued strength of their identity as academic ‘heads’
was reflected in their sense of culpability in being unable to function as a true
academic leader.

A significant group of experienced lecturers viewed many of the training reforms as
a threat to their sense of identity as ‘professional educators’ and ‘industry experts’.
They saw the downgrading of their identity to trainers or assessors as a diminution
of their roles. Some felt disenfranchised from the managerial elite and
disempowered in educational decision-making. The deprofessionalisation of TAFE
teachers is summarised by respondents’ claims of:

- Reduced professional autonomy.
- Increased surveillance of teachers’ work and time.
• Loss of collegiality and increased competition.
• Minimal career opportunities, progression and pathways.
• Lack of support for teaching and other qualifications.
• Lack of access to influential decision-making bodies.
• Trivialisation of the role and skills of teaching and learning.
• Declining salary parity with managers.
• Erosion of working conditions.
• External audits measuring compliance and quality.

Lecturers’ accounts claim that the assault on their autonomy reflects part of the attack on their status as professionals. They had lost control of course design at the institutional level and the freedom to design state-based curricula. This significant part of their work was given to industry training advisory boards who designed industry training packages and competency standards. The teachers’ role was diminished to implementation of standardised, prepackaged and commodified modules (Hyland, 1998).

Some lecturers described this experience as being treated as ‘factory production workers’, exploited, manipulated, marginalised and undervalued, with every minute of their working week controlled by management. Many features from the factory system, which resemble the time and motion studies of Taylorism, were introduced into TAFE colleges to reduce lecturers to a ‘service class’ (Kell, 1993). They lost a great deal of discretion on how to use their non-teaching time. A few lecturers claimed that managers scrutinised how they used their professional development time and argued with them about what did and did not constitute professional duties. Surveillance of lecturers’ work continues to intensify and the micro-management of their role is a significant attack on their identity as professionals.

Some lecturers resisted managerial practices that conflicted with their particular notions of what constituted the core business of TAFE. They resisted performing any work not associated with teaching, implying it was simply ‘administrivia’ and an unproductive ‘paper chase’. They valued the teaching and learning process above imperatives to prove compliance, cut costs and limit services. Therefore, they struggled against being depersonalised by emphasising the social importance of the learning process and the complexity of teaching, and dismissed the economic imperatives to do more with less. They were quick to use the moral high ground and
elevate the practical consequences of their labour over the more abstract outcomes of management. These lecturers maintained a positive and legitimate sense of self by articulating the view that teaching was a public service and social good. This strong professional stance was common.

In keeping with broad social change, lecturers’ resistance during the 1990s and early 2000s took the form of open confrontation. With the support of the AEU, many lecturers accepted collective action and adopted work-to-rule and strike tactics. They refused to consider tasks outside their Certified Award or complete any extra work without pay. Such actions signified their active defense of their profession. This highlights the strength of identity politics where at times groups use social solidarity to their advantage. They used the idea of professionalism as a form of judgement as to what would best further their collective interests under the circumstances in which they found themselves. As professionals, they felt bound to place the interests of the profession above other concerns.

The conflict between the lecturers’ understanding of the labour process typical of teaching and managers’ expectations is central to the concept of professional identity. For many of the lecturers, it involved a commitment to building the teacher-student relationship and educating students for life. They thought that managers, on the other hand, saw the role of lecturers as simply training students for a job. The difference between the professional role of teaching and the demands of economic rationalism, accountability and productivity lay at the heart of much of the tension (Bates, 1995; Chappell & Johnston, 2003; Gonczi, 1998).

The professional status of lecturers was undermined through the process of decredentialisation. Lecturers were no longer expected to hold education degrees and felt only semi-credentialed with a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (which became the de facto minimum benchmark for TAFE teachers). The fractured identity of lecturers; the demise of professional qualifications and the division within the TAFE workforce is a reflection of the poor investment by successive governments in TAFE:

There are two emerging TAFE workforces - one fulltime, aging and holding traditionally structured professional qualifications - the other contract or casual and holding at best workplace trainer and assessor qualifications, which may provide an important standard for basic workplace training and assessment, but which is hardly likely to provide the platform for the kinds of skill development needed (Noonan, 2001, p. 11).
The AEU claims that one of the most significant ways in which a profession symbolises its identity is through the qualifications it expects its members to hold. The union advocates that all TAFE teachers should be required to hold a teaching qualification higher than a Certificate IV (Forward, 2004).

As part of affirming their identity and professional status as teachers, a number of lecturers dismissed the idea of promotion and ‘getting ahead’. While bemoaning the lack of academic career pathways, some accepted ‘you had to play the game’ to win a principal lecturer’s position. However, aspiring for a management position was widely rejected because it would mean incorporation into the neoliberal culture, conformity and compromising values. The few lecturers who moved into management were largely dismissed as having sacrificed their values and independence. A few claimed that those who joined the management ranks had only done so as they had ‘failed’ to be good lecturers.

A small number of newly appointed contract lecturers (who had been in TAFE less than five years) were positive in their belief that individuals could get ahead in TAFE, provided they were willing to span the cultural division which distinguished the world of enterprise from the world of professional teaching. These lecturers, while exercising ‘legitimate but peripheral participation in a community of practice’ (Lave, 1993), were ‘unenculturated’ to the shared understanding of old timers in TAFE and were more easily appropriated into the new culture. By assimilating into the new organisational culture, they were disturbing the norms of conduct that gave TAFE teachers their distinct and separate organisational identities (Chappell, 2001). These newcomers were largely unaware of the dissonance between their acceptance of the culture and old timers’ resistance. Old timers saw them as traitors to the educational values that had underpinned the training sector since the Kangan era. Newer staff, adopting entrepreneurial values, thought that long-standing lecturers were uncompromising, narrow-focussed and privileged.

One novel way that lecturers (who had been working in TAFE for more than ten years) resisted the neoliberal culture was to invert the social hierarchy of the organisation. They redefined the work of teaching as the only site of real production and authentic knowledge. They viewed themselves as professionals in the service of providing a ‘social good’ (Seddon, 2000). This belief facilitated their self-differentiation and career satisfaction. It also facilitated their resistance to the values and norms of managerialism and economic rationalism, as they believed they
undermined the central purpose of their work and demeaned their involvement in teaching (Marginson, 2000). Part of this resistance was the belief that managers were attempting to control and exploit them and that they were viewed by the executive as disposable commodities.

Other lecturers, dissatisfied with the organisational culture, were aggrieved that managers gave the impression of working with lecturers when it suited them, but when it did not they suffered. This awareness of ever-present exploitation and commodification facilitated a ‘resistance through distance’ (Collinson, 2000), where staff literally or symbolically disengaged from management’s requirements. A few lecturers appeared to ignore the strategic objectives of the corporate culture and resisted participating in activities related to corporate management or compliance. Their sense of solidarity against the prevailing culture gave them strength to defend their identities as teaching professionals.

These findings reveal that peer group culture and occupational classifications are critical to worker socialisation and strongly influence identity construction (Weedon, 1987). The workplace is a powerful site where individuals construct knowledge and ‘distribute memory’ which helps them shape their identity (Resnick, 1993). An individual’s identification with a subject position and peer group gives it much psychological and emotional force. For lecturers, it is a means to regain some control over their labour process and mitigate the intensification of work. It also conceals the process of identity construction and leaves the subject unaware of the multiple systems of control. Drawing on sociocultural theory assists in understanding the numerous ways individuals become members of a community of practice (Lave, 1993) and how differences among individuals occur within the same organisational settings and across time (Baltes & Staudinger, 1996).

**Corporate Gamesmanship**

The corporate gamesmanship theme exposes the masks individuals wear and the games they play as they juggle competing demands in the workplace with self-interest. This thesis has provided many examples of the performativity culture of TAFE colleges and the ‘rules’ of the corporate game, which must be understood if one is to get ahead. Academic managers, more than any other group, understood that the game was being played on an uneven field, with unspoken rules and norms about managerial behaviour. They knew that to survive and get ahead they had to be ham actors, capable of taking on numerous roles and putting on the right
performance at the right time. They also understood that they had to devise stunts and ruses to ensure their study area always looked entrepreneurial and was implementing ‘strategic initiatives’.

Chapters 9 and 11 illustrated that academic managers had to learn the art of deal making, which underpinned the managerial culture. With unrealistic workloads and inadequate financial resources, they resorted to unpopular tactics (such as shaving hours off courses and increasing the number of casual staff) and making deals with key staff in order to get things done. As a result, they were simultaneously exploiters and exploited, albeit positioned in contradictory locations within exploitation relations (Blackmore & Sachs, 2003). They had educational values and cognitive interests that positioned them alongside lecturers as resisters to neoliberalism, but material interests that were fundamentally different and diametrically opposed to those of lecturers, which placed them in collusion with managerialism. They exploited lecturers’ insecurities, but were cutoff from matters of strategic planning and decision-making, which left them vulnerable in determining their own destinies.

Academic managers were strategically located at the interface of management, lecturers and administrative staff. In effect they were ‘discourse brokers’ and translators within the hierarchy, and could determine to a large extent how the neoliberal discourse was accepted by academic support staff and lecturers (Black, 2005). Directors expected them to bring about the cultural changes required and to ‘re-engineer’ lecturers’ mindsets and practices (Gee, Hull & Lankshear, 1996).

Although located at a key junction in the organisational structure, academic managers had little discretionary power and few opportunities to exercise managerial prerogative. They had very limited access to executive knowledge and strategic networks. Positioned as middle managers, they had great difficulty fulfilling their role as educational leaders, for their focus was not on academic issues and improving the quality of teaching and learning within the organisation. Instead, their role was reduced to administration, controlling budgets and minimising the costs of academic labour. It is the social division of labour that isolates academic managers from other managers and staff. To survive or get ahead in the TAFE hierarchy, academic managers adopted personas appropriate to the changing political, social and economic mood. As a survival tactic, they adopted penguin-like conformity when the need for accountability to the managerial line arose. They understood that a key part of their role required a dispassionate, bureaucratised, obedient identity.
Conversely, they used peacock-like performances when the need for individuality, showing off and taking centre stage appeared.

Academic managers, caught in the crossfire between competing ideologies and contested terrains, were the most stressed and least satisfied group of workers. While toeing the company line for the sake of self-interest, many were also trying to resist unrealistic demands and alleviate pressure on staff to do more. Most resorted to public acquiescence to the managerial dogma, but out of the spotlight would profess allegiance to liberal educational values. Such passive resistance was typical of the micropolitics of power operating in the colleges. Given the Jekyll and Hyde identities required of academic managers, it was not surprising that most intended to use the experience as no more than a stepping stone to other positions. Others, realising the invidious position they had been placed in, intended to opt out as soon as possible or return to teaching.

A Masquerade of Fairness

The masquerade of fairness theme depicts the divisive nature of neoliberalism, characterised by economic insecurity and inequality. A human cost perspective of the working lives of staff in TAFE exposes the fiction that the values of managerialism and practices of economic rationalism are fair and beneficial. Shifting the bargaining power to employers has given them greater scope to determine working conditions and has caused divisions within the TAFE colleges that are structural, social and cultural.

Chapter 7 showed that ambivalence towards career satisfaction was largely contingent on job security, career opportunities, remuneration and feeling valued. It also depended on the congruence between organisational values and personal beliefs. Chapter 10 illustrated that a significant number of individuals felt they operated in a climate of sacrifice and that to keep their job or get ahead they had to compromise some personal and professional values and principles. Chapters 3 and 5 showed that achieving greater productivity and efficiency was a goal of restructuring TAFE colleges. This resulted in the abolition of significant academic leadership and support positions (such as senior lecturers and career psychologists). It also meant cuts to the workforce and funding.

The new organisational structure divided the workforce into a hierarchy of management and layers of frontline staff with only two tiers of lecturers. It separated
people into a ‘core and periphery workforce’ (Handy, 2000). The core and periphery model fragmented the workforce according to employment mode and positional power, and by definition status and worth. The core was the small group of permanently employed ‘career staff’ who managed the business of the organisation and had access to power brokers or influential networks. The periphery was a pool of ‘frontline staff’, including casual, fixed-term contract and part-time workers who were drawn upon from outside the organization, or on the periphery of ‘core business’ within the organisation. Older lecturers who had permanency, but lacked recent industry experience and high-level skills, were an anomaly and an anachronism within this model.

Chapter 8 illustrated that dividing the workforce into core and periphery workers resulted in social and cultural discord, exacerbated by some staff feeling used, ignored and devalued. This friction was most pronounced in the diametrical attitudes of contract staff. Most contract lecturers felt they were treated as periphery workers whose teaching work was undervalued. A few felt marginalised and demoralised and described themselves as an underclass in the organisational structure. Some contract administrative staff complained that they were manipulated and exploited to do additional duties that were not expected of permanent staff. They resented their lack of opportunity to develop corporate knowledge and participate in professional development. As periphery workers, they were predominantly female, located at the bottom of the hierarchy and were on the lowest salary grades. They were driven by fear and job insecurity. This fear created silence. They were reluctant to speak out about exploitation, overwork, stress and discrimination. They put up with poor working conditions, lack of resources, inadequate and inferior equipment.

On the other hand, some contract staff were happy to engage in strategies to become noticed and would participate in entrepreneurial work, strategic projects and the wider aspects of organisational life, even though it meant they had to work unpaid overtime. They understood that such activities were vital in positioning themselves to become part of the ‘core’ business.

The changing nature of work has normalised patterns of core workers and periphery staff in TAFE colleges. Core workers put in long hours and endured work intensification to get the job done. They are testimony to a major shift in power relations in the workplace. Management has been able to coerce core and periphery workers to accept executive authority, expanded job roles and greater workloads.
Concerns about career stability compelled workers to do more due to fear of recrimination, job loss or through organisational restructuring tactics, such as making positions redundant or by reclassifying jobs (which forces people to apply for new positions or accept redeployment).

Organisational downsizing and restructuring, against a backdrop of high unemployment, fostered extreme job insecurity for both core and periphery workers, and this in turn gave management much greater bargaining power. Chapters 6 and 8 revealed that it strengthened gender stratification, which placed most women at the lowest levels of the hierarchy with less opportunity to exert economic, formal and informal power, and thus it perpetuated a pattern of lower relative earnings for women. This finding is supported by a recent independent review on gender pay gaps in Western Australia, which found that women are, on average, paid less than men in Western Australia and less than women elsewhere in Australia (Todd & Eveline, 2004).

The Ideal Worker
This study found that the image of the ideal worker is rooted in widely shared, gendered assumptions about behaviour, attributes for success, orientation, personality characteristics and life situation. It revealed a gendered picture of success where the cultural codes of masculinity were legitimised and the metaphor of the macho superhero was affirmed. A desire for success placed men and women in competition with one another on every platform. To get ahead, women and men had to identify with the masculinist culture and display attributes associated with machismo. One had to be action-oriented, outcomes focussed, and willing to sacrifice and endure hardship to get the job done. The ideal worker was a careerist willing to ‘go the extra mile’ to do increasingly more. He or she had to be entrepreneurial, target conscious and commercially focussed.

Chapter 9 highlighted the way executives influenced who got ahead in the organisation by articulating and promoting the attributes of the ideal worker. Result orientation, initiative, entrepreneurialism and calculated risk-taking were the key attributes for success. At the same time, staff were expected to be street-smart and strategically aligned to the current orthodoxy. Astute workers recognised that conformity and compliance were also expected. The chapter also revealed that executives viewed those who opposed or resisted the new way of operating in the colleges as ‘backward-looking’, ‘dinosaurs’ and ‘mavericks’. They showed contempt
for those who resisted the national training reforms and the new ideology, branding them as ‘narrow focussed’. By demeaning those with academic concerns and contrary views to the executive, they were readily dismissed as potential leaders or managers. If they had contrary views, they learned to be silent. Thus the discourse of the ideal worker in TAFE colleges became a vehicle to ‘manufacture consent’ (Chomsky, 1997).

While on the surface these attributes appear gender neutral, they actually reinforce masculinity and advantage men. For example, the norms gave preference to individual achievements, and financial and project management (where men were more represented) rather than teamwork and people management (where women were more represented). By equating success and career ambition to a willingness to work long hours and travel wherever needed, these norms favoured workers who did not have domestic responsibilities or played a lesser role in the private sphere of life. Moreover, these deeply rooted norms were taken for granted and invisible, with the result that workers who did not fit these masculine norms (whether women or men) were less likely to be valued or given opportunities to get ahead (Currie, Thiele & Harris, 2002; Morley, 2003).

Senior women more than men claimed that for them to get ahead they needed to operate from a masculine view of the world and be involved in high-profile projects or high-stakes core business to build up their credibility. They needed to become more visible in terms of their achievements, capabilities and potential. They recognised that the more strongly their position, work area and rhetoric was associated with typically masculine ways, the more likely they were to get ahead.

Chapter 11 revealed that the restructuring of TAFE colleges was a highly gendered process. While it provided women with opportunities to move into middle management, it tended to incorporate them into the masculine managerial culture (Blackmore & Sachs, 2003). As women moved into management, they were often placed in contradictory positions. If they attempted to adopt ‘soft management’ ways of operating they were left vulnerable to the accusation that they ‘couldn’t cut it in a man’s world’. This study unmasked some of the assumptions that reinforce the male norm and reproduce gender inequities. It found most explanations for women’s under-representation at middle and senior levels were deeply, but subtly expressive of the male norm. The small number of women in senior management and the larger number of women in administration at the bottom of the organisational hierarchy
were taken as normal. The achievement of a select few is taken as evidence that systemic discrimination against women does not occur.

A substantial number of males downplayed, dismissed or denied that a macho male culture persisted in the organisation, and consequently were unconvinced that systemic barriers existed preventing women from getting ahead. One third of male responses indicated that they were largely dismissive of the notion of the ‘glass ceiling’ and rejected charges of direct or indirect discrimination. They insisted that employment and merit selection practices were fair. This created the appearance of equality and suggested that time, rather than intervention strategies (such as affirmative action), would see colleges meet government equity goals. Many male responses echoed neoliberal objections to social engineering of the workplace and charged that any tampering with competition, testing the marketplace and the level playing field was anathema to business.

Many women, on the other hand, were convinced that male micropolitics acted as an exclusionary force protecting deeply embedded cultural and structural practices that advantaged men and subordinated women’s interests. They claimed that the nexus between masculinity and success pervaded the organisational culture in ways that produced an uneven distribution of workloads and rewards. Administrative staff felt unable to discuss conceptions of the male culture in official forums or confront managers. They were reluctant to voice their concerns about discrimination for fear of being mocked or belittled if they objected to the ‘blokiness’ or ‘boys’ club’ feel of the organisation. Their accounts illustrated the patriarchal organisational structure and paternalistic practices that marginalise women and meant that very few would ever occupy strategic, powerful and senior positions.

Limitations of the Study

It is a matter of importance to the future of TAFE colleges that issues of organisational culture, gender and power continue to be researched and confronted. The findings from this study point to many other aspects of organisational culture in TAFE that could be further investigated. For instance, a lifespan perspective could explore how individuals approached their working lives during significant stages of their careers. With TAFE colleges having few workers under the age of 30 and many over the age of 50, it is critical to find out how age impacts on men’s and women’s
approaches to their work roles and how life events influence their career expectations.

The influence of family variables (such as marital status, family size, age of children, dual careers, parenting roles and extended family support structures) on careers needs to be better understood. It would have been useful to collect demographic details (such as marital status, number and ages of children, childcare arrangements, responsibilities for caring of other relatives and household income). Such information would illustrate the changing role of families on the labour dynamics in TAFE colleges and may help organisations consider ways to reduce the conflicts between work and family life.

An analysis of the intersection of socio-economic status, class-consciousness and cultural background would make an additional contribution to understanding the links between power and gender in the workplace (Bradley, 1999). Asking respondents’ questions about their family, social and cultural backgrounds would reveal more about how their work identities are shaped by social difference and how people identify themselves as members of a particular group or class. It would be interesting to ask questions related to class-consciousness (such as whether individuals believe that Australia is an egalitarian society, whether TAFE colleges operate on a classless basis and whether people identify themselves as belonging to a particular class). Such questions would enable the theorising of change to include class in an analysis of organisational culture in the workplace.

A cross comparison of the organisational culture of TAFE in Western Australia with colleges in other regions and states would be useful in understanding important variations that occur in different settings. Understanding the experiences in different contexts would reveal new complexities, such as the influence of history, population density, state politics and demographics on the different ways that individuals are affected. Moreover, an international comparison (such as between Australia and Britain) would be useful to explore the similarities and differences of the human costs of neoliberalism in further education colleges from a global rather than just a local perspective.
Options for Change

Despite the stranglehold of conservative agendas on Australian politics and the iron-cage of neoliberalism in public institutions, it is possible for individuals to challenge VET policy directions and influence organisational cultures. Like other sociocultural feminist researchers I complete this research with ideas for a way forward. As pointed out in the introductory chapter, the responsibility for change must be shared widely across organisations. Policy options are required to challenge the narrow view of the VET sector and to change the vulnerable position of TAFE colleges, bringing a renewed focus on supporting gender equity and workforce development.

Confront and Challenge Neoliberalism in VET Policy

The first step for change is for a critical mass of individuals to analyse the assumptions that underlie national VET policy within the context of neoliberalism. The analysis needs to provide a coherent rebuttal of its claims and provide an inspiring and substantial alternative policy framework. As sociocultural theory suggests, changing assumptions and the language expressed in policy is a powerful mechanism to begin the process of transformation. With a shared understanding of the human costs of managerialism and economic rationalism, it is possible to lobby the government to rethink its approach to training and call for it to be developed within both a social and economic nexus. This is now happening. A groundswell of TAFE teachers, unionists, policy analysts, industrial researchers, industry and VET leaders are calling on the Commonwealth and state governments to redefine their role in training as a way of ending the dominance of market economics.

Botsman and Latham (2001) believe the rejuvenation of vocational education lies in bringing the corporate sector into the net of mutual responsibility. Furthermore, they argue that if global capitalism is to work properly in the future, it needs to be based on the social responsibilities of the privileged. Cornford (2000) argues that VET policy must be based on sound research rather than on ideology. He points to the failure of the training reforms being largely due to poor impact assessments. Others want to reposition the training system to meet new work patterns and social imperatives (Botsman, 2001b; Buchannan, 2002; Marginson, 2001, Moodie, 2004). These writers argue for concepts of nurturing, sharing and learning to replace the cut and thrust approach to training.
Skill shortages in Australia and deficiencies in the national training system cannot be rectified without better positioning of TAFE colleges. They require new funding models to meet the demand for VET and new mechanisms to deliver better learning experiences. The mandate for ‘efficiency’ rather than ‘effectiveness’ has outlived its usefulness (Kronemann, 2001; Senate Committee, 2000; Watson, 2002). As Marginson (2001) suggests, the neoliberal policy framework of the 1980s and 1990s has exhausted its positive values. The ‘do more with less’ mantra has had its use-by date. It is critical that everyone working in TAFE confronts the prevailing orthodoxies with an “economics as if people mattered” approach (Rees & Rodley, 1995, p. 267). Without system-wide, inclusive strategic planning and appropriate funding models TAFE will remain reactionary to short term market signals and political whims.

At a more personal level, individuals can resist aspects of neoliberalism. While resistance strategies (such as silence, disengagement, working only a 38-40 hour week and resisting job role expansion) tend to be short term survival measures, doing little to change culture or power relations in the long term, they buy time and emotional distance. Long term resistance could be gained through persistence, where employees seek to negate neoliberal imperatives by refusing to compete with colleagues and questioning managerial authority. Encouraging managers to act more transparently and to be more accountable could be achieved if employees demand collegial decision-making forums.

**Put Gender Back on the Agenda**

The neoliberal era coincided with major shifts in the social construction of gender and substantive economic dislocations in Australia (Davies, 1996, 2005). The feminisation of the workforce coexisted with the subordination of social policies, such as gender equity (Mutari, Boushey & Fraher, 1997). Feminisation was the direct result of employer strategies to decrease wages and increase control over external and internal labour markets. Such strategies relied on women’s marginalisation within the labour movement, and gendered assumptions regarding their compliance, position in organisational hierarchies and place in society.

As suggested in Chapter 1, the neoliberal agenda undermined social policy and equal opportunity legislation and never intended to achieve equal outcomes for women and men. It maligned affirmative action in the 1990s before it was ever given a chance to work. It deliberately attempted to misrepresent it in Australia (Aveling, 2002; Bacchi 2001). Equality in TAFE colleges can be improved through a proactive
approach to gender mainstreaming policy and legislation. One way to put gender back on the agenda in TAFE is to encourage gender-based analysis of VET and college policies, the workforce profile and the merit selection process. Gender-based analysis has more chance of delivering equality of outcomes as it ensures that the differing needs of women and men in all their diversity are considered during the development of policies and programs, rather than relying on assumptions and stereotypes to guess the impact (Bacchi, 2001).

There needs to be greater commitment by organisations to meet the objectives of equal opportunity, merit selection and affirmative action. Managers need to take more responsibility to ensure women are given the opportunities to develop a broad base of experience, provide more visible high-status work assignments and take more accountability for opportunities to act in senior positions. Managing directors must make it their mission to get women into senior roles, and college governing councils need to ensure that a critical mass of women are represented in all spheres of management and decision-making. The level at which women are appointed and the power they exercise is more critical than trying to balance their numbers. There needs to be greater imperatives for TAFE colleges to examine the masculine tenor of the workplace and redress the macho model of management.

Individual women need to demand policies that reflect the realities of their lives. Hakim (2001) suggests that recent economic policies have deepened social divisions and failed to pay attention to people's preferences in organising their home and working life. She argues that a range of employment and social policies need to be developed to suit the personal lifestyle and family preferences of women. Although if these policies fail to encourage men to take a fair share of domestic and child care labour they may simply entrench male advantage in the workforce and perpetuate women's position as peripheral workers.

**Develop the TAFE Workforce**

A significant outcome of market-led reforms in the VET sector was a labour market policy that fundamentally changed the composition and status of the TAFE workforce. Although such changes were detrimental to many employees, little was done to assist staff cope with their new roles or to encourage best practice in employment or professional development.
A radical intervention policy is required to renew the TAFE workforce as it is one of the most exposed sectors to the ‘retirement bubble’. In particular, colleges need a workforce strategy that better articulates the role of TAFE teachers:

The answer is not to go back into traditional practices whose time has already passed: rather a new workforce strategy is required. It must encompass recruitment, initial and on-going training, partnerships with industry and more flexible and contemporary approaches to the specification and performance of teachers’ work (Noonan, 2001, p. 11).

The strategy needs to restore partnerships and consultative arrangements that include the expertise of teaching and academic administration. Such expertise needs to be utilised in strategic planning to avoid the corporate world diluting the educative values embedded in vocational training.

Part of the strategy needs to address the stress of job insecurity, low morale and career dissatisfaction. This study illustrates that poor quality working conditions and a dilution of individual rights and benefits were used to meet increased efficiency targets and lower unit costs. Employees, who felt trapped in jobs that offered little security and reward, had little incentive to upgrade their skills, gain qualifications or participate in wider aspects of college life. To a great extent, exploiting contract and casual staff, compromising quality and accepting low morale purchased the quantitative gains in the training system.

The challenge facing TAFE colleges is to develop employment practices that do not compromise working conditions. Career satisfaction needs to be as important a consideration as efficiency requirements. There is a need to experiment with structural and cultural models that place greater emphasis on collegiality, teamwork, cooperation and collaboration, which are more conducive to a sense of well-being and high morale. In addition to improving productivity, transforming power structures may curb some of the ill effects of the macho culture. Effective teamwork, shared responsibilities, equal workloads, and commensurate benefits and remuneration may bridge the gap between executives and staff. Leaders must address the dehumanising effects of dividing the workforce into core and periphery workers, and curb the misuse of contract and casual labour. Rather than perpetuating a competitive culture, TAFE colleges must pursue activities that can truly improve their individual and collective well-being. They must aspire to become world leaders in a more qualitative sense.
Appendix A

Letter to Participants

Dear

Research Project: Gender and Organisational Culture

I am a PhD student at Murdoch University exploring aspects of the work culture in TAFE colleges in Western Australia. This research is being conducted as part of a Strategic Partnership with Industry - Research and Training (SPIRT) between two TAFE colleges and Murdoch University.

Your participation in a recorded small focus group discussion (approx 1-hour) would be greatly appreciated. The discussion will be centred on 15 questions that relate to your career such as attributes for success, perceptions of fairness, power and influence in the organisation. I am very keen to hear what you believe are the factors that facilitate or inhibit your career pursuits.

A copy of the interview questions is enclosed.

I would like to stress that your answers will be kept in strict confidence and your name and any information given during the discussion which might identify you will not be used in any publication arising from the research.

If you are willing to participate in this project, please complete the details below.

If you have any queries about the project please feel free to contact either myself on 93100430 or my supervisor, Associate Professor Jan Currie on 93602377.

Regards

Jane Lorrimar
Appendix B

GENDER AND ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE
MANAGEMENT INTERVIEWEE PROTOCOL

Managing Change
1. There have been a lot of changes in further education over the past few years. How do you think they have affected managerial styles at South Metro TAFE?
2. Do you think that these current changes are likely to affect male and female staff (academic and general) differently?

Attributes for Success
3. Who gets ahead in this college? What attributes do they have?
4. What are the characteristics of those who don’t get ahead?
5. Do staff have to sacrifice certain things to get ahead? Or compromise certain values and interest? If so, what are the things that get sacrificed?
6. Do you see any barriers that are placed in the way of individuals?

Perceptions of Gender in Organisational Culture
7. Why do you think there are so few women in our senior positions?
8. Do you think there is a problem with the number and position of female staff? If so, which strategies do you think could benefit women?
9. In your experience, do men and women have different styles of working? If so, what’s the nature of these differences?

Personal Strategies in relation to staff career development
10. Do you see it as your particular responsibility to give opportunities to women and/or to encourage particular women to apply for higher positions? Have you done either of these things?
11. More generally, and in an informal way, do you ‘train’ people for particular positions? Encourage those you feel have potential? If so, in what sort of way?

Career Planning
12. We would like you to think about your own career? Overall, how satisfied do you feel with your career path to date? What is the most satisfying thing for you?
13. Over the course of your career, have you ever sat down and planned your career? Did you hope to get to the kind of position that you hold now?

Life at the top
14. Staff in senior management position has to interact with a number of different groups and wear many hats, are you conscious of having to cross boundaries? How do you manage that?
15. People at the top of organisations are often described as isolated or, as the phrase goes, ‘lonely at the top’. Does this describe you?
16. Where in the college do you draw most of your support from Who do you talk over problems at work with? How do you maintain contact with them?
17. Do you have any other comments regarding your career? In particular how have your career decisions impacted on your family, interests and social relationships?
GENDER AND ORGANISATION CULTURE
STAFF INTERVIEWEE PROTOCOL

General Career Question
1. We would like you to think about your career. How satisfied do you feel with your working life?
2. Over the course of your career, have you ever sat down and planned your career?

Attributes for Success
3. Who gets ahead in this college? What attributes do they have?
4. What are the characteristics of those who don’t get ahead?
5. Do staff have to sacrifice certain things to get ahead? Or compromise certain values and interests?
   If so, what are the things that get sacrificed?
6. Do you see any barriers that are placed in the way of individuals?

Perceptions of Gender in Organisational Culture
7. Do you think men and women have different styles of working and create a different atmosphere in the workplace?
8. Why do you think that there are so few women in senior positions?

Perceptions of Fairness
9. Do you think the system of promotion and/or reclassification at SMC is fair?
10. Are there strategies you adopt in order to survive and meet the expectations of the organization?
    Do you think benefits and duties are fairly distributed?

Power
11. How would you describe those who have power? What attributes do they have?
12. What sort of power and influence do you have? Do you think the spread of power & influence is fairly distributed between campuses and centers?

Collegiate support groups
13. Where in the college do you draw most of your support from?
14. How do you maintain contact with them?

Summary Career Question
15. Do you have any other comments regarding your career? In particular, how have your career decisions impacted on your family, interests and social relationships? Would you do it again or would you do it differently?
Appendix C

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<td>I ……………………………………………………… have read the information on the research project <em>Gender and Organisational Culture</em>. Any questions I have asked about the project have been answered to my satisfaction.</td>
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<td>I agree to take part in the focus group discussion and understand that I may change my mind and stop at any time.</td>
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<td>I understand that all information provided is treated as confidential and will not be released by the researcher.</td>
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