

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

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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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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

NEAT	National Employment and Training
NBEET	National Board of Employment, Education and Training
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education and Research
NSDC	National Staff Development Committee
NTRA	National Training Reform Agenda
OECD	Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.
OEO	Office of Equal Opportunity
QETO	Quality Endorsed Training Organisation
RTOs	Registered Training Organisations
SCH	Student Contact Hours
SEA	Secondary Education Authority
SES	Senior Executives Service (public sector)
SESDA	State Employment and Skills Development Authority
SPIRT	Strategic Partnership with Industry - Research and Training
SSTU	State School Teachers Union
STB	State Training Board
TAC	Training Accreditation Council
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TAFEWA	TAFE college network of Western Australia
TEE	Tertiary Entrance Examinations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational and Scientific and Cultural Organisation
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	Vocational Education and Training-in-Schools
VOTEC	Vocational and technical education and training (France)
WADOT	Western Australian Department of Training
WASSTU	Western Australian State School Teachers Union
WAWA	Western Australian Workplace Agreement

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