

## VIEWING RTOS THROUGH THE LENS OF CULTURE

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## THE RESEARCH

- A component of the national consortium research project: *Supporting VET providers in building capability for the future*
- Research team members: Thea Fisher, Roger Harris, Andrea Bateman and Mike Brown
- Research Activity 4: *Assessing the impact of cultures and structures on team and organisational capability*
- Focus of this presentation – culture

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## METHOD AND SAMPLE

- Qualitative study using participant questionnaires and semi-structured focus group interviews
- 7 TAFE institutes: 4 metropolitan and 3 regional in 6 states
- 13 work teams ranging in size from 3 to 15 members
- Cross-organisation roles: Human resources, administrative support, finance, client and student services, LLN project and ICT project
- Teaching roles: Business studies, Plumbing and Furnishing

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## THE LITERATURE

- Organisational culture – contested ground with multiple definitions
- Worthy of closer examination by organisational leaders
- Study of culture enhances understanding of modern organisations
- Cultural elements play a critical role in determining strategy, goals and ways of working
- “Managing” cultural differences

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## FINDINGS

- Work team views of organisation’s culture:  
‘huge’, ‘diverse’, ‘confused’, ‘fragmented’, ‘complex’, ‘bureaucratic’, ‘risk-averse’, ‘compliance-driven’, ‘innovative’, ‘entrepreneurial’, ‘business-like’, ‘customer-focussed’
- Work team views of own culture:  
‘student and community-focused’, ‘customer-focused’, ‘quality-focused’
- Cultural differences - frequently feeling at odds with culture of senior managers

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## CLUSTERS OF CULTURAL DIFFERENCE

- Discipline or occupation
- Geography
- History
- Ethos
- ‘Us and Them’

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## **MULTIPLE CULTURES**

- Negative aspects – getting in the way of change
- Positive aspects – providing specific responses for particular clients
- Key role of leadership in managing cultural differences
- Over-arching culture – living with inevitable inconsistencies

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## **CONTACT DETAILS**

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