

Leadership in Vocational Education and Training: Developing social capital through partnerships

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The author would like to acknowledge the work of researchers from the entire CRLRA research team in the conduct of the research discussed in this chapter.

One of the key features [about Vocational Education and Training] was the central place of new networks of influence and connection. The other was the importance of...leadership capable of pulling together the interests, resources and commitment in a region or community to forge a sense of common purpose and direction for change.... [W]hat matters most in the learning revolution is the work that goes on at a local level.

Dickie and Stewart Weeks (1999, p. 5), ANTA National Marketing Strategy for Skills and Lifelong Learning.

MANAGING CHANGE THROUGH VET LEADERSHIP

The first year of a four year longitudinal research project, *Managing change through VET: The role of VET in regional Australia* (CRLRA 2000), sought to document the impact of vocational education and training on the social and economic wellbeing across seven of Australia's regions. The aspect of the study reported in this paper is the dynamics surrounding leadership and partnerships across the community collaborators in VET. These collaborators are VET providers, clients, systems, organisations, communities and institutions. The dynamics produce social capital, and social capital builds a strong community with distinctive VET demand and supply characteristics. In turn, a strong community with appropriate VET skills and knowledge provides the platform for a strong local economy.

The paper discusses how VET contributes to strong communities and socio-economic wellbeing in a number of ways, yet there is evidence that it can contribute much more effectively. Good quality partnerships developed through a new style of leadership called 'enabling leadership' are shown to enhance both the quality and quantity of VET outcomes. The inherent features of these partnerships are processes that are collaboratively and locally designed to meet local needs (Hugonnier 1999; Kenyon 1999). These local 'endogenous development' processes arise in the context of the local/global tension. Strong social cohesion, trust and social capital underpin these successful VET outcomes. Vocational education, training and learning is a tool which regional citizens use in diverse situations for their diverse lifelong learning purposes.

METROCENTRISM AND THE REGIONS?

Differences and inequalities between the 'city and the bush' are historical and well documented in Australia (e.g. Butler & Lawrence 1996). In summarising the statistical literature about demographic and social changes in regional Australia, Wahlquist (1999, 1) concludes:

Rural and regional Australians are, by every significant measure, disadvantaged. Country people die younger, and receive less medical attention. They find it harder to access medical specialists, dentists, physiotherapists, psychologists, even pharmacists. They have lower levels of education and higher unemployment. They have more accidents, suffer worse health, and rural youth has a shockingly high suicide rate.

There are two key indicators of social disadvantage noted by in Australia today: skills and location (Latham 2000, 17). As a key principle of the Regional Australia Summit (1999, 4) Education, Training and Learning Theme, states:

Education and lifelong learning provides the capacity to manage change.

Managing change, then, is the principal process involved in regional and community development, and it is the function for which VET is most needed. VET's role as a resource to those processes is the next issue to be examined.

VET AND PARTNERSHIPS

A range of community, government and private VET organisations have been encouraged to change the way they do business by forming configurations and consortiums of partners for various purposes: to collaborate, to multiply inter-organisational networks or partnerships and take on a qualitatively different form in designing VET for specific purposes and regions. One reason for these changes in configuration, as suggest in relation to university and TAFE collaboration, is that:

... smaller, decentralised structures based on strategies of cooperation and horizontal relationships adjust more rapidly to changing technologies and market conditions, develop new products and services in a shorter time period and provide more creative solutions in the process. This form offers great competitive advantage in a global economy. (Sommerlad et al 1998, p. 17)

It is these 'structures' which are based on 'horizontal relationships' (that is, trust-based networks focused on common and shared needs and values) that this research sets out to document. This is social capital - the shared values, networks and trust (Falk & Kilpatrick 2000; Putnam 1993) which are identified in the research literature as enhancing economic outcomes.

The nature of the dynamics between various VET providers and vocational learning needs requires answering questions not only about the 'what', but also the 'how' and the 'why'. In this paper, answering these questions requires documenting and analysing the way people work with the circumstances they have at the local level, then facilitate and trigger the processes, systems and structures that produce VET outcomes. Capacities such as these are often called 'networking' and 'leadership', which are indeed recognised in the research literature as essential ingredients in the production of resilient and sustainable social and economic outcomes.

VET, NETWORKS AND LEADERSHIP FOR CHANGE

Dickie and Stewart-Weeks (1999) find the importance of a '...focus on networks and leadership' (p. 6-7). ANTA (2000) reports the significance of 'local leadership' and 'networks' (p. 25) in enhancing VET outcomes across Australia. This convergence in the research and policy literature is a significant change of direction for VET in Australia, and is supported by comprehensive community-based research into community leadership (Falk & Harrison 1998; Falk & Mulford forthcoming) that shows the different types and purposes of a situated-style of leadership that differs from tradition, top-down leadership forms. Peirce and Johnson (1997) highlight some of the main requirements for leadership under the conditions required in community leadership in the new millennium:

What we need...is something new - networks of responsibility drawn from all segments, coming together to create a wholeness that incorporates diversity. The participants are at home with change and exhibit a measure of shared values, a sense of mutual obligation and trust. Above all, they have a sense of responsibility for the future of the whole city and region. (p. iv)

Sometimes called 'situated leadership' (Falk 1999) because of its situation-specific characteristics, enabling leadership (Falk & Mulford forthcoming) includes relationship building and collaborative problem-solving, community capacity audits and situational analyses. In short, it involves asset mapping of social, human and economic resources (Kretzmann & McKnight 1993), to establish the developmental needs of the particular community and region. With the results of the situational analysis, the enabling leadership structure for that situation can be designed and relevant, local solutions can be collaboratively established. Enabling leadership as situated network building across traditional barriers for specific situations and purposes, is suspected to be different from traditional top-down notions of leadership, but this has only recently been explored through research. This paper begins the process of expanding and articulating work cited above, such as Falk and Mulford (forthcoming), whose chief findings thus far concerning enabling leadership are now summarised.

ENABLING LEADERSHIP

The following are some of the key conditions that shape the nature of the interactive process fostering positive learning of knowledge and about identities. These contextual conditions contribute to enhanced networks, relationships, collective action and, therefore, leadership:

- *Building internal networks*: Are the relevant knowledge of skills, knowledge and values present for the purpose in hand?
- *Building links between internal and external networks*: How well are the links between the internal and external networks in the community built and maintained?
- *Building historicity*: How effective is the building of shared experiences (including norms, values and attitudes) and understandings of personal, family, community and broader social history?
- *Building shared visions*: How systematic, inclusive, and inclusive of knowledge and identity resources (including norms, values and attitudes) is the reconciliation of past shared experiences with the desired future scenario/s?
- *Building shared communication*: How explicit and systematic are the communicative practices, about physical sites, rules and procedures?
- *Building each other's self confidence and identity shifts*: How explicit and systematic are the opportunities where these interactions occur?

The role of leaders under these contextual circumstances is basically one of developing trust. For example, the building of networks relies for its success on building trust between the network members, a clear leadership role. Likewise, building trust between people as they share communication is fundamental to successful outcomes. It can also be seen that one outcome of the above indicators of sound process will be enhanced levels of generalised trust and commitment in all the networks of that community-of-common-purpose. In other words, trust is apparent at both specific and generalised levels. Building trust must clearly be a goal of leaders of the new millennium.

The precondition for 'good leadership' in the new times heralded by the above is that the leadership is not approached from a predetermined 'this is the right way to do the job' stance: the action is situated in a particular location, with particular needs and particular planned outcomes in the form of *enabling* others. The situation dictates the needs, the planning and the outcomes. The situation determines the type and extent of enabling leadership that is involved. The characteristics of an enabling leader in new times include:

- relationship-building across community sectors (genders, classes, ethnicities, ages and so on) to establish common interests and activities for furthering the community's specific future and goals
- relationships develop from interactions which need qualities of historicity, externality, reciprocity, trust, shared norms/values
- identifying relevant knowledge and identity resources for particular purposes taking account of need for plentiful interactions
- bringing people together with resources to plan possible futures
- planning opportunities for future events, interactions small, large, across community to facilitate the short and long term goals of the futures agenda
- ensuring the facilitation of networking across groups and sectors throughout all processes
- celebrating and documenting successes, recognising and moving on from failures.

In the section that follows, the methodology for the overall project, from which the data reported here is drawn, will be outlined.

PROJECT METHODOLOGY

The main study (CRLRA 2000) sought to provide the greatest possible amount of information in a wide range of areas where vocational education, training and learning occurs, across an initial 7 regions. The theory-building research design can be described broadly as a multi-site, multi-method approach (e.g. Maxwell 1996).

The interviewee selection process in those 7 regions was informed by the five objectives in the *National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1998-2003* (ANTA 1998). The objectives are equipping Australians for the world of work; enhancing mobility in the labour market; achieving equitable outcomes in vocational education and training; increasing investment in training; and

maximising the value of public vocational education and training. These objectives were used to identify specific issues and groups as foci for the different sites selected, and a purpose-made questionnaire as well as targeted interview schedules were developed.

The purposive sampling strategy (Patton 1990) deliberately sought respondents from four groups in each of the seven regions: First, there were organisations concerned with formal VET provision. Second, there were employers. Third were representatives of community organisations, and fourth were learners or community members. The two main sources of data were interview data and questionnaire data. For each of the four interviewee groups, questions were based around the same four interest areas. Information and perceptions were sought about:

- changes in the community and their impact on individuals and organisations;
- interactions related to vocational education and training among individuals, enterprises, VET providers and community organisations;
- recent vocational education and training experiences focussing on their contributions to social and economic wellbeing;
- people's perceptions about the future vocational education and training needs.

Questionnaires were completed by most interviewees from the 28 sites. In total, 399 questionnaires were completed for scanning purposes. Data were analysed using a combination of manual thematic analyses, NUD*IST, and some detailed ethnomethodological analyses using a range of techniques (Miles & Huberman 1984). Standard statistical procedures were applied to the questionnaire data as appropriate, though these data are not the subject of the report in this paper.

The data reported in this paper tests the assumption that local (endogenous) planning and leadership enhance socio-economic VET outcomes for regions, and that these outcomes are in fact more sustainable. Two examples of the data showing this endogenous planning will be shown. They illustrate various features of the trust and social cohesion that are found to be important for enabling leadership, especially across sectors.

The research questions from the main study concerning partnership and leadership are:

- What are the different configurations of vocational education and training in regional communities?
- What are effective models of collaboration between communities and their VET providers?

It is stressed here that the following section draws on only a small section of the data as illustrative documentation of the research findings. The paper continues now with a sample of illustrative data, then continues with a section outlining the study's results for partnership and leadership issues. Readers are directed to the main report, available on the web (<http://www.CRLRA.utas.edu.au>), in photocopy form, or in published report form from ANTA or CRLRA directly.

ENABLING VET LEADERSHIP: TWO CASES

This section presents two cases of many in the data. Each case shows how the partnerships and leadership differ according to the local needs and situation.

Case 1: TAFE as a VET enabler

Collaboration in this case brings together four participating partners, all benefiting in a multitude of ways. The case beginnings stem from a number of felt, as well as expressed needs. The members of an Indigenous retirement village express a felt need to the City Council for a place in which they can gather and socialise. The Council is unable to respond due to financial constraints. TAFE offers to offset some of the associated costs by supplying labour to the project and in doing so meeting the need for a practical work experience component of some of its Indigenous trainees.

Each of the participants is unable to accomplish their goals without the ensuing interaction between each of the partners. Mutual benefit is accomplished in an efficient manner. Collaboration achieves that which in isolation is unachievable and is accompanied by a number of unintended social outcomes of great importance to each of the collaborators.

A representative of the local city council describes the way the case worked in practice:

Case 1: TAFE as enabler

When the [retirement] village was first constructed it was based on a philosophical principle that it wanted to promote independence of living amongst older people. Even though they were living in supported accommodation they would be encouraged to live as independently as possible and in fact live in a town-like or home-like atmosphere. In practice what we found was that the needs level of the people in our hostel increased, the support needs increased and also that the people there themselves wanted to gather together rather than being necessarily part of the broader community because of the difficulty of moving around and so on. They were happy to work together and to play together if you like, as a community, in itself, and they had been asking council for some time to construct a recreation facility for them where they could meet and conduct their various activities. Well, at that stage council couldn't afford to do that because we had a strong commitment to other works at the village. However the TAFE approached council with an offer to provide labour to construct a recreation room if council would provide the funds for the purchase of materials and other things. Council accepted that as a good idea and went ahead, and the building was actually constructed and it's now in constant use by the people in the village.

Now the outcomes from that were, I guess it's a win/win for everybody. First of all, the people in the village got themselves a recreation room that they really love and that they use a lot, and they're very proud of it. Secondly, the people at TAFE got an opportunity to get real work experience building a real building rather than just a mock up on the TAFE site, and particularly that was for younger Aboriginal people who were participating in the building program. They were the - it was basically an Aboriginal training program, (Thirdly) I guess it gave them an insight into the problems of older people in being on the job there and seeing the needs of older people, but also in reverse [it] showed a more positive side of young people to older people. You know ... older people are fairly critical of younger people generally and think that they are just bludgers and threats to their existence and I think that, you know, one of the positives was that there was a bit more understanding and appreciation from the residents in the village to the TAFE students who were there doing the work. So, yeah, it was a two-way thing. And (Fourthly) I guess council was in-between - [it] got the benefit of a building that is now an asset to its retirement village so council thought it was a pretty good project. You know we were very pleased with the outcomes of the project.

TAFE were extremely pleased with the outcomes too, first of all because if they hadn't had a project it's most likely that the course would not have run, they basically have to have a project that they can work on and work towards and they were looking for one. What they can provide is the labour, but obviously the other participant has to provide the materials and there is a fair bit of money involved in that, so, it's not easy for TAFE to get another joint venturer if you like in these projects, so they were very happy: it kept a course going that otherwise would have been lost to [The District] and once courses are lost at TAFE and other things, you know, they don't come back. So that, that was part of the drive to do it too, that we didn't want to see that building trade course disappear, or it was pre-apprenticeship training course disappear. And ... as I mentioned before, we were looking at other potential joint venture projects with TAFE as well. We haven't actually entered into any with them, but TAFE has worked with other groups like the Department of Housing to do works on their estates and so on, so TAFE's involvement with the community has continued after that particular project. Maybe that one gave them a bit of a high profile that they can hold up and say, 'look we can do it'.

Outcomes of Case 1

- There is external networking (inter-organisational practices) evident on the part of all groups, and to external regional and state structures, initiated by strong local leadership
- Changed attitudes are evident, and to personal identities so individuals see themselves as being able to develop in different roles - the capacity and willingness to act in new and different ways. That is, changed attitudes and identity formation promote risk-taking and transfer of learning through networks both within and linking to outside the communities
- Raised levels of awareness and caring for other members of community
- Learning took place at different levels - personal, group and organisational
- Individuals acquired skills
- Lifestyle of retirees improved
- Cost sharing and reduced capital outlay claimed
- Resources associated with drawing on future and past experience evident (dimensions of historicity and futuricity)

- Understanding and trust is improved between Indigenous youth and the older Indigenous generation living at the centre
- Financial and social benefits from the TAFE course being maintained in the community
- Collaboration secured TAFE course for future
- Real life skills building project for students

In other words, this model demonstrates elements of three different groups of needs being met: Individual, community and region.

Case 2: Community as VET enabler

Collaboration is not simple, nor is it uniform in its influence. Collaboration occurs for specific purposes in specific places at specific times, and its very nature means that some stakeholders will be included and other groups may not. The trick of the leaders or initiators of the collaboration is to know who should be involved in the case in hand. However, knowing who and actually achieving the involvement of the desired parties are often two different matters, for reasons that may be beyond the control of the local planning group. The following scenario illustrates some of the multi-dimensionality of partnerships and collaboration.

Case 2: Community as enabler

The Lakeside Committee was formed to try to beautify and reclaim the banks of the lake on which the town is located. The group formed and then needed to affiliate with a registered body to be eligible for Government funding. They became a group under Landcare and received \$45,000 over three years. While Landcare is largely rural based, the Lakeside group draws in people from a wide range of organisations, including local orchardists, the Development Association and the local Indigenous groups.

A proper project plan was drawn up and the plan is to get rid of the exotic trees that have grown up along the bank and to replace them with native trees. Part of the project involves collecting seeds to use in the revegetation programme. There is a core group of five people in the project, but it is often possible to have up to thirty volunteers come to help on planting days.

Generally, it is perceived that the town gets together to work on important projects. The group's major project is building a bush house at the High School to raise seedlings to be planted out. This could be used by the High School as well. The local Convent school and the local High School will plant trees. Volunteer groups will also plant.

A group of eight trainees under the management of Greencorp (a training company) has used the Lakeside project as their base for training. They have been working there for six months and are about to finish. They have been involved in all kinds of training on the site. The Project provides the materials and the trainees provide the labour. They have cut down exotics, replanted the shores of the lake, put in walking tracks, and put in a bridge.

Local businesses are asked directly if they will help. They have been very generous. The cement works has helped; local orchardists have helped; graziers; ACME Machinery; the welding works donated the steel frame; and a local builder was the works overseer. There were also outside links involved with the project. For example, the Department of Natural Resources was involved with the grant application, Greening Australia and Greencorp have also been involved in different aspects.

One section of the lake shore which is a traditional Indigenous area has been allocated to the local Indigenous group to deal with in their own way. They intend to plant bush-tucker trees and to put in a dance area. The Indigenous dancing group will be involved as well.

Across the district, there are a multitude of identified training opportunities which remain unmet.

However, the local TAFE branch is threatened with closure because the only courses it offers - standard construction and engineering courses - are not viable. The community wanted the TAFE to run a computer course, but the TAFE didn't have the resources, so the course was run from a school at a regional centre an hour's drive away. The decision on which courses to run is beyond the control of the local management, and in the hands of the manager at the main campus about an hour and a half's drive away in the regional centre.

The demise of the TAFE would result in the loss of about three jobs to the town, a physical asset of considerable value, and an enormous potential asset to the community and region.

A local committee led by the Mayor is now seeking ways to secure the funds to ensure the TAFE stays in town and provides a more community responsive community college offering.

Outcomes of Case 2

Strongly evident in the piece are the points already confirmed, especially the interplay of individual, community and regional dynamics. As well:

- The role of adequate resourcing is crucial to achieving sound outcomes
- The impact of external (in this case regional centre) decisions on more peripheral wellbeing
- The impact of the initiative and different forms and styles of leadership are integral to the success of the ongoing collaborative projects
- The partnerships open up and identify coherent and locally relevant employment and training opportunities
- The case of the TAFE branch provides a different view of collaboration, and demonstrates the contribution of the TAFE - its three jobs, the value-adding that the maintenance and rates of the campus pass on to the local district and the contribution to the community of the employees outside their work role
- It also illustrates some of the constraints involved in achieving partnerships when a 'head office' is removed from the community involved by a long drive and therefore does not fully appreciate local issues.

There are bound to be local opponents to the above initiatives, and these would lend another view of the situation, although it is to be expected that a collaborative outcome, while aiming for a shared purpose, may not carry all in its path.

RESULTS FOR LEADERSHIP AND PARTNERSHIPS

The results of this paper show that there are aspects related to partnerships driven by effective leadership in the local organisation of VET that directly impact on its effectiveness. These aspects are not only to do with the physical resources available to the participants (such as transport and childcare). Nor are they solely related to the individual's skill base, confidence or motivation, even though these issues have been shown to be vital in VET's effectiveness in their own right.

Each successful partnership within a configuration can be described according to four primary variables:

- **Purpose**: The purpose of the partnership is a stabilising influence on the project as well as needing to vary with emerging vision and needs. Well-defined and well-understood purpose is the linchpin of the development of strong networks among the partners, and the resulting trust facilitates VET outcomes at individual, community and regional levels.
- **Partnership members**: The membership must be of the people who work to get things done. Leaders emerge for different stages of the partnership development. Good leadership is characterised by participation, relevance and flexibility. Partnerships that do not work appear to be those whose membership is 'by sector' rather than 'by operant'-the person who actually exerts the force to get things done.
- **Intensity**: The number of meetings per week, month or year is a crucial factor in the viability and success of partnerships. Early in a cycle, more frequent meetings are important until shared vision and trust are built, and real and expressed needs are understood and planned for. This depends on the strengths of the staff 'on the ground'-their skills as individuals and team workers. The intensity of meetings will taper as trust builds, until meetings are held as required.
- **Duration**: The duration of the project partnership will vary according to purpose, relevance of needs met, adjustment to emerging needs, and the development of the partnership to meet changing community and regional needs. In many instances, the partnership re-configures (has

slightly or radically different operant members) for a different purpose, although this is only possible because of the continuity of staff and vision established in the earlier partnership.

These four variables are then defined according to five dimensions (see Table below):

- on-ground personnel continuity and leadership
- vision coherence and continuity
- relevance of activating needs
- relationship among partners
- mix of individual, community and regional focus

Table: Elements of effective partnerships

	On-ground personnel continuity & leadership	Vision coherence & continuity	Relevance of activating needs	Relationship among partners	Mix of individual, community & regional focus
Purpose	Continuity of relevant personnel is essential for quality and sustainable outcomes. Purpose determines staffing needs, but changing purpose (oiled by trust) may need changing personnel	Vision will change over time but must retain aspects of continuity and coherence according to evolving purposes	Externally imposed purposes must intersect with participants' real and expressed needs for successful impacts. Reciprocally, if these needs are the starting point, then emerging purposes and wider needs may grow	Shared understanding of purpose will develop trust and facilitate action	The project purpose will serve multiple ends at different stages
Partnership members	Continuity of staff intersects with the need to have those staff as the ones who get things done. Leadership is the issue	Shared vision facilitates the work of those who get things done in working as a team	Relevance of activating needs will change and so affect the composition of staffing needs	Trust among partners continuously confirms the status of those who get things done	Those who get things done will do so at these different levels of impacts; this mix will help determine staffing requirements and continuity
Intensity	Intensity of interaction between partners is directly affected by continuity of on-ground personnel	Intensity of partnership is affected and streamlined by coherence of vision with resourcing implications	More interaction has to occur in times of disjuncture where needs are not being met, putting strains on resources and trust	Trust between partners reduces the intensity of interactions so facilitating outcomes and minimising resourcing requirements	Varied individual, community and regional impacts are likely to demand a more intense meeting schedule for partners
Duration	Personnel continuity directly impacts on (a) the project sustainability over time, and (b) the relevance of project duration according to purpose	Evolving and relevant visions are strategically linked to project duration	Relevance of activating needs is a key factor in determining real project duration	Trust oils the flexibility of project duration, avoiding needless continuance and resources of projects, facilitating the reformation of partners for new or revitalised purposes	Real impact on regional level builds over time, along with staff and vision continuity and coherence

The main issue to consider is not the configuration of all the VET players and stakeholders at any one site, but the partnerships within the configuration. The partnerships drive the effectiveness of VET outcomes, where effectiveness includes the variety, depth, time span and availability of provision.

WHAT ARE EFFECTIVE PARTNERSHIPS AND THEIR RELATION TO LEADERSHIP?

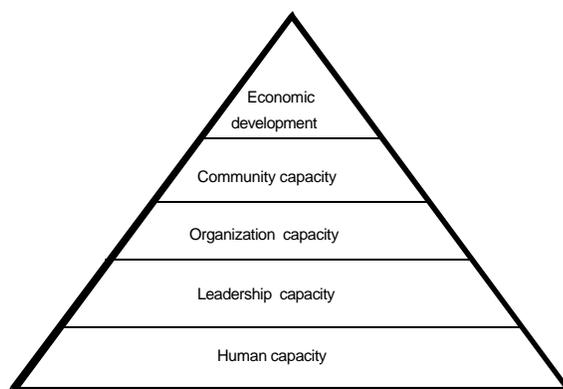
The features of effective VET partnerships are:

- Successful partnerships have employed a community-based, bottom-up planning process which is broadly collaborative.

- Successful partnerships depend on the relevance of the vocational learning that arises from the planning processes in terms of filling the felt and expressed needs of the participants.
- Successful partnerships begin and are carried into practice through leadership of various kinds.
- While collaborative community-based planning and development processes are crucial, these depend on government to resource programs *and their development processes* adequately.
- Continuity of relationships over a period of time (historicity) leads to more positive VET outcomes through the consistency of availability and the consequent building of trust.
- Collaboration at a rural level reduces some barriers to participation.
- Historicity (continuity of relationships) between local partners (community, schools, TAFEs) promotes a self-checking or peer accountability, or 'horizontal accountability'.
- One form of provision of VET, or one approach, or one set of courses, or one teaching method, does not work across the board. This is sometimes described as 'one size does not fit all'.

Allen (1999, 9) describes the five levels of economic development of which VET is such an integral and embedded feature. Given the inescapable fact that the sole purpose and *raison d'etre* for vocational education and training is to enhance economic and social wellbeing through a cycle of individual knowledge, skills and identity development, it is significant that the analyses in this and preceding chapters support Allen's contention that levels of capacity must precede strong economic outcomes. Allen's model, with minor amendments in the Figure below, illustrates how economic development, is dependent on the levels of capacity at the foundation of the pyramid:

Figure: The five levels of economic development



Amended from the original diagram by Allen, J. 1999, *The Nebraska model*, Keynote address to Regional Australia Summit, Parliament House, Canberra, 27-29 October, p. 9.

This paper has presented a section of data that supports a model of partnerships and leadership driven by bottom-up, community-owned planning processes. This appears to ensure sustainable VET outcomes because of VET's resulting relevance in meeting real and expressed needs, in building community capacity, and, as mentioned, in contributing to the likelihood of sustainability. Purposefulness, leadership, vision, and continuity of staff and provision are vital in securing positive and sustainable VET outcomes. None of these is possible without a shift in focus from funding generic VET outcomes to resourcing the building of strategic processes and capacity of a collaborative and inclusive kind.

Key barriers to effective collaboration and partnerships include a lack of social cohesion and trust. Partnerships that successfully blend strong community-based goodwill with external networks and resources will achieve the most positive benefits. This results in heightened wellbeing at three levels: individual, community and regional. In very general terms, and from the broader study, there are reports in the data that VET has a positive impact on the social and economic wellbeing of regional Australia. This impact is made through the enabling effect on the achievement of outcomes that are needed by regional Australians, and that directly affect their lives.

In general, it was found that "...social cohesion, trust and social capital underpinned all successful VET outcomes" (CRLRA 2000, 129). Specific findings from the main study relating to partnerships and leadership include:

1. Vocational education and training (VET) is an enabler for rapid change in regional Australia. It does this by facilitating:
 - Relevance and purposefulness
 - Effective partnerships
 - Trust
 - Leadership
 - Quality and quantity of infrastructure
 - Perceptions of VET as 'learning' rather than education and training
2. VET is most effective when in accord with the principle of 'Integrity of Continuity':
 - Continuity of personnel, resources and place
 - Purposefulness
 - Inclusive planning
 - Organisational and community history and precedents
 - Vision for future of vocational education and training in the community
- 3 Integrity of continuity is achieved through collaborative local, community-based and inclusive planning for VET that meets the needs of:
 - Individuals
 - Community
 - Region
4. VET's impact on social and economic wellbeing is achieved through building capacities consisting of:
 - Skills
 - Confidence
 - Networks
 - Job readiness
- 5 Developing quality partnerships in vocational education and training involves bonding communities together as well as connecting them to external agencies and information.

Partnerships that successfully blend strong community-based goodwill with external networks and resources achieve the most positive benefits. There is evidence that the benefits translate into heightened social and economic wellbeing at three levels: individual, community and regional. In order to confirm and expand the nature and extent of these benefits, this third aspect should be examined in more detail in the ongoing study. Key barriers to effective collaboration and partnerships include a lack of social cohesion and trust.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

The most significant implication for practice lies in the fact that VET is most effective when local planning and development of VET responses are achieved in collaborative partnerships. The direct implication is that regional audits and capacity building, using an endogenous development design, must be implemented (see Guenther et al 2000, for an example). Once this is achieved, the individual, community and regional VET needs can be fulfilled using the national frameworks and structures as the imprimatur. For practice, this means linking more strongly with local groups and organisations, identifying an enabling leader from the community (who may be from a provider but must have local trust) not only industry but the whole community. It is not enough in itself to cater for industry's needs, since the outcomes, while important, need to be locked into the (as near as possible) whole community for support, resource management and sustainability.

It is stressed that strong social cohesion, trust and social capital underpinned all successful VET outcomes documented in this study. In all cases where these factors had been undermined or were lacking in some way, the contribution of VET to the wellbeing of those living in regional Australia was not as clear as in cases where these factors were strongly in evidence. The study carries with it the force of logic that portrays vocational education, training and learning as a tool which regional citizens could use more effectively in diverse situations, for their diverse lifelong learning purposes.

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