

Developing instruments for your VET research

The following formats provide templates that can be adapted for many different forms of VET research.

The questionnaire format is followed by several interview formats and then an observation and record scanning format.

In questionnaires the design issue is to keep them short and consistent in format. Interviews need limited questions for participants but good prompts for the interviewee. Observation schedules need to separate feelings from voices and behaviours observed, while record scanning formats need to isolate key issues for the study from the wealth of rhetoric available. Finally there is a focus group protocol.

Management Development Survey

This Survey is Approved by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research

To: Human Resource Managers or Training and Development Managers

This **National Research Study** is an attempt to examine a variety of issues in the management, training, and development areas, and their impact on organisational culture and performance.

The study has been approved by the Australian National Training Authority and the National Centre for Vocational Educational Research. This survey has been cleared by the Commonwealth Government Statistical Clearing House in accordance with government guidelines. The project will only work if we can collect *your views* of management development and, in particular, frontline management development within your organisation. A Frontline Manager is a person 'who is responsible for the coordination of the work of others and is the first level of such coordination within the organisation'.

Your responses concerning managers and management development will be valuable to the project. The project will collect the views of HR and Training Managers, Managers and Frontline Managers by questionnaire and then subsequently through interviews. We are interested in how organisations change and what business benefits there have been from management development processes.

The information gathered will be treated with strictest confidence as the study has been approved by independent business and community members of the University Ethics Committee.

We would be extremely grateful if you would complete the appropriate answers and use the self-addressed, reply paid envelope for the return of your responses. We value your input, but if you are unable to respond, please authorise a colleague to do so on your behalf by the 12th April 2000.

If you would like a brief summary of the findings when the results are available, please enclose a business card so we can mail the project outcomes directly to you.

Thank you,



Professor. Geoffrey Soutar - Project Director

University of Western Australia

First of all, this section asks about background details of your organisation so we can put your responses in context. For each question please tick one box, unless otherwise asked.

(1) How many employees do you have in your organisation?

50 or less	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51-100	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
101-500	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
501-1000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 1000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(2) How many front line managers do you have in your organisation?

10 or less	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11-20	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21-50	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
51-100	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than 100	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(3) What was your organisation's annual turnover or budget in the last financial year?

Less than \$1M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$1M- \$10M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$11M-\$50M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
\$50M-\$100M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More than \$100M	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

(4) Which Industry, Business or Service classification best reflects your organisation?

Agriculture, forestry and fishing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transport and storage	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mining	<input type="checkbox"/>	Communication services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Finance and insurance	<input type="checkbox"/>
Electricity, gas and water supply	<input type="checkbox"/>	Property and business services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Construction	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education	<input type="checkbox"/>
Wholesale trade	<input type="checkbox"/>	Health and community services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retail trade	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cultural and recreational services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal and other services	<input type="checkbox"/>

(5) In which parts of Australia is your organisation's main centre of operation?

ACT NSW NT QLD
 SA TAS VIC WA

(6) Do you operate in:

Metropolitan areas Rural areas Metropolitan and Rural areas

(7) How would you describe your organisation's performance in the following areas?

Very Poor

Very Good

(7)								
Sales	(or customer response)	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sales growth	(or growth in customer response)							
Return on investment	(or budget allocation)							
Profitability	(or value by community)							
Market share	(or community penetration)							
New products	(or service innovation)							

Product quality	(customer satisfaction)
Service quality	(customer service satisfaction)
Cash flow	(or budget distribution)

Overall performance

(8) How would you describe your organisation's performance in these areas over the past two years ? (again non profit organisations should use the phrase in brackets)		<i>Getting a lot Worse</i>				<i>Getting a lot Better</i>		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sales	(or customer responses)							
Sales growth	(or growth in customer responses)							
Return on investment	(or budget allocation)							
Profitability	(or valued by community)							
Market share	(community penetration)							
New products	(or service innovation)							
Product quality	(customer satisfaction)							
Service quality	(customer service satisfaction)							
Cash flow	(or budget distribution)							

Overall performance

(9) How well would you say the following paragraphs describe your company:	<i>Describes us very well</i>				<i>Not like us at all</i>		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. We locate and maintain a 'niche' in a relatively stable product area. Generally, we are not at the forefront of new product or market development, but concentrate on a limited range of products, doing the best job possible through quality, superior service, low prices, and so forth.							
2. We make frequent changes in and additions to, our range of products or services. By responding rapidly to early signals of market needs or opportunities, we try to be 'first in' in new product and market areas, although we may not maintain market strength in all of the areas we enter.							
3. We maintain a stable, limited line of products and services and simultaneously follow a selected, promising set of new developments in other areas. We are seldom 'first in' with new products, but may be 'second in' with a more cost effective or better conceived product.							
4. We do not have a consistent product-market orientation. We are not aggressive in maintaining established products and markets, nor are we willing to take many risks, but we will change our product or service offerings when and where environmental pressures force us.							

(10) The best description of our organisation is provided by:

Paragraph 1 [] Paragraph 2 [] Paragraph 3 [] Paragraph 4 []

(11) The training and development we do in this organisation:

	<i>Strongly Disagree</i>			<i>Strongly Agree</i>			
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is of consistent quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has an acceptable standard of quality	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is economical	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is done consistently well	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is done at a reasonable cost	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is good value for money	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Is well done	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Has workplace outcomes that last a long time	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with each of the following statements. If you strongly disagree, circle 1. If you strongly agree, circle 7. If your feelings are not so strong, circle an appropriate number in the middle. There are no right or wrong answers. Some of the statements are similar. This is necessary to properly measure your opinions and for no other purpose. There are no trick questions.

(12) In this organisation:

Strongly agree

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
There is open discussion and employees are encouraged to participate in decision making							
There is an emphasis on excellence and quality outputs							
Employees are empowered to act and take responsibility in their jobs							
Our products and services are more innovative than those of our competitors							
We are market oriented							
The emphasis is on achieving predictable performance outcomes							
There is an emphasis on human relations, teamwork and cohesion							
Expansion, growth and development are encouraged							
Control of management is centralised							
We change products and services more than our competitors							
Our employees are entrepreneurial and flexible, enabling change to be created							
There is flexibility and decentralisation in management							
There is an emphasis on creative problem solving							
Employee concerns and ideas are considered important							
The focus is on goal and task accomplishment							
We have a strong track record of profitability							
We concentrate on developing new products, services and markets							
Innovation, change and risk taking are important							
We aggressively enter markets with new products and services							
We try to develop our staff so they can achieve their potential							
We are better technologists than we are marketers							
We look after our employees very well							
Our performance evaluation processes are participatory							
We recruit and retain the people needed to develop new products, services and markets							
Employees' job satisfaction is very good							
We have a reputation for being innovative and creative							
We monitor the marketplace to find changes and trends							
Efficiency and productivity are important							
Workplace safety is good							
There are very few workplace grievances							
We value diversity							
Our performance evaluation processes are devolved to work units							
We use competence based training in our work skills programs							
We use competence based training in our management development programs							
Employee turnover is low							
We honour our commitments to staff							
We have a strong track record of growth							

We are generally very effective
 Things generally run pretty well
 We are good at developing our managers
 We have very good training and development programs
 We maintain continuity through strategic planning
 We develop good long term relationships with suppliers
 We ensure staff have appropriate knowledge
 We honour our commitments to customers

(13) The management culture of this organisation: *Strongly disagree* *Strongly agree*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Encourages continual individual growth							
Values group reflection and discussion							
Supports experimentation and risk taking							
Values and uses localised knowledge within the organisation							
Generates through groups, innovative systems and solution							
Values diverse and conflicting perceptions of organisational issues							
Invites suggestions of change to current organisational goals							
Does include differing subgroups views within broad visions							
Tolerates different approaches to organisational issues							
When faced with conflict, negotiates to find new solutions							
Is adaptive and flexible in restructuring to new situations							
Uses self regulation as the basis for performance management							
Recognises the interdependence of organisational sub systems							
Encourages direction with positive feedback							
Will seize on opportunities which may be contrary to current goals							

(14) What percentage of your organisation's revenue or sales is spent on training and development in 1999?
 1% or less [] 2% [] 3% [] 4% [] 5% or more []

(15) What percentage of your organisation's staff was involved in training and development in 1999?
 10% or less [] 20% [] 40% [] 60% [] 80% or more []

(16) Front line managers in this organisation: *Strongly disagree* *Strongly agree*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Manage their personal work priorities very well							
Manage their professional development very well							
Provide good leadership in the workplace							
Establish effective workplace relationships							
Manage effective workplace relationships							
Participate well in work teams							
Lead work teams well							
Facilitate work teams well							
Manage operations well to achieve planned outcomes							
Manage workplace information							
Manage customer service to achieve quality outcomes							
Manage a safe workplace and environment							
Manage continuous improvement systems and processes well							
Facilitate change and innovation well							
Capitalise well on change and innovation							

(17) Have you heard of the FRONTLINE MANGEMENT INITIATIVE (or FMI)? Yes [] No []

If no, thank you for your assistance with this project. Please return the questionnaire to the research team in the self-addressed, reply paid envelope and estimate of the time taken to complete this form : [] Minutes

Instrument: Telephone interview protocol

Training managers FMI users: telephone interview

- 1 - Briefly describe your business with some key facts.**
- 2 - Give me a picture of how FMI started and where you have got to now?**
- 3 - Tell me about the learning processes you use with the FMI?**
- 4 - Would you say the FMI has been effective? And who for?**
- 5 - How was the decision made to go for the FMI?**
- 6 - What have been the issues with FMI so far?**

1 - Briefly describe your business with some key facts.

the nature of the firm's business;
the size of the firm (i.e. small, medium, large);
the make-up of the work force, that is, roughly, the number of permanent and casual employees, the number of men and women employees;
the range of occupations covered.
the make-up of the management work force.

2 - Give me a picture of how FMI started and where you have got to now.

Did you have frontline training before? How much?
How you got to hear about and why you got involved in the FMI?
How long have your current participants being working with FMI?
What numbers of participants have you now at each level of the FMI?
How many have been accredited?
At what levels?
How many more do you expect and when?
Who do you work with for training and assessment delivery?

3 - Tell me about the learning processes you use with the FMI

Had you used competencies in the organisation before?
Have the competencies been right for your people?
Have you adapted them?
How are participants selected?
What kind of training relationships and process have developed?
How much is internal or external
Do you use mentors?
Do you use on-line support?
Have you got any special learning groups operating formally or informally?

4 - Would you say the FMI has been effective? And who for?

Is it changing your managers in any way? Can you provide any examples?
Is it changing the organisation structure or culture in any way? Can you provide any examples?
Is it making the business more effective in any way? Can you provide any examples?
Has your business effectiveness changed during this period? is there an example of how FMI is related?

5 - How was the decision made to go for the FMI?

Who and what drove the decision? What was the mechanism?
What network of professional contacts and literature do you have to find out about new initiatives?
How does the FMI fit in with your HRD Strategy? Can you provide any examples?

6 - What have been the issues with FMI so far?

What are the disadvantages of the FMI?
What are the advantages of the FMI?
What three things would you change about FMI?
Can we come and talk to you and some participants?

Interview record - Organisation / Representation MK2

Interview location :

Participant :

E mail :

Role :

Org Age :

Organisation :

Key FMI Figures – Interview questions

(prompts not revealed)

Review of Research question framework

- What is valued in FMI training? (Technical)
- What concepts of management are constructed? (Critical)
- What constructs these views and with what results to management culture?(Socio Cultural)

1- What was your role ? Contextual and historical picture

How did you get involved and then connected?

Network links – previous achievements – old boys

What else was happening? Management Development – CBT

What was the political will for and against the FMI?

Parties – Ministers – Committees – Co representatives

What forces steered the course?

Gov – Deetya – ANTA – Industry - State influence

Who was involved?

What was done as intended?

Contracts – processes - personalities

What got politically nobbled?

Contracts – outcomes – old boys – serendipity – power shift

2 - What is your current relationship to FMI?

Specific commercial interests – continuous?

What enterprises are you connected to?

In pay of – allied to – relationships with

3 - What is working well?

Fidelity – diversity – who benefits

How is the assessment ethically?

Dual role of trainer/assessor – checking - monitoring

Is it self fulfilling?

Does the market prevent misuse – or does money rule ?

4 - What got changed?

Grudges – unfulfilled expectations – for worse – for better – serendipity?

5 - What was critical?

What could have stopped it – what if there was no FMI?

What else does it need?

National – local – process – company level - support

6 - What are you most pleased about?

Best outcomes – why happened?

7 - What are you unhappy about?

Interview record - Organisation / Representation Mk 1

Interview location :

Participant :

E mail :

Role :

Org Age :

Org Pol :

FMI Participants :

Slight variations of this protocol were used in the field work for managers in the organisation, managers of HRD and FLM team members or subordinates. They have been omitted in the interests of minimising duplication.

Once again the main questions were those used in the interview and the subsidiary questions were used as probes and clarifications as secondary questions where necessary.

1 - Can you briefly describe your role and background in the organisation ?

- Your responsibilities, liaisons and outputs.
- The nature of the firm's business.
- The size of the firm (ie. small, medium, large).
- The make-up of the work force (ie permanent / casual employees, men / women).
- The range of occupations covered.
- The make-up of the management work force.

2 - Could you briefly describe your involvement with FMI and the learning processes that have developed within the enterprise

- How did you hear about FMI, and get involved and selected ? Voluntary /mandatory
Prior to the FMI - Did you have frontline training ? or do any competency-based training before ?
How long and at what level have you been working with FMI? How much longer do you expect ?
- Who do you work and learn with, and where - for training and assessment delivery ?
Mentors/Formal- Informal Work groups/Projects/On line/Assessors ?
- Is the FMI like you expected - what is different?
Have the skills of FMI been right for you and your job?
What did you like/dislike about the FMI process and what should be changed?
What's next on your training and learning agenda?

3 - What is different about your performance as a manager since FMI?

- What management skills have you developed - how are you better ?
Managing Work Priorities and Personal Development
Leading the Work Group Managing Information
Managing People Managing Customer Service
Managing Operations Managing Continuous Quality Improvement
Managing Safety Managing Change and Innovation
Building Teams Managing Workplace Learning
- What could be the reason for the difference ?
- How responsible do you believe the FMI is for the difference ?
- Are you developing the "right skills" ?

4 - What is different about the organisation since FMI?

- What has changed for the better in your organisation since FMI ?
- Have there been changes :
 - in how groups function ?
 - in how groups relate to each other ? in organisational morale ?
 - in local goals structures and systems ? in group flexibility?
 - in communication between groups ? in attitudes and values ?
 - in the language of learning ? in attitudes to learning ?
 - in how new ideas have been created ? in how teams learn ?
 - in working processes and outcomes ? in what people value ?
 - in job roles and opportunities ? in the value of people skills over technical skills ?
- What could be the reason for the difference ?
- How responsible do you believe the FMI is for the differences ?
- Are these differences “right” for your organisation ?

5 - What is different about the business since FMI?

- Is there a difference? in sales, service, production, profit or customer satisfaction ?
- Have there been bottom- line changes in :
 - Production rates
 - Staff Costs
 - Failure rates
 - Waste reduction
 - Quality Improvement
 - Accident rates
 - Insurance premiums
- Have there been noticeable differences in the :
 - Average wage
 - Assets per employee
 - Turnover per employee
 - Employee numbers trend
 - Customer base
 - Product development
 - External Awards, recognition
 - Strategic Alliances
 - Quality improvement
- What could be the reason for this difference?
- How responsible do you believe the FMI is for the difference?
- Are these “good” changes for the business?

6 - How the FMI has been effective? Who for, and how do we know?

- What concrete examples are there of the impact of the FMI, making people, the organisation and the business more effective?
 - (What validates any performance improvement?)
 - (How do we know these perceptions of performance are valid?)
- Are you as a manager, more effective ? How much?
- Is there an example of how FMI is related to this?
- Can you provide any examples of how your skills attitudes or behaviours have changed as manager ?
 - Do you have more motivation and flexibility – evidence?
 - Do you carry out more self-monitoring and self-appraisal – evidence?
 - Do your plans have more utility or cost effectiveness – evidence?

Do you recognise your own individual learning needs – evidence ?
Do you take more responsibility for learning ?
Have you gained any promotion or certification ?

- Is the organisation more effective ? How much ?
- Is there an example of how FMI is related to this ?
- Is FMI changing the organisation structure or culture in any way?

Can you provide any examples, is there :

More Integrated action	Decreased group conflict
More strategically linked action	Improved reception to new ideas
Improved group focus	Flexibility in response to different cultures
A development of a common language and formats	Support for innovation
Improvement in knowing where to go, & what to do	Support for learning
Better problem identification	Improved design of learning
Improved analysis and critical thinking	Improved morale
More effective decision making	Lower turnover
Promotion of empowerment	More planned succession
Focus from technical to people skills	Better job definition
Improved group relationships	Improved performance feedback
Improved group outcomes	More effective comparison of performance

- Is the FMI making the business measurably more effective in any way? How much ?
- Is there an example of how FMI is related to this ?

Improvement in overall effectiveness	Improvement against good / bad competitors
Increase in profitability	Improved customer satisfaction
Increase of cost effectiveness	The capacity to innovate
Increase in sales	The ability to learn
Increase in customer transactions objectives/goals	The ability to meet organisational
Increase in safety systems	Positive change in continuous improvement

7 - Has FMI been linked to the way the business wants to go in the future ?

- Is there an organisational strategy ?
 - Does this strategic intent have a direction, is it future orientated, and related to external environment ?
 - Are their strategic objectives ?
 - How are they linked and changed internally and externally ?
 - Are they used at departmental level ?
 - Does the organisational strategy change how you do your job ?
- Is the organisations strategy linked to the HR strategy and how
 - Is HR strategy linked to the HRD strategy and how ?
 - How does the FMI fit in with your HRD strategy?

- Are FMI projects linked to organisational strategy ?

Are FMI projects impacting on organisational strategy ?

Is the FMI process contributing to the pursuit of strategic goals at the organisational and business levels ?

Are the FMI HRD practices changing organisational culture and how ?

8 - What is the greatest impact from the FMI on you, the organisation, and the business ?

- Can you put a dollar measure on any of these changes?
- What were the costs and time costs of the FMI inputs and practice ?
- What have been the benefits of the FMI?
- What have been the drawbacks of the FMI?
- What have been the other major influences on the organisation at the same time as the FMI ?

9 - What additional impact would you have liked from the FMI, and how could the FMI have done this?

- What three things would you change about FMI?
- What have been the issues with FMI so far?
- What if there had been no FMI ?

Thank you - your story and ideas will enrich this national evaluation of the FMI.

If you want to add anything later – please use the contact details on the sheet.

Interview record - Organisation / Representation Mk 2

Interview location :

Participant :

E mail :

Role :

Org Age :

Org Career :

Field research questions from the three research perspectives :

Technical :

What is the FMI like - Competencies/Assessment/Process?

What is good

What is bad

What 3 changes would you make?

What do you value in the training?

Did you have choice in the learning process?

What directed the way you learned?

How did the learning relate to your work needs?

Would you describe it as training or learning?

Critical :

What do you get from the learning experience?

What are you using now?

What are you doing differently?

How do you manage differently?

Are you still learning and how?

What do you still want to learn?

What do you see as the goals of management?

What do you see as excellent management?

What are examples of best management practice?

What would you like to change about management practices?

What do you value in management practice - how should we manage ?

Socio Cultural :

What has shaped your views about management?

Who has shaped your views?

Are your views shared?

Who shapes your actions?

How would you like the management culture to change?

Give examples of other managers behaviours you respect / dislike?

What has changed during the learning process?

Are there examples of what is different now?

Instrument: Record scanning schedule

Organisation Code :
Dates of Research Visit :

Possible Records >	Business Effectiveness Financial Trends	Company and HR/HRD Strategy	MFI Policy Visibility Customisation	FMI Operations Coordination Meeting Gps	HRD Interaction Tr. program Performance Review	HR issues Tenure Promotion Attendance Succession	Health & Safety
Access Level							
Managerial Level							
Training Level							
Frontline Management Level							
Organisational Display							
Public Display							

Instrument: Observation schedule

Organisation Code :
Dates of Research Visit :

Observation >	Interviewees	Individuals	Group Interaction	Physical Layout	Physical Surrounding	Organisational Displays	Business Displays
Possible Cues :	Face Dress Proximity At Interview	Eyes Body Proximity In Workplace	Dialogue Instruction Interaction	Inclusive Exclusive	Signage Inclusive Exclusive	Internal Influence of FMI as a Learning tool	Influence of FMI as a Commercial Developer
Evidence of							
Organisation Culture - General							
Motivational Levels							
Workplace Interaction							
Workplace Diversity							
Training Culture							
Man Dev Culture							
Strategic Integration							

Instrument: Focus group protocol

The objectives of the focus groups were:

- ❖ To assemble a group of practitioners with experience of in-enterprise FMI activity.
- ❖ To generate, and be informed by, diverse perspectives and narratives of FMI experience.

- ❖ To enable participants to indicate issues for the researcher to consider within the subsequent stages of the study.
- ❖ To gain an understanding of emerging FMI structures and patterns.
- ❖ To build interest in the research study, and network links for case study access.

The focus groups included those organisational actors associated with FMI practice such as trainers, mentors, managers, participants and FMI administrators and addressed key questions about their engagement with the FMI in a semi-structured fashion for a period of up to an hour, with the intention of recording and transcribing discussions where appropriate. The focus groups encouraged dialogue and individual stories of engaging with the FMI, and descriptions of the relationships involved. Participants were prompted to indicate how these emerging FMI relations were mediating managers and their organisational performances. They were encouraged to detail what was happening currently that did not happen before, and who was benefiting from the changes. Finally participants discussed what could be changed about FMI practice and if it was linked to broader organisational directions or strategy. The key questions for the focus groups were:

- Why did you get involved with the FMI?
- What patterns of FMI adoption do you see?
- What difference is/can it make to individual Frontline managers?
- What difference is/can it make to their organisations?
- Is it delivering tangible business benefits and what are they?
- How could FMI be improved?
- What evidence is there of FMI being part of business strategy?