

Supporting vocational education and training
providers in building capability for the future

CONSORTIUM RESEARCH PROGRAM

NEWSLETTER

Edition 4, March 2006

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Diary

Coming conference presentations on the consortium:

19-21 April

Symposium on the research program at the AVETRA conference, University of Wollongong. Chaired by Prof. Roger Harris, and including presentations from Prof. Victor Callan and Dr John Mitchell.

28-30 June

Paper on the consortium at the Integrating for Excellence conference at Sheffield Hallam University, UK. Presented by Prof. Roger Harris.

Coming conferences that include VET streams:

21-23 May

VISTA Association of VET Professionals conference at Cumberland Lorne Resort.

<http://www.vista.org.au>

5-8 July

Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA) conference at Fremantle, WA.

<http://www.atea.edu.au>

27-30 November

Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) conference in Adelaide. (Call for abstracts for papers by 30 April.)

<http://www.aare.edu.au>

Welcome

Welcome to the second year of this consortium research program, and to this quarterly newsletter that aims to keep you up to date with research activities. This edition highlights the progress of research over the past three months and gives a taste of what is to come in 2006.

What's new!

New products produced by the consortium research program are available now. You can read all of these – plus earlier products - on the consortium website:

<http://consortiumresearchprogram.net.au>

New literature reviews are from:

- Research activity 4: *Cultures and structures* (draft)
- Research activity 5: *Learning through work* (final version)
- Research activity 7: *Educational leadership* (draft)

A fact sheet titled: *Organisational culture: what is it?* comes from research activity 4: *Cultures and structures*. It provides a plain language introduction to culture in organisations.

15 Case studies of good practice in VET come from research activity 3: *Critical issues in teaching and learning*. These provide the VET sector with models of effective practice.

Papers based on the consortium's research include:

- *VET networked for quality* by Dr John Mitchell, Assoc. Prof. Clive Chappell, Andrea Bateman and Susan Roy (designed to be read in conjunction with other products from research activity 3)
- *Visions for RTO capability* by Berwyn Clayton (presented to the Researching Work and Learning Conference in Sydney, December 2005)
- *Investigating learning and work* by Assoc. Prof. Clive Chappell (presented to the same conference)

NOTE: Final research activity reports - which bring these activities to a close - will appear on the NCVER website when the review process has been completed, and will be linked to the consortium website. Final reports going currently going through review are from research activity 3: *Critical issues*, and research activity 5: *Learning through work*.

In the field

Researchers from five of the consortium research activities are currently out in the field gathering data from the VET community.

Career pathways (Research activity 2) and *Human resource practices* (Research activity 6) have joined forces to run parallel surveys in the field in the next few months. Lead researchers Dr Michele Simons, of the University of South Australia and Dr Andy Smith, of Charles Sturt University will collaborate on interviews and focus groups.

Cultures and structures (Research activity 4) led by Berwyn Clayton, of the Canberra Institute of Technology, has received agreement from 11 RTOs across Australia to conduct in-depth interviews and focus groups in coming months.

Educational leadership (Research activity 7) led by Prof. Victor Callan, of the University of

Views of the future

'One of the more important challenges...is to understand the significant conceptual gap that separates learning that takes place in the classroom/training room contexts and learning that occurs at work.'

Final report for research activity 5:
Learning through work

'Modern leadership and management requires individuals to be more focussed upon the future, upon innovation and change, and the roles of enabler, coach and mentor to... motivate employees and to build both confidence and capability to meet these challenges. To address these challenges, individuals need to have well developed capabilities in emotional management (ie emotional intelligence) and a real understanding of themselves (ie authentic leadership).'

Literature review for research activity 7:
Educational leadership

'The terms speed, flexibility, adaptability, agility, and integration are qualities seen to be closely associated with organisational performance and success...As managers move towards adaptive and innovative organisations, they are finding that existing structural dimensions have to change to better achieve organisation goals...

'RTOs may NOT be able to assume that organisations run simply and rationally, that is, that if people are treated well, they will respond and be motivated to work harder...Cultures are complexes of linked factors which influence motivation and action and are therefore worthy of study.'

Literature review for research activity 4:
Cultures and structures

Find out more

Visit the website:

<http://consortiumresearchprogram.net.au>

Queensland, is undertaking in-depth investigations in six VET organisations. This list of organisations will be finalised during March, with visits commencing from April. It is still not too late to volunteer your organisation for consideration in this area of leadership and management development, and succession and related planning.

Decision making (Research activity 8) led by Geof Hawke, of University of Technology, Sydney, will also be conducting interviews and case studies in the very near future.

International interest

Interest in the consortium research program was sparked by a symposium presented at the 4th International Conference on Researching Work and Learning held at the University of Technology, Sydney in December, 2005.

The symposium was presented by consortium directors Prof. Roger Harris, Ms Berwyn Clayton and Assoc. Prof. Clive Chappell, supported by principal researchers Prof. Andy Smith and Dr John Mitchell.



Principal researcher Dr John Mitchell talks with Bill Bailey from the University of Greenwich, UK



Consortium Director Prof. Roger Harris with Bruno Clematide from Kubix, a workplace learning and VET research consulting company in Denmark.

Good practice

Examples of good practice in building workforce capability already exist in the VET sector.

- A Leadership and Management Development unit has been set up at the Canberra Institute of Technology to work for a strategic approach to capability building across the organisation. The unit will work with human resources, teacher education and staff networks to develop a leadership framework, run professional conversations, trial a coaching program and start a mentoring program for all staff.
- The Workforce Information Service - and its website - provided by the Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology in SA is becoming an active resource and hub of information. It is part of the whole of government approach to workforce development *Better Skills. Better Work. Better State* launched last year to support workforce planning and to retrain, upgrade and replace skills in the workforce. Check the website on: www.workforceinfoservice.sa.gov.au

Send your examples of good practice from your organisation, and this newsletter will publish them.

Contact details

For enquiries about the consortium,
please contact any of the Directors



Prof. Roger Harris

Tel: (08) 8302 6246

roger.harris@unisa.edu.au



Ms Berwyn Clayton

Tel: (02) 6207 4844

berwyn.clayton@cit.act.edu.au



Assoc. Prof. Clive Chappell

Tel: (02) 9514 3999

clive.chappell@uts.edu.au

Contact the editor



Editor: Thea Fisher

Tel (02) 6207 3660 or email:

info@consortiumresearchprogram.net.au

Background in brief

Here is a digest of some ideas emerging from research being undertaken in the consortium.
Full documents are on the consortium website: <http://consortiumresearchprogram.net.au>

Educational leadership

The literature review from research activity 7 refers to research proposing that:

- An understanding of leadership in VET can be increased by distinguishing between leadership and management. For senior leaders and managers in RTOs, building capability is focused on the best ways to facilitate the transition from managerial to leadership roles.
- Transformational leadership is the current dominant school of thought – that is, leadership focused on major change.
- Leadership development at all levels of an organisation is sustained by the creation of core values, cultures, structures and human resource practices that allow staff to grow and to build new capabilities.

Learning through work

The final report of research activity 5 finds that:

- Understanding of learning at work is limited because much thinking about learning is tied to learning in formal education settings.
- The two main influences on learning at work within RTOs are job complexity and organisational environment.
- For RTOs to develop workplace learning for their staff, more work is needed to evaluate current learning environments.

Organisational cultures and structures

The literature review from research activity 4 refers to research proposing that:

- An awareness of structure and culture and the factors affecting their relationship has considerable implications for organisational capability.
- Structural rejuvenation does not have to be wholesale restructure, but can be adjustment of parts of organisations according to the pace of change in their environments.
- The focus of current organisational culture change is moving away from 'planning change' and onto 'facilitating emergence' of change.

VET networked for quality

A paper to describe a selection of VET networks and how they contribute to building and promoting good practice in teaching, learning and assessment, finds that:

- Networks in VET enhance the quality of provision in a variety of ways. They facilitate the exchange of information, ideas, techniques, approaches and tools between VET practitioners. They also provide a mechanism for providers to interact with and obtain feedback from their enterprise clients.
- Networks are complex and often require sophisticated facilitation and management – but they are always needed.

How you can take part

- Join the 467 people on our **newsletter mailing list** and pass the newsletter on through your own distribution list.
- Join one of the **online forums** on the consortium research program website.
- Check out the **newsletter diary** to see what you might be able to participate in.

Subscribe: Join our mailing list to receive this newsletter regularly. Email your request to:
The editor, Thea Fisher at: info@consortiumresearchprogram.net.au



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