

Geof Hawke's article in *The Australian TAFE Teacher*,
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www.aefederal.org.au/Publications/TATT/TATTissues.html

Workforce Development – Who decides?

Quite a lot has been written over the years about the approach organisations should take when making decisions about developing their workforce. Indeed, almost everyone seems to have a view about what the right approach should be.

What we know much less about is how organisations actually reach such decisions. What factors do they consider, how do they set priorities and how do they go about the process of reaching a decision?

Having reached a decision though, how do individual members of the organisation's workforce decide what they'll engage with? Or are there more interesting, satisfying or important things might attract their involvement, but have nothing to do with the organisation's priorities? This is something we know even less about.

And this is interesting, because one of the recurring themes in the management literature of the late twentieth century was the notion of empowering employees to, at the least, be equal partners in setting corporate agendas and influencing decisions that affect their lives.

A consortium of researchers from three institutions has been funded by DEST to carry out a program of research that is aimed at 'Supporting VET providers in building capability for the future' (see <http://www.consortiumresearchprogram.net.au>).

One research focus area addresses this question of how RTOs make decisions and how individuals in those RTOs make their own decisions about workforce development. This research activity is being led by Geof Hawke from OVAL research at UTS and will be working with a range of public and other RTOs in the next months to better understand the decision-making processes that occur at both organisational and individual levels as well as how these two interact.

For more information on this activity, contact Geof on (02) 9514 3462 or Geof.Hawke@uts.edu.au.