
Integrating Essay
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by
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Candidate Declaration

(a) The integrating essay presented for examination has been completed by myself, alone.

(b) The integrating essay, and the publications that it has drawn on, have not been submitted previously, in whole or part, to qualify for any other academic award.

(c) The content of the integrating essay is the result of writing that I have carried out since the official commencement date of the approved research program.

(d) Any editorial work, paid or unpaid, carried out by a third party is acknowledged.

(e) Ethics procedures and guidelines were followed for all studies referred to in this integrating essay.

Veronica Volkoff
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Summary of the research

This integrating essay presents and discusses the findings of the research studies that I have completed within the context of the shifts in the Australian vocational education and training landscape and resultant trends in vocational education and training policy, in particular equity policy, during the period of researching and writing the nominated works, 1995 to 2004.

The research included analysis of vocational education and training in relation to: equity policy; provider inclusiveness strategies; and access, participation, completion and outcomes in relation to learners, in particular members of designated and emerging equity target groups. A range of methodologies was implemented in these studies, usually utilising a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

The first study, the Longitudinal study of student experiences in vocational education and training, explored the experiences of access, participation and outcomes of students in vocational education and training from a range of equity target groups. It was undertaken in six Australian locations across three states and territories. It revealed that intentions, experiences and outcomes varied across students and equity target groups and that membership of multiple equity target groups compounded disadvantage and had an adverse effect upon outcomes.

The second study, a Review of equity literature, was commissioned to inform national policy and broad strategy development and analysed the situation for five designated equity target groups in vocational education and training, nationally. Two other studies focussed on Vocational education and training for people from non-English speaking backgrounds, undertaken five years apart, reviewed the literature and analysed participation and outcomes for people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

A further study analysed the Delivery of vocational education and training programs by adult and community education providers, particularly its provision for people belonging to disadvantaged groups.
Nominated Publications

The following publications have been nominated as substantive works to be considered for the award of Ph.D.

Research Study 1: Longitudinal study of student experiences in vocational education and training


2. Volkoff, V. and Golding, B. (1997). Is access working? An exploration of outcomes for unemployed VET participants. In Good Thinking, Good Practice: research perspectives on learning and work, Volume 1 (pp. 131-142), Brisbane: Centre for Learning and Work Research, Griffith University.


Subsequently, a revised version of this paper was published as follows:


**Research Study 2: Review of equity literature**


**Research Study 3: Review of Research: Vocational education and training for people from non-English speaking backgrounds**

Research Study 4: Adult and Community Education’s contribution to vocational education and training


Position paper: for National Equity Workshop


Research Study 5: Review of Research (2): Vocational education and training for people from non-English speaking backgrounds


Appendix 5, p. 136, provides the required documentation of my publications including signed statements from my co-researchers confirming the extent of my contributions towards each co-authored work.
1. Introduction

This integrating essay will present and discuss the findings of the research studies that I have completed within the context of the shifts in the Australian vocational education and training landscape and resultant trends in vocational education and training policy, in particular equity policy, during the period of researching and writing the nominated works, 1995 to 2004. In particular, the essay will:

- describe how my twelve nominated publications have responded and contributed to emerging debates;
- present the main theses put forward in these publications; and
- demonstrate how they have contributed to improving understanding of equity in Australian vocational education and training, informed the work of other researchers and had an impact on policy and practice.

Researcher background

During the period of writing these works and this integrating essay, I was employed as a university academic at RMIT University (1994-2005) and then at the University of Melbourne (2005-current). The three main areas of my work at RMIT University were:

1. teacher development – initial training and professional development of vocational education and training teachers/trainers for work in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes, Adult and Community Education (ACE) providers, Private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and enterprises;
2. research – primarily undertaking publicly funded research studies commissioned by national and state training/education authorities and independent research bodies; and
3. international development – contributing to vocational education and training reform and capacity building through consultancy work for aid agencies such as AusAID and UNESCO-UNEVOC in and for communities in South Africa, India,
Mozambique, China, Kazakhstan, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea, Uzbekistan and Malaysia.

In addition, from 1994 to 1999, I held program management responsibilities for a graduate diploma and master of education academic programs. From 2000 to 2005, I was responsible for management/direction of the Post-compulsory Education and Training (PCET) Research Centre, a centre funded entirely through commercial/external income within the Faculty (later School) of Education at RMIT University.

Since February 2005, I have worked as a Senior Research Fellow within the Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning (CPELL) at the University of Melbourne, primarily as a researcher but also with teaching responsibilities within the Master of Education Policy (International) program. This latter set of responsibilities has also involved my annual development and offshore facilitation of a three week program of intensive study in three European countries for up to 25 post-graduate students and academic staff. This program focuses on analysis of policies and strategies implemented in European countries to promote equity in post-compulsory education and training.

During the period of writing these nominated publications, my international development work regularly involved spending significant periods of time working overseas, particularly in South Africa, India and China, and providing customised, intensive professional development programs and study tours across Australia of durations varying from a few weeks to months. Such a multi-faceted workload, including extensive report writing for research and international consultancy clients, together with substantial absences working offshore in developing countries and additional centre and program management responsibilities, made it very difficult for me to embark on a traditional PhD path. However, it did allow me to develop high level research skills and to produce an influential body of research work and publications in the field of equity in vocational education and training. That is why I now seek to complete a PhD by Publication, in recognition of the substantial research work that I have undertaken and published over these years in the field of equity in Australian vocational education and training.
In addition to the five research studies from which the nominated publications have been drawn, I have completed an additional four studies also specifically focussed on equity in vocational education and training in Australia. These also are included in the timeline shown in Table 1, Appendix 1 (p. 101). The publications arising from three of these studies are in print and the one from the fourth study is scheduled for publication in 2007. Additional research work and publications of an international comparative nature or focussed on other aspects of education and training are not referred to in this essay but included in my attached curriculum vitae (Appendix 4, p.116) that lists all of my education related publications.

**Overview of the research studies**

The period during which the five research studies that formed the basis for the twelve nominated publications were undertaken, 1996-2004, was a period of immense change in Australian vocational education and training, as will be discussed in the next section. Every one of these research studies focussed on an aspect of equity in vocational education and training in Australia. The research included analysis of vocational education and training in relation to: equity policy; provider inclusiveness strategies; and access, participation, completion and outcomes in relation to learners, in particular members of designated and emerging equity target groups. A range of methodologies was implemented in these studies, usually utilising a mix of both quantitative and qualitative methods.

All of the studies were funded by national vocational education and training research agencies with a view to the research informing and advising national and state/territory vocational education and training policy makers, system administrators, providers and other researchers.

The first study, the *Longitudinal study of student experiences in vocational education and training*, was developed in negotiation with and funded by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). The second study, a *Review of equity literature*, was
commissioned by ANTA directly and specifically to inform national policy and broad strategy development. The publications arising from these two studies were reviewed by researchers and policy makers. In addition, the findings of the first study were presented to and critiqued by Australian equity researchers through a day long forum hosted by the University of Melbourne Centre for the Study of Higher Education.

Studies three to five were funded through national competitive tender processes by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). Submissions for funding of research were invited with research topics/questions to be designed to meet the national vocational education and training research priorities determined by the National Research and Evaluation Committee (NREC). These research priorities reflected the approach to equity policy at the time exemplifying the issues associated with conducting funded research. However, as will be outlined in this essay, the published analyses of findings were themselves influential in shaping subsequent policy. The publications arising from these studies were internally and externally peer reviewed prior to their publication by NCVER.

The nominated publications arising from these five research studies include research reports, book chapters, a journal article, a position paper to a research forum, conference papers and a policy and strategy advice report.

Much of this research work has been completed in collaboration with other researchers. There are a number of reasons for this. In the case of the first research study I have nominated, I was invited to take part at the study proposal stage and seconded for two days per week from RMIT University to work with a colleague at the University of Melbourne. Secondly, as described above, for most of my academic career, research formed part of a multi-faceted workload and was regularly balanced with program management, teaching and international consultancy responsibilities. Though each aspect of my work productively informed and enhanced the other aspects, it was necessary for me to share the research workload with others. Thirdly, I enjoy working collaboratively with others in a collegial environment.
2. A decade of change in the vocational education and training landscape

At the beginning of the research period, 1996, vocational education and training in Australia was in the early stages of a wave of massive and national reform. Technical education had existed in Australia since the establishment of the Schools of Mines in the Victorian goldfields in the early 1870’s (Smith and Keating, 2003) followed soon after by the Brisbane Technical College and the Working Men’s Colleges in Sydney and Melbourne. Though these early colleges had been established through ‘a mixture of government, business and community initiatives, and reflected the wide variety of interests in technical education’ (Smith and Keating, 2003, p. 7), it was not until a century later that this initial broad-based interest in vocational education and training was revived.

The Kangan Report (1974), initiated by the Commonwealth Labor Government in 1973 had promoted a clear identity for the sector as a more broadly based vocational and training sector, which subsequently became known as Technical and Further Education (TAFE). This marked the beginning of the period of Commonwealth Government involvement in vocational education and training. The Kangan Report had also advocated the concept of providing unrestricted access to TAFE and, as a result of a range of subsequent government initiatives and widespread community support, TAFE, by 1995, was providing vocational education and training programs and services to the largest, most diverse and geographically dispersed group of participants in post-school education and training.

Though the TAFE sector grew substantially following the release of the Kangan Report, it was not until the mid 1980s that an economic crisis prompted government and industry to contemplate a more comprehensive reform agenda. At this time, a complex combination of factors prompted an increased demand for training including: two major periods of recession; changes in the structure of the economy; increased unemployment,
particularly youth unemployment; introduction of new technologies; changes in the way that work was organised; and industry and award restructuring.

The report *Australia Reconstructed* (ACTU/TDC, 1987) had declared Australia’s skill base to be inadequate and recommended that government, business and unions pro-actively cooperate to develop new policies on employment and training, and particularly to address the training needs of young people. To make Australia more competitive demanded a reform of industrial production, but such reform required an integration of education, training and industry-based skill formation with the elements of work organisation, industrial relations and new technologies. Importantly, this report had promoted skills formation as an investment in people as productive resources, rather than perceiving it as a cost, thus allocating it a central position within the process of restructuring. However, the emphasis was still firmly on the needs of the labour market rather than on the individual or society and use of the term ‘skill formation’ emphasised the outcomes that were perceived to be important (Goozee, 1995).

The *Structural Efficiency Principle*, introduced soon after in 1988 as the result of close cooperation between the Federal Labor government and unions, led to restructuring of awards in Australia industry that encouraged multi-skilling and also very often explicitly linked skills and wages with training. Unemployment, long term unemployment and youth unemployment peaked in Australia with the recession of the early 1990s. In response to the issues of industry restructuring, globalisation, introduction of new technologies, the need for increased competitiveness of Australian industry and high unemployment rates, a series of major reviews with a focus on training were launched during this period. The resultant reports fostered and provided direction to the national training reform agenda. Of particular significance to equity were the following four reports.

1. The Deveson Report, *Training Costs of Award Restructuring: Report of the Training Costs Review Committee* (Deveson, 1990) that encouraged diversity and
competition among vocational education and training providers and introduced the concept of an open training market.

2. The Finn Review, *Young People’s Participation in Post-compulsory Education and Training* (Finn, 1991) that set national targets for increasing the participation of young people in post-compulsory education and training and identified a series of barriers impeding effective participation of women and people from disadvantaged backgrounds. It recommended a number of strategies to increase access to and participation in vocational education and training.

3. The Mayer Report, *Putting General Education to Work: The Key Competencies Report* (Mayer, 1992) that specified areas of key (vocationally relevant) competence to be achieved by young people by the completion of Year 12 with a view to improving their employability upon graduation.

4. The Carmichael Report, *The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System* (AVCTS) (Carmichael, 1992) that recommended changes to the entry level training system including the creation of a single system of entry level training incorporating apprenticeships and traineeships. It also acknowledged the need to overcome gender inequity and social disadvantage in access to entry-level training and proposed that an array of equity related programs be integrated with the development of the AVCTS in order to reduce disadvantage and to enhance access and participation in vocational education and training.

During the same period, the Commonwealth, State and Territory ministers responsible for training, as the Ministerial Council (MOVEET), agreed to the development of national industry competency standards and in 1990, the Commonwealth Government established the National Training Board to manage the development of standards and endorse the standards, in conjunction with the relevant industry advisory bodies. A new body, the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), was initially established in 1992, at this stage informally, to provide strategic directions for the national vocational education and training system. In the same year, MOVEET endorsed the creation of ‘an efficient, effective, responsive and integrated training market’ (MOVEET, 1992) and a National
Framework for the Recognition of Training (NFROT) to establish greater national consistency in the recognition of qualifications and training programs (Smith and Keating, 2003) and set six national goals for vocational education and training including Goal 5, ‘to improve access to and outcomes from vocational education and training for disadvantaged groups’ (MOVEET, 1992).

ANTA was formally inaugurated at the commencement of 1994 and the post-compulsory education and training sector was further integrated through the development of the unified Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), achieved through agreement between the three sectors of schools, vocational education and training, and higher education. As well as increasing consistency, this facilitated the development of pathways between the sectors and the establishment of a right, albeit difficult to attain, to Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).

By 1995, Australia’s eight state/territory-based TAFE systems were in the process of being ‘restructured within a market framework’ (Anderson, 2006, p. 3). Private providers had become eligible to apply for Registered Training Organisation (RTO) status and to compete with TAFE institutes for public funds. Within this ‘market framework’, government (and enterprises) assumed the role of purchasers of training places from both public and private providers acting as ‘vendors’.

The early 1990s was a period of ambiguity in national vocational education and training policy in relation to access and equity within the context of training markets (Anderson 2006). As Anderson points out, the Australian National Training Authority had suggested that market forces would stimulate ‘greater responsiveness by training providers to client diversity’ (ANTA 1994b) and thereby meet the needs of disadvantaged people. However, it also acknowledged that there was potential for market failure and proposed a role for government in purchasing training places for identified target groups to promote their equitable access to skills acquisition (ANTA, 1996a).
ANTA’s issues paper for consultation seminars, ‘An approach to achieving access and equity in vocational education and training’ (ANTA 1996b, p. 2), acknowledged that ‘individual client groups’ (women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, people from a non-English speaking background, people with a disability, and people living in rural and remote areas) did not participate equally in all levels of vocational education and training. They were more likely to be studying at lower level vocational education and training courses and also to be working in lower skilled areas of the workforce.

Thus ‘Equity 2001: strategies to achieve access and equity in vocational education and training for the new millenium’ (sic) (ANTA, 1996b) placed priority on improving access for all groups within the context of a more open and competitive training market. It also extended focus beyond simply providing access, emphasising that strategies for equity needed to ‘encompass all of these goals: equal access, quality participation and successful outcomes’ (p. 3). As Anderson (2006) concluded, in the early 1990s, the Commonwealth Government embarked on ‘an unprecedented policy experiment that has substantially altered the structure, composition and dynamics of the VET sector’ (p. 187) and then accelerated the pace of market reform in vocational education and training from 1996/1997 onwards, focussing on reforming the demand side to provide ‘clients’ greater choice and influence over providers. Within this context, the questions of who were considered to be vocational education and training ‘clients’- industry, enterprises, individuals or the community; whether some ‘clients’ were more important than others; and whether and how meeting the needs of the full range of clients could be balanced; became key and enduring issues for policy makers, providers and researchers to address.

It was during this period of rapid reform, establishment of the national vocational education and training system, and shifting perceptions of access and equity in vocational education and training that I began the research work leading to the nominated publications. Table 1 in Appendix 1 (p. 101) provides a distilled overview of the evolving vocational education and training context, with particular attention given to equity policies, drivers and approaches, during the period of this research work. It also outlines the timing and duration of the research studies that I completed.
3. Longitudinal study of student experiences in vocational education and training – Research Study 1

The first set (1-7) of my nominated publications resulted from the Major longitudinal study of student experiences over the course of their vocational education and training in Australia, research for which I undertook during the period 1996 to 1999.

By 1996, some development had been undertaken in relation to access and equity in the reformed vocational education and training system, but it was limited in its scope. In mid 1994, a study, ‘Successful reforms: competitive skills for Australians and Australian enterprises’, commissioned by ANTA and led by Dr Vince FitzGerald (ANTA, 1995), evaluated the training reforms to that time, in training providers and workplaces. In relation to access and equity in the new vocational education and training system, the evaluation acknowledged that some work had been done: a major report in relation to improvement of equity for women (DEET, 1991a) had been endorsed and actioned by state/territory TAFE authorities as The National Plan for Action for Women in TAFE (NPAWT). In addition, a report on Women in Entry Level Training (DEET, 1991b) and a National Collaborative Adult English and Literacy Strategy (ALIO, 1993) had been endorsed.

However, the FitzGerald Report (ANTA, 1995) also recognised particular weaknesses of the evolving vocational education and training system including a number of failures: of work-based training initiatives in dealing adequately with access and equity objectives; in addressing implications of the reforms for the specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples; and in addressing the needs of small and regional communities. The report also noted the lack of participation of women and disadvantaged groups in the setting of the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA), and the risk that a user-pays system of training might systematically exclude those on low or no incomes (ANTA 1995, pp. 29-30).
Leading up to the commencement of this longitudinal study, a number of research and policy advisory reports focussed on equity in vocational education and training had been completed. They included the following reports that addressed specific disadvantaged groups:

- Women (Lawless, 1991; Barnett, 1993; Lyall and Hawkins, 1993; Women’s Bureau DEET, 1993; Barnett and Wilson, 1995; Smith and Ewer, 1995);
- People with a disability (Meadows and Tronc, 1990; National TAFE Chief Executives’ Committee, 1993; Reynolds and Barnett, 1993; Dundas, 1994);
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples (Finch, 1992; Coles, 1993; NSW Multicultural Unit, 1995; DEET, 1995);
- People from non-English speaking backgrounds (Mageean, 1990; Zinopoulos, 1992; Mawer and Field, 1995; NSW Multicultural Unit, 1995; Bertone, 1995; Stephens and Bertone, 1995; VandenHeuval and Wooden, 1995); and
- People living in rural and remote areas (NBEET, 1991; NBEET, 1994).

Indeed, by the end of 1995, some major steps had been taken at Commonwealth and state/territory levels to improve access to training opportunities for under-represented groups in addition to the National Plan of Action for Women in TAFE. Social justice initiatives had been developed and implemented in various states and territories to address access and equity concerns, for example, the Queensland Social Justice Policy for VET (VETEC, 1993), the Victorian Negotiated Targets Strategy (OTFE, 1993) and the NSW Strategy for Equity in Education and Training (NSW Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, 1994).

However, while access and participation in TAFE had received considerable attention in policy developments in the early 1990s, more sustained debate was required around the concepts of ‘access and equity’ (Powles 1992). Despite the priority that had been placed on meeting the needs of women and selected disadvantaged groups, Powles and Anderson (1994) argued that since the early 1990s there had been a dearth of any systematic analysis of participation and barriers to access in TAFE. In addition, the
impact of any policy or program initiatives to improve access and equity in vocational education and training, developed as part of the reform process, had yet to be evaluated in any comprehensive way. As the vocational education and training system was being expanded to incorporate private providers, it was important for research on access and participation in vocational education and training to include private provider training contexts, in addition to TAFE. Only Anderson’s (1994) work had made an initial attempt to address access and equity issues beyond TAFE and in the private sector.

Research that had been completed on access and participation in TAFE had also been limited in focus. It had concentrated almost exclusively on the barriers that impeded initial access to TAFE for prospective learners. Anderson (1995), in his national report on client perceptions of student support services in TAFE, had argued that researchers must also focus on those factors that promote effective participation once a student is actually in the system and which ensure that they are less likely to drop out.

In addition, much of the research leading up to this period had lacked a qualitative dimension. Quantitative analyses of participation rates of different groups were valuable in facilitating understanding about who was enrolling in vocational education and training programs and which groups were missing out on training. Analysis of course and module completion data could also provide an approximate indication of ‘success’ for particular groups. However, in order to devise effective strategies to improve access, participation and outcomes in vocational education and training for disadvantaged groups, it was vital to be able to identify the barriers that were preventing not only access for disadvantaged groups but also their continuing and successful participation in training.

The original research concept for this *longitudinal study of student experiences in vocational education and training* came from Damon Anderson. Subsequently, Barry Golding and I were recruited by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education (CSHE) at the University of Melbourne. I was seconded from RMIT University as a part-time (0.4) Research Fellow of the CSHE throughout the period of this study (1996-1999). Our initial tasks were to develop the research proposal in conjunction with Dr Margaret
Powles of CSHE, negotiate the necessary funding with staff from ANTA, fully design and develop the methodology and survey instruments and prepare the research ethics proposal for the University of Melbourne’s Human Research Ethics Committee approval.

While support for this research was provided by a range of regulatory and advisory bodies, TAFE institutes, private vocational education and training providers, corrections facilities, community and advocacy organisations, university colleagues, other vocational education and training researchers and of course, most importantly, by the individual respondents themselves - the vocational education and training participants - the research and publications were completed entirely by Barry Golding and myself.

This research study was designed around the contention that insufficient attention had been given to factors that affected the continuing participation of individuals and groups in vocational education and training in the longer term. No longitudinal studies of access and participation had been undertaken with as broad a range of groups as we proposed and few had used primary data to qualitatively analyse the barriers and issues from a learner or group perspective. Finally, the use of a longitudinal study made it possible to track the complex but important relationships between the wide range of motivations, intentions, experiences and outcomes over the course of the vocational education and training experience or ‘journey’.

The research took the form of a longitudinal study focussed on the access, participation and outcomes experience of members of equity target groups in vocational education and training, in six Australian locations across three states and one territory: Melbourne and Geelong (Victoria); Toowoomba and Cairns (Queensland); Alice Springs (Northern Territory); and North-West Tasmania.

In particular, this study was designed to:

- focus on student intentions, experiences and outcomes;
- provide a number of participant/client perspectives over time;
use both qualitative and quantitative data;

derive first hand accounts of vocational education and training student experiences, in detail and on location in a provider context;

offer a national perspective;

explore issues across a range of client groups; and

include other vocational education and training providers as well as TAFE institutes.

The research examined the experience of vocational education and training students who were members of seven target groups, the first five of which had been formally identified by the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA, 1994a) as disadvantaged groups in vocational education and training in Australia:

- women;
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Indigenous) peoples;
- people with a disability;
- people from non-English speaking backgrounds;
- people living in rural and isolated areas;
- people who were long term unemployed; and
- people without adequate literacy, numeracy and social skills (low social skills were examined with reference to a sub-sample of people in vocational education and training programs in custody).

The last two groups were considered to be emerging target groups and were therefore included in the study.

The study aimed to address two central research questions:

- What are the major barriers and issues facing women and disadvantaged client groups with respect to gaining access to and participating in vocational education and training? and
• What action can be taken at a national level to improve access to and participation in vocational education and training for the identified client groups?

In addition to these central questions, six subsidiary research questions were explored during the course of the research:

• What is the nature of the vocational education and training journey?
• Why do participants engage in vocational education and training, and with what outcomes?
• What affects the choice of vocational education and training provider?
• What barriers do people experience?
• What effect does target group membership have on access, participation and outcomes in vocational education and training?
• Are some target group attributes more likely to pose barriers for learners and are some groups more disadvantaged?

As illustrated in Table 1 in Appendix 1 (p. 101), the period during which this study was undertaken saw considerable change in vocational education and training policy and practice in Australia. New concepts were introduced and others developed or expanded. These concepts included the notion of a training market with user choice, the development of training packages and new forms of apprenticeships and traineeships. There was continued expansion of accredited vocational education and training delivery into schools, enterprises, private training providers (RTOs) and adult and community education (ACE) providers. There were shifts in access and equity policies, particularly in Victoria, from targeted approaches towards ‘managing diversity’ approaches. Ongoing difficulties in the labour market affected people of all ages and the introduction of the ‘Jobs Network’ to replace the former federally funded Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) led to a demise of the CES labour market training programs.
There was also strong acknowledgement, during this period, of important population issues: growing ethnic and cultural diversity; ageing of the population; and expanding gaps in income and quality of life between employed and unemployed people. Changes in Australian industry such as increased use of technology, disappearance of unskilled jobs, casualisation of labour, shifts from manufacturing to service based industries, consolidation of industry awards, spread of multiskilling, and linking of wage levels to levels of skills and qualifications all pointed to an increased need for training and a widening gap between people with high level and up-to-date skills and those without.

The methodology for this study utilised qualitative research techniques in conjunction with quantitative data collection and analysis. It included a comprehensive and integrated range of research techniques including literature review, extensive consultation with key stakeholders, focus group discussions, written surveys and in-depth individual case studies.

In selecting the locations for the study, it was necessary to acknowledge the different vocational education and training systems and different regional profiles of participants that existed across states and territories. The variety of vocational education and training providers tended to be greater in large urban areas, particularly capital cities, offering greater choice for learners. The targeted groups were also not evenly distributed across Australia. Some groups, for example, people from non-English speaking backgrounds were more likely to be living in capital cities while Indigenous people were more likely to be in rural and isolated areas. It was important to accommodate this diversity within the design of the study and to develop a sampling strategy that was feasible and sufficiently representative.

The sample included six regions in three states (Victoria, Queensland and Tasmania) and the Northern Territory. In mid 1996, 1,200 questionnaires were distributed through 22 vocational education and training providers to members of the targeted groups, to gain initial data from target group participants and to establish a sample of respondents willing to be interviewed in face-to-face focus group sessions. Initial focus group sessions in
1996 involved 360 respondents and a total of 235 of these learners who were studying in 1996 in a range of vocational education and training provider types, participated in both the initial focus group interviews in 1996 and again in the follow up interviews in 1997/1998.

The follow-up interviews were conducted face-to-face, in focus groups, wherever possible. However, some respondents who could not attend the scheduled focus group sessions in their locality were interviewed by telephone, at their convenience. Respondents also completed written surveys. Following analysis of all the collected data, selected respondents were further interviewed, by telephone, to provide additional data for case studies. The methodology is described in detail in our published report (Golding & Volkoff, 1999a, pp. 48-56).

**Study findings**

This research study identified some important findings including that learners accessed a range of programs and vocational education and training providers for reasons other than those that were related to a narrowly construed view of the purpose of industry training, workplace skilling or direct labour market outcomes. It also identified that the most important barriers to vocational education and training included those which extended beyond programs and providers and were connected with learners’ social and economic circumstances as well as their location. Of particular significance was the finding that barriers and disadvantages within vocational education and training increased and vocational outcomes decreased, as the number of equity target groups to which a learner belonged, increased. Outcomes of engagement in vocational education and training were found to differ by target group: those who belonged to more target groups and whose vocational outcomes or expectations were more limited, were more likely to value achievements associated with gains in self confidence and social contact.

Seven of the publications arising from this research study have been nominated. These were produced during the period of the study and at its conclusion (published 1997-2000).
The formal report to ANTA of the longitudinal study, ‘Creating Outcomes: individuals and groups on the VET journey: Report of a major longitudinal study of student experiences over the course of their training in Australia’ (Volume 1: ‘The VET Journey’, pp. 1-189 and Volume 2: ‘Learner experience by target group’, pp. 190-445) was published jointly by the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne and the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) (Golding and Volkoff, 1999a).

To disseminate the findings and gain peer feedback to our analyses and conclusions, we published, throughout the course of the study, a series of papers, journal articles, and magazine and newsletter articles that addressed particular issues and/or equity target groups. Six of these are nominated and discussed in this essay as they chart the progress and reflect the different aspects of the study: Golding and Volkoff (1997); Volkoff and Golding (1997); Golding and Volkoff (1998a); Volkoff and Golding (1998) and the revised journal article, Volkoff and Golding (2000); Golding and Volkoff (1998b); and Golding and Volkoff (1998c).

The first nominated publication, ‘Is there equity in the outcome? Some evidence of non-English speaking background and rural vocational education and training experiences from an Australian longitudinal study’ (Golding & Volkoff, 1997) was presented to the ‘5th International Literacy and Education Research Network Conference on Learning’ in Alice Springs. Our paper argued that the prime focus on the ‘client’ in the education and training relationship, while clearly useful in customer service terms, was problematic within a vocational education and training context if the assumptions about who the client was, why they were engaged in vocational education and training, and what outcomes they achieved in vocational terms on completion were overly simplified or misconstrued. We also proposed that, within the context of a competitive vocational education and training market, simple comparisons of outcomes, by group, provider or program could be disadvantageous and insufficient unless they took account of the socio-cultural, economic and locational inequality that was increasingly becoming evident in Australia. The paper explored these issues by examining the reported
experiences of vocational education and training access, participation and outcomes for non-English speaking background and rural and isolated vocational education and training participants.

In this paper, we questioned the espoused policy premise that equity has a primary ‘vocational outcomes’ dimension in a vocational education and training context. Rather, we proposed that equity has a number of important outcome dimensions in a vocational education and training context. Vocational outcomes were often regarded by our respondents as secondary in comparison with improvements in their communication skills, self confidence and self esteem. For some, with a history of negative and unsuccessful experiences in education, the achievement of successful completion of a course was a valued end in itself. For others, it provided entry to a further course or the confidence and study skills to be able to embark on higher level study. Some participants who had engaged in literacy and numeracy courses most highly valued their new capacity to read to their children, help them with their homework, make a written job application or gain a driver’s licence for the first time. Others valued gaining skills that enabled them to make volunteer contributions to their local communities.

For vocational education and training participants from a non-English speaking background, some of whom were highly qualified in their first language, completion of an Australian vocational education and training program could be just the first step in the long process of gaining recognition of their skills, a re-invention of their foreign qualifications, not formally recognised in Australia. Many of these valued outcomes, at first glance, not directly vocational, were potentially important steps in the process towards achieving improved educational and vocational outcomes for individuals and their families, with benefits also flowing through to local communities. The social capital strengthening benefits of adult learning have been widely documented in more recent years, internationally (DfEE, 2001; Bynner et al., 2001; Feinstein et al., 2004; Parsons & Bynner, 2005; SNCAE, 2005) and in Australia, particularly in relation to participation in vocational education and training within the Adult and Community Education sector.
The second nominated publication, ‘Is access working? A comparison of outcomes for employed and unemployed VET participants’ (Volkoff & Golding, 1997) explored and compared the different ways in which employed and unemployed people engaged in, and achieved outcomes from, vocational education and training in Australia, drawing on the interview data that we had gathered by that time, in addition to survey data and other relevant published research. This paper was presented to the Centre for Work and Learning Conference hosted by Griffith University at Surfers Paradise and published in ‘Good Thinking, Good Practice: research perspectives on learning and work’ (Volkoff & Golding, 1997). It was written at a time of high youth unemployment, the rate of which had remained close to 30 per cent for the previous four years (Vanstone 1996), and rising levels of long term unemployment in Australia (see Table 1, Appendix 1, p. 101). Consequently, considerable emphasis was placed at this time, by both the Federal and state governments, on the vocational education and training sector having a ‘…key role to play in solving the problem of youth unemployment’ (Vanstone 1996).

Two themes were explored in this publication, based on self-reported data from vocational education and training participants who had recently completed their study: the rationale for long term unemployed people participating in vocational education and training and perceptions of their employability after completion; and the range of outcomes, beyond employment, valued by vocational education and training participants, including outcomes that were not directly vocational within the narrowly construed view of industry training or direct labour market outcomes.

An important finding reported in this paper was that study participants who had been long term unemployed (LTU) prior to their enrolment were more likely than those who had not been long term unemployed to:

- be members of other equity groups as well (e.g. LTU and with a disability);
- be members of more other equity groups;
• have low basic skills (52% LTU: 32% not LTU);
• have a disability (24% LTU: 8% not LTU); and
• be an Indigenous person (27% LTU: 12% not LTU).

We found that participation in vocational education and training did help to reduce unemployment rates across equity target groups but to varying degrees by group. Using Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 1995 data (N=64,703) to explore a ‘before and after training’ comparison, we found that unemployment rates varied by equity target group at the outset, and that non-English speaking background people benefited most in employment terms from participation in vocational education and training while those with a disability benefited least. The rates of non-participation in the labour force were also reduced for each group following training. However, once again some groups (e.g. rural people and women) benefited more strongly than others (e.g. Indigenous people and people with a disability).

Analysis of our interview data also revealed that outcomes from vocational education and training were valued differently by employed and unemployed respondents. Positive outcomes from vocational education and training in the form of improved self esteem, confidence and an enhanced sense of identity were more significant for people who had been unemployed prior to training, reflecting the disempowering effects of unemployment. As Blunden (1997) argued, the feelings of worthlessness commonly reported by people who experience protracted unemployment,

‘... can overpower everything else, including a sense that we can learn ... when we think of ourselves as inadequate ... our learning legs are cut off at the knees ...’ (p. 26).

Blunden (1997) concluded that the development of self-respect was a ‘necessary condition for learning’. Hence the importance of successful experiences in vocational education and training for further study as well as employment. We argued that experiences that build and re-build self-esteem and identity, families and communities
should be encouraged and overtly included in vocational education and training curriculum. Our research indicated that unemployed people actively used the experience and empowerment of their status as learners as a starting point from which to create or re-create personal, social and cultural identity and connections. We proposed that these ‘non-vocational’ outcomes should be more formally recognised as positive and socially desirable outcomes closely connected with vocational outcomes.

As awareness grew about this longitudinal study, the findings documented in these early publications began to be used by other researchers to inform their own work, for example: Mawer & Connole (1997); Kilpatrick and Bell (1998); Weeks (1999); and ATEC (2003b).

The third nominated publication arising from this research study was ‘Participation in VET in Australia: different drives, same needs?’ This conference paper was presented at the Monash University - ACER, Centre for the Economics of Education and Training (CEET) and National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) Conference, ‘Different Drums – One Beat? Economic and social goals in education and training’ in March 1997, and subsequently published (Golding and Volkoff, 1998a).

Drawing on our interview transcripts and descriptive questionnaire responses, in this publication, we questioned two myths: that TAFE and non-TAFE vocational education and training were accessed in the same ways; and that vocational education and training was considered to be purely vocational, from a client perspective.

The TAFE Graduate Outcomes Survey of 1995 (ABS, 1995, Table 2) had revealed that only one third of TAFE graduates entered vocational education and training for the main reason of gaining a job or self-employment. Indeed, only 21 per cent of TAFE graduates had been unemployed and looking for work prior to their course (ABS, 1995, Table 14). A majority (59%) had been working before their course and half of those who had not been working had not been actively looking for work during the six months prior to the course.
Our interviews with students had revealed a rich tapestry of reasons why people accessed vocational education and training. These reasons reflected different personal and employment circumstances: to gain a job; to gain necessary or extra skills for their existing job; as a requirement of their job; to gain a better job, a promotion or to effect a career change; to get into another course of study; as a condition of gaining unemployment benefits; to gain sentence reduction while in a corrections centre; to enhance family or social caring skills; and to enhance personal and living skills. While many of the reasons for engaging in vocational education and training reported by individuals could easily be classified as vocational, others which on first glance appeared to be non-vocational, could in the longer term lead to vocationally related outcomes.

We also identified in this paper that there was considerable overlap between membership of several of the target groups. A strong nexus was also apparent between membership of multiple target groups and unemployment. One third of the 360 people that participated in our initial interviews belonged to four or more target groups and 88 per cent of this one third had been long term unemployed prior to their course of study.

In addition, our findings indicated that it was unlikely that competition in vocational education and training would improve access, participation or outcomes for disadvantaged people. We suggested that different providers were making up a segmented, quasi-market catering to very different target groups rather than being overtly competitive for the same clients. While some user groups were in a position to make market choices through their capacity to pay, those most disadvantaged, without the ability to pay for their training, had the fewest choices. Thus people with the most complex, multiple memberships of equity target groups were likely to have the most limited choice of provider, to access providers with the lowest levels of funding and resources such as Adult and Community Education providers, and to study in low qualification level programs.

While our paper did not intend to dismiss the desirability of competition in vocational education and training, we suggested that there were likely to be unintended
consequences of competition for social policy and outcomes in the absence of specific and complementary social justice principles and programs.

The findings and arguments presented in this publication have had considerable and lasting impact, widely cited by vocational education and training researchers in their publications, for example, by: OTTE (1997); Anderson (1999); Weeks (1999); McIntyre (1999, 2000a, 2000b); Campbell (2000); James (2000); Maxwell, Cooper & Biggs (2000); Watson, Kearns, Grant & Cameron (2000); Dumbrell, de Montfort & Finnegan (2001); Ryan (2001); Selby Smith, Ferrier, Anderson, Burke, Hopkins, Long, Maglen, Malley, McKenzie & Shah (2001); Baynes, Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman (2002); Dawe (2004a); Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers & Rumberger (2004); Kilpatrick & Millar (2004); and Miralles (2004).

The fourth nominated publication, ‘Drowning, not waving: equity target groups in the marketplace’ (Volkoff & Golding, 1998a) specifically and in more detail than in our previous publications, examined overlapping membership of equity target groups in vocational education and training and explored whether equity (or inequity) could be detected both quantitatively and qualitatively, in the outcomes achieved.

We had identified in earlier work that different types of vocational education and training providers engaged different proportions of learners who belonged to more than one equity target group. Analysis of overlapping membership of equity target groups had been largely absent from other vocational education and training literature to this time though it had begun to be explored in relation to higher education within the 1996 Higher Education Council Discussion Paper ‘Equality Diversity and Excellence’ (NBEET, 1996).

This paper was presented to the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) Inaugural Conference, ‘The importance of VET research influencing policy and practice’, held in Sydney in February 1998. We argued in this paper that the group targeting approach had limitations as it took little account of the diversity within targeted groups and failed to acknowledge membership of multiple,
overlapping groups. We suggested that without acknowledgement of the intra-group differences, for example between different non-English speaking background cultural and gender groups, between groups with different disabilities, between rural and isolated locations and between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, there was a risk that strategies would fail to address the causes of disadvantage for individuals and communities who were members of those sub-groups and potentially label (and stigmatise) all members of a particular group as disadvantaged.

We also drew attention to the fact that some groups with what appeared to be good access, experienced poor outcomes, while the reverse was true for other groups. Aspects such as levels of prior education and training, rates of access to vocational education and training, rates of transition to the labour force following training, and the likelihood of overlap with other group membership were important to consider for each equity target group.

Following detailed analysis of unpublished ABS 1995 TAFE Graduate Outcomes survey statistics (ABS, 1995), we proposed a ‘model for accommodating diversity’. This initial model, based on three sets of factors, was designed to address the complex relationship between intra-group diversity, group overlap, and disadvantage in vocational education and training.

The model (Golding & Volkoff, 1999a, Figure 1.1, p. 25) comprised three overlapping layers:

1. **Intra-group factors**: factors that applied to subgroups within the three largest equity target groups – women, rural people and non-English speaking background people. Not all members of these groups were disadvantaged, and not all of those who were, experienced a disadvantage attributable to a common cause. In addition, the effects were often different if examined from different perspectives, such as access, participation and outcomes. We suggested that these groups might be better accommodated within an equity framework that took account of the
intra-group factors impinging on particularly disadvantaged sub-groups rather than relying on measures directed at all, including not disadvantaged members.

2. *Group factors*: factors that applied to particular equity target groups. We suggested that there were significant differences in outcomes for Indigenous people and people with a disability as a consequence of group factors and that these two groups should be targeted as priority groups, in addition, taking account of intra-group factors (such as disability type) for specific targeting and programming purposes. While clearly, intra-group factors also apply to these groups, evidence available at that time suggested that both of these groups had consistently very low transitions to the labour force after vocational education and training.

3. *Cross-group factors*: factors that applied consistently irrespective of and in addition to equity target group and intra-group factors, commonly entrenching disadvantage. We suggested that the impact of low basic skills (low literacy, numeracy and social skills) and unemployment, acting individually or together, were particularly important in determining the outcomes from vocational education and training, irrespective of other categories, and on all vocational education and training participants. Further, these cross-group factors were likely to have a devastating effect on outcomes when they overlapped with membership of other equity target groups.

We proposed that it was the intersection between these three sets of factors that was important to be addressed in striving to improve access to, participation in and outcomes from vocational education and training. Analysis of our longitudinal data showed a striking increase in the proportion of people not in employment, twelve months after our initial interviews with vocational education and training participants, with increasing membership of equity target groups. It was also evident that while employment outcomes varied by group (all respondents, women, rural people, non-English speaking background people, Indigenous people and people with a disability), vocational outcomes were
reduced for those members of each group who were previously unemployed, and even further reduced by the impact of low literacy and numeracy skills.

Though this publication was initially developed as a conference paper, an edited and refereed version of this paper was subsequently published in the ‘Learning Communities: International Journal of Adult and Vocational Learning’ (Volkoff & Golding, 2000).

The findings and arguments presented in this publication have been widely cited by vocational education and training researchers and have had an enduring impact on subsequent research work, for example, in: McIntyre (1999, 2000a, 2000b); Robertson & Barrera (1999); Weeks (1999); James (2000); McIntyre & Egg (2001); Phan & Ball (2001); ERC (2002); John (2004a, 2004b); Miralles (2004); Coates & Krause (2005); and Smith, Pickersgill, Smith & Rushbrook (2005).

The fifth nominated publication, ‘Learner attributes and their outcomes: experiences of Indigenous VET participants from a longitudinal study’ (Golding & Volkoff, 1998b), presented as a paper to the Second National Indigenous People’s Training Conference ‘Challenging pathways’, in March 1998, explored self-reported outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who had recently participated in vocational education and training. In particular, it looked closely at the relationship between learner attributes and their outcomes. In this paper, we acknowledged that Indigenous vocational education and training participants achieved outcomes that extended well beyond what might conventionally be regarded to be vocational and that in a range of vocational education and training delivery contexts, the benefits of Indigenous vocational education and training flowed beyond individual learners and enterprises to Indigenous families and communities.

We noted the strong association between low levels of education and high unemployment within the Indigenous community and the low rates of post school qualifications among Indigenous people. Twenty per cent of Indigenous people in Australia were also speakers
of English as a second language (ABS, 1995b, Table 9.9) and Indigenous people were more likely to live in rural and isolated areas, to experience a disability and to be in custody: the rate of imprisonment for Indigenous people was, at that time, 18 times greater than for non-Indigenous Australians (ABS, 1997).

Using personal stories of Indigenous participants in vocational education and training, gathered through our longitudinal research study, we demonstrated that there were many threads of disadvantage associated with being an Indigenous person in Australian vocational education and training. The problems faced were exacerbated particularly by low basic skills, insufficient prior education and training and prior unemployment. However, assistance and encouragement in coming to terms with and strengthening Indigenous identity and building self esteem, that were offered within vocational education and training providers, were identified to be important factors in supporting employment outcomes.

The paper also illustrated the importance of recognising the benefits of vocational education and training outcomes in terms which extended beyond the individual and the immediate gain of employment. The many positive outcomes of vocational education and training that were reported by Indigenous people, such as gaining a job, vocational skills, self confidence and social contacts were all the more significant, given the long history of setbacks experienced by many Indigenous Australians. This paper highlighted not only the problems and positive outcomes that individual learners experienced in vocational education and training, but also the complex problems behind categorisation of disadvantage based on only one learner attribute or outcome measure.

This paper built on our earlier, unpublished paper presented to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training Advisory Council (ATSIPTAC) National Networking Group Seminar in Canberra on 26 August 1997, ‘Some implications for Australian Indigenous Training from a VET longitudinal research project’, (Golding & Volkoff, 1997) that informed Boughton and Durnan’s (1997) report to ANTA in which they
explored best practice and benchmarking in Aboriginal community controlled adult education.


In addition, the Australian Education Union submission to the Senate Employment, Education and References Committee – Inquiry into Indigenous Education (AEU, 1998, p. 22) stated that

‘In their paper, Learner attributes and outcomes: Experiences of Indigenous Vocational Education and Training participants from a longitudinal study, Golding and Volkoff have contributed to a greater understanding of the complex relationships between reasons for participation in vocational education and training and the difficulties and outcomes experienced for Indigenous people’.

The AEU submission included cameos and quotes from the interviewees, documented in our paper ‘… as a means of conveying the degree to which Indigenous history, culture and identity are inextricably linked to education and training outcomes’ (AEU, 1998, p. 22).

This nominated publication also informed the work of Ainley & Fleming (2000, p. 22) in their Literacy Advance Research Project: ‘Learning to Read in the Early Primary Years’, a collaborative venture of the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria and Australian
Council for Educational Research, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA), as well as the DETYA (1999) publication ‘Indigenous school to work transition’, that reviewed and documented the issues and solutions connected with the transition from school to work and/or further education and training for 12-19 year old Indigenous young people.

The sixth nominated publication, ‘Group Handicap in the VET Stakes’ (Golding & Volkoff, 1998c) was a paper presented at the 6th Annual International Conference on Post-Compulsory Education and Training, ‘Vocational knowledge and institutions: changing relationships’, convened by Griffith University in December 1998 in Queensland.

This paper built on the discussion documented in the earlier papers and used racing analogies to identify some of the implications of the research findings for access and equity policies in a range of vocational education and training settings. We explored the nature of the vocational education and training ‘race’, the ‘handicaps’ experienced by equity target group members and the ways in which client groups experienced participation in vocational education and training and their ‘chase’ for employment outcomes in a competitive labour market.

As Table 1, Appendix 1 (p. 101) illustrates, considerable changes occurred in vocational education and training policy during the period of this longitudinal study such as the introduction and expansion of concepts of user choice and the training market, training packages, and new apprenticeships and traineeships. Accredited vocational education and training had also expanded into new providers: schools, private (for profit) RTOs, enterprises and the Adult and Community Education sector while the federally funded labour market Skillshare programs had been abolished.

Shifts in industry towards casualisation of labour and the disappearance of many unskilled jobs had taken place within the context of a population that was ageing,
becoming more ethnically and culturally diverse and increasingly divided between those who had and had not, knowledge, skills and jobs. These shifts placed a stronger emphasis on the need for individuals to acquire education and training in order to stay ‘in the running’ but also ‘weighed down’ people who were disadvantaged with greater individual responsibilities to select and fund their own vocational education and training and to maintain their momentum throughout the course and beyond to achieving their goal.

In this paper, we examined the broad range of intentions that brought people to vocational education and training and introduced a typology that we had developed to facilitate comparisons between the intentions and outcomes of interviewees in vocational education and training. The four types of intention that were identified through the interview transcripts were described as: jobseeker, learner, worker and contributor.

*Jobseekers* were studying to improve their employment status: to gain a job, gain skills or qualifications to gain a job, or to gain skills for self employment. *Learners* were participating primarily for educational reasons, beyond direct skill or employment reasons, for example, to gain a qualification and/or entry to further study, to satisfy a hunger for learning or because of a specific interest in the course content. *Workers*, already employed, were studying to gain additional skills for their existing job, to gain a promotion, to become more multi-skilled for employment or their own business, or because their employer wanted or required them to undertake the study. The fourth group, categorised as *contributors*, were studying primarily to improve their personal capacities and/or to help them to contribute to their family and community.

This range of intentions, demonstrated by participants, added a layer of complexity to the vocational education and training ‘race’. Not only were the goals different, but some groups were more equipped to sprint towards their goals than others. Some were ‘slow runners’: disadvantaged because they lacked the literacy and numeracy skills required to complete the course, or even to gain entry to their desired course. Some could not afford
the fees for their desired course or were ill equipped with practical or workplace experience to gain a job following completion.

Indeed, for many vocational education and training participants in 1998, there was no ‘standard track’. If vocational education and training is characterised in narrow terms as a ‘race’ to employment, then there is clearly a disparity between individuals and groups. For those who already had secure employment, lifelong learning was more likely to be resourced and rewarded at the ‘finish’ by their employer. For some people unable to gain a job, or even an interview at the end of their training, lifelong learning could become an occupation in itself, with the ‘finish’, if their desired outcome was a job, continuing to be out of reach.

What did this mean for equity policy in 1998? A common approach to addressing inequity between groups in vocational education and training was to invoke social justice principles to supplement existing policies and practices. This commonly involved identifying and systematically removing barriers for particular target groups, reducing structural inequities within providers and then monitoring and reporting on (hopefully) improved outcomes. An important implication of this equity model is that discrete groups exist whose needs and ‘interests can be developed separately from each other’ (Day 1998, p. 4). In the case of our interviewees, drawn from the seven groups we studied, there was a high level of membership of multiple groups that made division into separate groups, for the purpose of addressing impediments in vocational education and training, illogical.

At the time of writing this paper, national vocational education and training policies in Australia had begun to move away from just focusing on ‘target groups’. Instead, there was a shift in position towards achieving equitable participation and outcomes for individuals as clients, and a greater emphasis was put on ‘measuring the capacity of the vocational education and training system to respond to the diverse needs of clients and potential clients’ (ANTA, 1998, p. 1) (see Table 1, Appendix 1, p. 101). However, the same ANTA strategy document acknowledged that the levels of participation and achievement in vocational education and training, in many instances at that time,
mirrored ‘existing patterns of community disadvantage’ (ANTA, 1998, p. 2). That is, who you were, where you lived, where you were born, what racial or ethnic group you belonged to, whether you were employed or not, were likely to affect your outcomes.

We argued, in our paper, that some programs and services were clearly required and most efficiently provided, by group. For example, the need for and provision of child care facilities, English as a Second Language programs, disability support, programs for Indigenous learners, and accommodation services for apprentices from remote areas.

Referring to the model of group overlap developed in the earlier publications, we proposed that it was possible to conceptualise disadvantage as the ‘flip side’ of the relative advantage of some individuals and groups. Access, participation and choice of program and provider are all likely to be enhanced for people with a history of successful school experience, strong literacy and numeracy skills and in employment or with positive work experience. People in employment are more likely to be confident, to know what it is they want or need to learn to build their career and how to locate and choose the most appropriate provider. They are also more likely to have the financial resources to pay for their program and provider of choice and to bear the costs of transport and other expenses associated with their study. In addition, they are less likely to suffer the debilitating effects of poverty or to be geographically, socially or culturally isolated.

One benefit of the ANTA (1998) approach that set aside target groups and focussed primarily on the client is that it could recognise that clients in vocational education and training were not all studying for the same reasons. ANTA (1998, p. 2) stressed that the vocational education and training system should be able to ‘offer inclusive and appropriate products and services for the full range of clients and potential clients’. However, while acknowledging ‘different perspectives’ in its equity strategy, industry, rather than the individual, was perceived by ANTA, in most other contexts, to be the primary client.
Analysing early data from our longitudinal study, this paper also explored the types of outcome achieved by interviewees, in relation to their study intentions, documented during the initial interviews. We found that *work-related* outcomes resulted from a range of intentions and that many non-vocational outcomes (e.g. *learning* and *contribution* related) resulted for people who had engaged in vocational education and training for both work and job seeking reasons. We reported that a considerable degree of congruence was apparent between three intention and outcome types: *worker* intentions and *work-related* outcomes; *learner* intentions and *learning-related* outcomes; and *contributor* intentions and *contribution-related* outcomes. People with *jobseeker* intentions demonstrated the most diverse outcomes, though *job-related* outcomes were most common for them.

The findings and arguments presented in this paper had considerable and lasting impact on the work of other Australian vocational education and training researchers. In particular, researchers cited and built upon our findings of: wide ranging learner intentions; the compounding of disadvantage by membership of multiple equity groups; the debilitating effects of unemployment and low skills on learner outcomes; and the implications of these findings for per-student funding allocations.

Publications citing this paper included conference papers, policy advice documents, annotated bibliographies and national research reports, for example: Watson, Kears, Grant & Cameron (1998, pp. 12, 36, 38); Watson (1999, p. 4); Watson & Pope (2000, p. 4, 6); Watson (2001); Watson, Wheelahan & Chapman (2002, p. 38); Axford & Moyes (2003); Ryan & Watson (2003, p. 8); Watson (2004, p.5); and Willems (2004, p. 203).

The final publication arising directly from this research study was the two volume report ‘*Creating Outcomes: Individuals and Groups on the VET Journey: Report of a major longitudinal study of student experiences over the course of their vocational education and training in Australia*’ (Golding & Volkoff, 1999a) submitted to and published by ANTA together with the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne.
Volume 1 (Chapters 1-7, pages 1-189) provided a summary of the key findings of the study as well as a detailed overview of the literature and contextual background to the research, definitions and methodology used. It then addressed the stages of the ‘vocational education and training journey’: deciding to begin – pre-program effects; accessing the course and provider; participation; outcomes; and pathways. This volume also introduced the typologies that had been developed through this study.

Volume 2 (Chapters 8-15, pages 190-455) introduced the groups that had been studied in vocational education and training and provided a detailed chapter on the findings, including excerpts from the interview transcripts to illustrate individual learner experiences in vocational education and training, for each group: women; rural and isolated people; people from a non-English speaking background; Indigenous people; people with a disability; long term unemployed people; and people with low basic skills.

Because of its longitudinal nature, this study was able to provide findings in relation to learners’ journeys through vocational education and training: their intentions, outcomes and pathways and relationships between these not otherwise available through ‘single point in time’ participation studies. We analysed our data in a variety of ways: by equity target group; by provider type and by program type. Qualitative and quantitative data were combined in individual learner records, through the design and use of a Filemaker Pro software database. This enabled all learner interview transcript material to be directly linked with their individual personal characteristics such as membership of equity target groups, age, previous work and study details, enrolment details, and ascribed intention and outcome types.

In this final publication, we reported that people engaged in vocational education and training for a wide range of reasons that varied by equity target group. The intentions that respondents had identified in their first interviews often closely related to their subsequent outcomes that they reported to us in their follow-up interviews. In addition to outlining the four types of intentions of worker, jobseeker, learner, and contributor
introduced above, in discussion of nominated publication ‘Group Handicap in the VET Stakes’ (Golding & Volkoff, 1998) (see Appendix 2, Table 2. Intentions Typology, p. 104), we analysed the distribution of intention types by equity target group membership. It is important to note here that some interviewees reported multiple intentions (average 1.2 intention types per interviewee).

Nearly half of all the interviewees (49%) were jobseekers, studying with the primary intention of improving their employment status. Long term unemployed people (62%), Indigenous people (59%), women (53%), and people resident in rural and isolated areas (53%) were more likely to be studying with this intention.

The second most common intention type reported by interviewees was learner (33% of all interviewees) and we found that Indigenous people (53%) and people with low basic skills (51%) were particularly likely to be studying for educational reasons as their primary intention. People with a learner intention generally belonged to more equity target groups (average 3.4) than all interviewees (2.9 groups).

The worker intention was less commonly reported with only 19 per cent of interviewees saying that they were studying in vocational education and training to improve their work function. Men (24%) and people from non-English speaking backgrounds were more likely to report this as their primary intention. People with a worker intention generally belonged to fewer equity target groups (average 1.7) than all interviewees (2.9 groups).

The contributor intention, study to improve a respondent’s personal capacity and/or to contribute to their family and community, was almost as common (reported by 18% of interviewees) as the worker intention. It was most likely to be reported by people with a disability (28%) or with low skills (26%). Not surprisingly, people with worker and contributor intentions generally had a higher average age than all interviewees.

Barriers impacting upon participation as well as access were explored in detail in this report. There were many common barriers reported across all groups. However, the
barriers that interviewees considered to be most important varied by equity target groups: family and child care responsibilities were the most important barriers for women; coping on available income was a central barrier for long term unemployed people, people with low skills and Indigenous people; not having enough basic skills (including English language literacy) was the strongest barrier reported by people from non-English speaking backgrounds; and three equally important barriers – not having enough basic skills, the way in which the course was taught and ‘other’ (including their disability and health issues) – were nominated by people with a disability.

A gain in skills was the most important achievement reported overall by interviewees (45% reported this achievement) and this applied to almost all equity target groups. The second most important achievement reported by all interviewees (27%) was a gain in self confidence. For Indigenous learners, this was THE most important gain reported (45%) and it was also highly valued by people with low literacy, numeracy and social skills (39%) and people from a non-English speaking background (36%). In general, older learners and people belonging to larger numbers of equity target groups were more likely to report achievements that were less vocationally related.

To aid analysis of our qualitative data, we developed an outcomes typology (See Appendix 2, Table 3., p. 105, for more detailed description) with five main types of outcome:

- **work related**: outcomes of study that included a job or improvement of the work functions for those already in work;
- **job related**: outcomes of study that included improvement of job prospects for those not in work;
- **learning related**: outcomes of study that included placing a value on learning in its own right, e.g. entry to another course, a qualification, or improved educational level;
- **contributor related**: outcomes of study that included improvement in personal capacity to contribute to family and community; and
• **minimal or none**: outcomes of study that included no real progress in relation to personal or vocational goals.

In many cases, interviewees were classified with multiple outcome types resulting in an average, across all interviewees, of 1.4 outcome types per interviewee.

The *learning related* outcome type was the most common among all interviewees (40%) and across all equity target groups except people living in rural and isolated areas for whom it was the second most common outcome reported. Almost as commonly reported was the *work related* outcome (39%) and this was the most important outcome reported by rural and isolated people. While *contribution related* (31%) and *job related* (17%) outcomes were less commonly reported by all interviewees, women, long term unemployed people and people with low basic skills were more likely to report these outcomes than the other interviewees. Interviewees who reported *minimal or none* type outcomes (11% of interviewees) had an average age higher than that of all interviewees and were almost three times as likely to be male (17%) than female (6%).

Program and provider effects were observable for particular equity target groups and for those learners who belonged to multiple equity target groups. For the participants in this longitudinal study, TAFE institutes provided a wide variety of program types and catered to a wide range of clients. TAFE enrolled learners who were interviewed in this study were more likely to belong to a greater number of equity target groups than interviewees who studied in other types of providers.

Interviewees who were studying in TAFE providers were more likely to report *jobseeker* (45%) and *learner* (39%) intentions with only about one-fifth reporting that they were studying with *worker* (19%) or *contributor* (20%) intentions. However, they were more likely to report *learning related outcomes* (38%) and *contribution related* (35%) outcomes than *work related* (31%) or *job related* (22%) outcomes.
Interviewees in community education providers were more likely than those in TAFE providers to report *jobseeker* intentions (62%), with only 30 per cent with *learner*, 20 per cent with *contributor* and 11 per cent with *worker* intentions. They also reported *work related* (46%) and *learning related* (46%) outcomes in greater proportions than interviewees in TAFE courses.

Private providers catered to younger interviewees who mainly were studying with *jobseeker* (52%) or *worker* (48%) intentions and reported the highest rates of *work related* outcomes (80%) and much lower rates of *job related*, *learning related*, or *contribution related* outcomes.

An exploration of the relationship between outcomes reported and people’s membership of multiple equity target groups revealed that as the number of equity target groups that interviewees belonged to increased, the proportion of them gaining a *work related* outcome decreased, while proportions gaining *learning related* and *contribution related* outcomes increased as Figure 1 (Golding & Volkoff, 1999a, Figure 6.8, p. 166) below shows.

Figure 1. Percentage of interviewees belonging to multiple equity target groups by outcome type

![Figure 1](image)

Clearly, program types have a strong influence on the types of outcomes that are likely to
be achieved. For the people we interviewed in our research, study in apprenticeship and traineeship programs were most likely to lead to work related outcomes (73%) followed by vocational education programs and short courses (both 49%). Literacy, numeracy and English as a Second Language (ESL) courses, as well as access and general preparatory programs, provided the strongest learning related and contribution related outcomes.

There was strong congruence between the intentions and outcomes that were reported by interviewees. Work related outcomes were reported by 77 per cent of people who had reported worker intentions, 74 per cent of people who had described learner intentions also reported learning related outcomes, and 63 per cent of people with contributor type reasons for study reported contribution related outcomes. However, it was also clear that learning related and contribution related outcomes were valued outcomes for people who had enrolled in study primarily for employment related reasons.

When we investigated the relationship between unemployment following study and membership of multiple equity target groups, we found a strong correlation between membership of multiple target groups and unemployment, as Figure 2 below illustrates (Golding & Volkoff, 1999a, Figure 6.13, p. 170).

**Figure 2. Percentage of interviewees NOT working by membership of multiple equity target groups**

![Bar chart showing the percentage of interviewees not working by the number of equity target groups per interviewee.](chart.png)

- 5 groups: 86%
- 4 groups: 56%
- 3 groups: 50%
- 2 groups: 39%
- 1 group: 12.5%
We further explored whether the debilitating effect on employment of membership of multiple equity target groups was exacerbated by membership of particular groups. People who had been long term unemployed or had low basic skills prior to study were much less likely to have gained employment following their study in vocational education and training. As Figure 3 (Golding & Volkoff, 1999a, Figure 6.14, p. 171) below shows, rates of employment fell for women, rural and isolated people, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, Indigenous people, and people with a disability if they had been long term unemployed prior to their study. Rates of employment for some of these groups (e.g. women, rural and isolated people and Indigenous people) were even lower if they had low basic skills prior to their study.

The second part of the report (Volume 2) looked very closely at the barriers that people from each of the seven groups that were studied faced before they came to vocational education and training, during their participation, and after they completed their course, in gaining the outcomes they sought. The different effects on access, participation and outcomes for each group were illustrated in detail, by case studies, selected from the interviews.
In summary, this study found that people started on the vocational education and training journey for different reasons. They had a variety of intentions and worked towards different goals. It was clear that not everyone was studying in order to gain skills to secure a job, though this had often previously been thought to be the case for most learners.

Learners had different reasons for choosing a particular vocational education and training provider, for example, because it had a good reputation or it was the only one they could afford or physically access. Some chose a provider (e.g. an adult and community education provider) because the setting and the teachers made them feel comfortable and gave them the learning and personal support they needed.

The difficulties that learners experienced varied for different groups of people and also by provider type. Many important barriers were linked to learners’ family, social and economic circumstances, to the nature of their previous educational experiences as well as to where they lived. The more equity target groups that learners belonged to, the more difficulties they were likely to face in studying and gaining employment outcomes from their vocational education and training. Those with the lowest basic skills or who were unemployed prior to their study were most disadvantaged at all stages of their vocational education and training journey.

Learners achieved a wide range of outcomes and valued them differently. While some reported that gaining a job was the most important achievement for them, others who had also gained a job valued other outcomes such as an increase in skills or confidence more highly. The value placed on a work outcome by job seekers may have been influenced by a view, perhaps gained from experience, that job security was limited. Thus, some people who did achieve work outcomes following unemployment prior to study, placed greater value on gaining skills and confidence, perhaps as they perceived these outcomes as ones that they ‘owned’. Indeed, learners engaged in and achieved outcomes from vocational education and training for reasons that went well beyond what might conventionally be regarded as ‘vocational’.
The intentions and outcomes that learners reported were generally related. However, some learners adapted their goals in the first place, to match what they thought were feasible outcomes for them. If employment outcomes seemed unlikely for them, given their prior experience and personal characteristics, they sometimes found other goals for themselves such as gaining skills to become more self-sufficient or to support other family members or community groups. Those learners who belonged to higher numbers of equity target groups, and whose expectations of gaining employment were limited, were more likely to value achievements associated with developing social relationships, personal interests and leisure activities and gains in self confidence.

Many of the learners who were in employment at the conclusion of our research had already been working at the beginning of their study. One of the important conclusions that we made was that it was difficult to report or compare employment outcomes of a particular course, without taking account of the proportions of learners who had already been in employment at the outset.

Our interviewees reported a wide range of important advantages that participation in vocational education and training could provide them in personal, family, social and community contexts. For many learners, these benefits were reported to flow beyond their work contexts to their families and communities.

The impact of this final report on subsequent research in this area has been substantial. In addition to the citations of the short nominated publications already referred to above, this final publication of the study informed:

- policy formation, for example, ANTA’s national plan of action for increasing opportunities for people with a disability in vocational education and training ‘Bridging Pathways – Blueprint for Implementation from 2002 until 2005’ (ANTA, 2000b);
– the Australian Education Union submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education Committee Inquiry into the Quality of Vocational Education and Training in Australia (AEU, 1999);
– the Australian Education Union TAFE Funding Campaign (AEU, 2000);
– vocational education and training equity agencies: e.g. Access Training and Employment Centre, Victoria (ATEC, 2002, 2003a, 2003b); and
• the work of vocational education and training researchers, for example:
4. **Review of equity literature – Research Study 2**

In parallel with the work on the longitudinal study described above (see Table 1, Appendix 1, p. 101), I completed an additional research study by invitation from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). This research was commissioned by ANTA with the goal of informing policy formation. It was also undertaken collaboratively, with the same colleague as the longitudinal study together with a colleague from Monash University. The ‘Report of equity literature: barriers, strategies and policies’ was published by ANTA in print in June 1997 (Golding, Volkoff & Ferrier, 1997) and on its website for many years, as part of a ‘Stocktake of Equity Reports and Literature in VET’ to inform vocational education and training researchers, policy makers, equity managers, practitioners, advocates and activists.

This study located and sourced Australian vocational education and training research focussed on equity published between 1990 and 1996. In our publication, we provided a critical analysis of the material and synthesis of the key findings from the many research studies for five equity target groups: women; Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people; people with a disability; residents of rural and remote communities; and people from non-English speaking backgrounds.

In particular, we noted the access and equity principles and concepts used nationally by ANTA and explored definitional issues associated with equity related terms, broadly and also in relation to each of the five equity target groups. The analysis of the literature for each group was structured into three main sections: access; participation; and outcomes. This analysis was led by an introduction comprising an examination of the definitions used to identify members of that group both in the literature and in practice, and a ‘snapshot of the situation’ for that group including relevant statistical data about the group in the community and in the labour force, and its participation in and outcomes from vocational education and training.
The main barriers to access, participation and outcomes were identified in the literature for each target group, and also across groups, as well as strategies that had been used to reduce these barriers. Finally, this ‘solutions oriented’ overview presented recommendations for future vocational education and training equity policies and strategies. These recommendations focussed on: policies for creating an equitable training market; and strategies for encouraging and recruiting equity target group members, facilitating program entry, ensuring program relevance, developing program flexibility, and enhancing the learning environment.

Important recommendations that we made in this report included that to make a difference, equity needed to be embraced as a goal by all players in the vocational education and training system, including private providers, and that equitable participation by representatives of equity target groups in vocational education and training sector decision making should be achieved (Golding, Volkoff & Ferrier, 1997, p. 60).

Other key recommendations focussed on target setting and monitoring of outcomes: that targets should be set for particular groups, with specific strategies, action plans and performance agreements based on consistent definitions; and that outcomes monitoring processes that recognised client diversity should be established. We also suggested that there should be recognition of the requirement for additional funding to address the needs of students with overlapping membership of target groups to account for their multiple disadvantages.

In relation to strategies to improve participation rates for equity target groups, we recommended support for the development of appropriate entry points and articulated pathways into accredited courses, and development and implementation of appropriate recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes. Finally, we acknowledged that vocational education and training is a cultural activity, and emphasised the desirability of providers employing teachers and trainers who would contribute to the creation of an organisation that was as internally diverse as the clients it served.
This ‘stocktake’ informed policy formation, as it was designed to do, in particular, ANTA’s (1996b) statement ‘Equity 2001: strategies to achieve access and equity in vocational education and training for the new millennium’ (sic), the equity focussed supporting document ‘Achieving equitable outcomes of Australia’s national strategy for vocational education and training, 1998-2003’ (ANTA, 1998) and later, ‘Partners in a learning culture: Australia’s national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander strategy for vocational education and training 2000-2005’, (ANTA, 2000a).

Vocational education and training researchers also drew on this work to inform their research, for example: Boughton & Durnan (1997); DETYA (1999); Hartley & Connole (1999); Long, Carpenter & Hayden (1999); McIntyre (1999); Robertson & Barrera (1999); Fraser (2000a); Hunter, Gray & Jones (2000); James (2000); McIntyre & Egg (2001); and Higgins (2003).
5.  Focus on people from non-English speaking backgrounds – Research Studies 3 and 5

Investigating the experience of people from non-English speaking backgrounds in vocational education and training, during the longitudinal study, was of particular significance to me. My parents experienced being refugees and migrants as young children and then undertook a second migration to Australia as young adults. I commenced schooling in Australia with no English language proficiency and English was the second language that I learned, in both spoken and written forms. I therefore pursued the possibility to further investigate this area of vocational education and training equity research with particular interest when suitable opportunities arose.

During 1998, I completed a review of research related to the access, participation, outputs and outcomes in vocational education and training of people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Commissioned by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), following a competitive research grant award process conducted by the National Research and Evaluation Committee of ANTA, the ‘Review of research: Vocational education and training for people from non-English speaking backgrounds’ (Volkoff and Golding, 1998) analysed and consolidated relevant literature published or in progress from 1991 to March 1998 and relevant population and participation statistical data for the same period.

In particular, this review teased out the complexity embedded within a simple definition of non-English speaking background and explored the effects of changing migration patterns on learner diversity and potential vocational education and training clients in Australia. We also identified trends in participation in vocational education and training for this group as well as a wide range of influences, beyond language spoken at home, on non-English speaking background people’s participation in vocational education and training. In addition, we located non-English speaking background people’s participation in a national education and training policy context and summarised conclusive,
inconclusive and contested evidence from the literature, drawing out particular areas requiring further research.

In this review, we pointed out that Australia had a higher proportion of immigrants than other contemporary Western societies and one of the most culturally diverse workforces in the world. However, the Australian multicultural and multilingual society did not entirely comprise immigrants. Some Australian Indigenous people and children of immigrants were also identified as having a non-English speaking background – that is, identified as speaking a language other than English at home.

In our exploration of definitional issues, we identified that there was no single consistent or commonly accepted definition of people from non-English speaking backgrounds in use in the vocational education and training sector. Therefore, it was difficult to compare data between studies within the vocational education and training sector and also to make comparisons with studies conducted in higher education.

The most important barriers to participation in vocational education and training, that non-English speaking background people experienced, were identified to be inadequate, or perceived to be inadequate, levels of English language proficiency (ABS, 1996; SEETRC, 1997; Bertone, 1995; VandenHeuval & Wooden, 1995). In addition, this group was more likely than the overall population in vocational education and training to experience a lack of employer support for training (Stephens & Bertone, 1995; Baker & Wooden, 1991; VandenHeuvel & Wooden, 1995). This was especially the case for women who were often employed in manufacturing industries that were being restructured with resulting declines in employment opportunities, particularly for unskilled workers. Women from non-English speaking backgrounds with family responsibilities were also deterred from undertaking training by a lack of appropriate and accessible child care and family support options (Zinopoulos, 1992; Mawer & Field, 1995) and the scheduling of training outside work hours, in unpaid time (Bertone, 1995; Stephens & Bertone, 1995; Collins et al., 1997).
We also identified that while differences between cultural and educational traditions of Australian born students and those from a non-English speaking background had been recognised, little formal study had been completed except in relation to full-fee-paying overseas students. The structure of written work, use of group work, forms of participation in assessment, different cultural attitudes to knowledge and processes of knowledge acquisition, and different attitudes of Australian teachers, all had the potential to pose difficulties (e.g. Ballard & Clanchy, 1991; Karmel, 1997; Karmel & Wood, 1997). This meant that the mono-cultural ‘one size fits all’ approach, structures and processes of the National Training Reform Agenda of this period, often placed non-English speaking background people, especially women, at a disadvantage (Zinopoulos, 1992; Mawer & Field, 1995; NESB MCGVET, 1995). The lack of integration of language and literacy training within vocational education and training exacerbated difficulties for this group, particularly those with low levels of English language proficiency.

Non-English speaking background people with substantial previous education and training, including professional qualifications, commonly found that their qualifications (and prior work experience) were not recognised in Australia (Mawer & Field, 1995). Inadequate and inappropriate recognition of prior learning (RPL) processes and resources exacerbated this problem for them (NESB MCGVET, 1995). The available data suggested that non-English speaking background people who were members of other equity target groups as well (e.g. women, rural and isolated people, people with low levels of prior education in their own language), were more seriously disadvantaged in participating in training and in gaining successful outcomes from that training.

It was also evident that many non-English speaking background people did not proceed directly to work after completing a vocational education and training program. Having an Australian vocational education and training qualification did not necessarily lead to employment for them. Non-English speaking background people were disadvantaged in gaining employment by a range of factors including lack of knowledge of local employment opportunities and job seeking strategies, lack of networks and helpful contacts, and lack of appropriate child-care facilities, the latter particularly impacting on
women. Work experience opportunities, integrated within learning programs were potentially of particular value to them. However, our longitudinal study (Golding & Volkoff, 1999a) had found that for many, vocational education and training could be seen to be part of a longer, more protracted pathway to work, likely to involve other study, perhaps in other sectors such as adult and community education or higher education.

Five years after concluding this study, during 2003, I was again commissioned (as sole author and through competitive tender) by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), to conduct follow-up research to be published as a chapter in a book of research readings on equity in vocational education and training. The purpose of this chapter was to integrate and synthesise what had been researched and documented in relation to non-English speaking background vocational education and training learners during the period 1997 to 2001, directly building on the work completed in the third research study described above.

The chapter, ‘Tangled threads: issues faced by non-English speaking background people in VET’ (Volkoff, 2004), provided a background to the growing cultural and linguistic diversity of the Australian population, further explored the definitional issues associated with the term ‘non English speaking background’, and identified trends in vocational education and training participation and outcomes for people from non-English speaking backgrounds during the period 1997 to 2001. In the absence of a single common definition for non-English speaking background people in use in vocational education and training in Australia, I explored the literature and statistical data in relation to two defined (but clearly overlapping) groups: people who were born in a non-English speaking country prior to migration to Australia; and those who spoke a language other than English at home (that also included people born in Australia: Indigenous people and children of migrants).

Around the turn of the 21st century, Australia had, as a percentage, the second largest migrant population in the OECD and among the largest in the world (O’Flynn et al., 2001). Despite the fact that the proportion of Australia’s population born overseas in
2001 was almost the same as it had been at the time of Federation in 1901 (DIMIA, 2002), compared with earlier times, Australia’s migrant population early in the 21st century was significantly different. It had a much lower proportion of native English speakers with more than 14 per cent of the Australian population born in non-English speaking countries and one in four of the 24 per cent of Australians who were born overseas, born in Asia (ABS, 2001).

The 2001 census (ABS, 2001) revealed that 2.8 million people (16% of the population) in Australia spoke a language other than English at home, collectively speaking more than 200 languages, including 60 Indigenous languages. Of serious importance to participation in vocational education and training, almost one in five (18.4%) of these people reported having only limited English language proficiency (ABS, 2003). This included not only middle aged or elderly migrants but also 13 per cent of young people aged 24 years and under who had been born in Australia but spoke a language other than English at home.

Vocational education and training students without adequate English language proficiency as a basis face a difficult task in maintaining confidence, gaining an apprenticeship or traineeship, successfully completing necessary assessment tasks and their course, and obtaining their anticipated employment outcome or pathway to higher level study (Misko, 1997; McDermott, Baylis & Brown, 1998; VandenHeuval & Wooden, 1999; Golding & Volkoff, 1999; Robertson & Barrera, 1999; Watson & Pope, 2000; Richardson, Robertson & Ilsley, 2001; DIMIA 2002). I argued in this publication that this key issue of English language proficiency needed to be urgently addressed in order for people from non-English speaking backgrounds to be able to benefit from vocational education and training participation to the same extent as other Australians.

The rates of participation of non-English speaking background people in vocational education and training were also identified to be an issue. Through analysis of NCVER unpublished vocational education and training (AVETMISS) data for the period 1996-2001, I identified that the rate of growth during this period in vocational education and
training participation by the overall population was not matched by people from non-
English speaking backgrounds.

While the overall number of vocational education and training students in Australia had
grown by 30 per cent, growth in the number of students who reported that they were born
in a non-English speaking country had only grown by 17 per cent. Thus, by 2001, the
proportion of vocational education and training students who were born in a non-English
speaking country had declined to 11.7 per cent from 13 per cent in 1996. During the same
period the proportion of people born in non-English speaking countries in the Australian
population had remained relatively stable at 14.4 per cent. A similar decline in vocational
education and training participation rates was evident for people who spoke a language
other than English at home.

There were potentially a number of reasons for such declines: policy shifts including the
move away from specifically targeting non-English speaking background people in
vocational education and training; insufficient hours of English language training funded
for new arrivals through changes in Commonwealth Government entitlements; and shifts
in emphasis in migration categories with greater proportions of migrants entering under
the Skill Stream that required high levels of English language proficiency and
skills/qualifications (more than 55% of 2000-2001 migrants compared with only 29% in
1995-96) and fewer through the Family Stream (DIMIA, 2002).

My analysis of AVETMISS data (NCVER, 2001) revealed that participation of people
born in non-English speaking countries in vocational education and training was
concentrated in courses at the highest and lowest levels of the Australian Qualifications
Framework (AQF). They were more likely, than all vocational education and training
students, to be studying in courses at Diploma and above level and at Certificate I and II
levels. A similar pattern existed for vocational education and training students who spoke
a language other than English at home, but with an even greater concentration at the
lower AQF levels. This pattern may have been, in part, a reflection of different migration
streams: people entering through the Skill Stream with high levels of English proficiency,
skills/qualifications, strong employment history and adequate finances undertaking higher level training; and people entering through the Humanitarian Program or Family Stream with lower levels of English language proficiency and skills needing to study in language and literacy and enabling programs prior to being able to engage in higher level study. It may also be a reflection of the difficulties people from non-English speaking backgrounds face in trying to gain an apprenticeship opportunity with poor English language skills, inadequate understanding of how the system works and poor networks.

Reasons for engaging in vocational education and training were also different between people who spoke a language other than English at home and Australian students overall. Analysis of reasons for study documented in the 2002 NCVER ‘Student outcomes survey national report’ (NCVER 2003), that classified TAFE graduates into seven mutually exclusive categories, revealed two categories for which graduates speaking a language other than English at home had the lowest representation. These categories were Apprentices and Trainees and Skill Improvers, the very categories for which employment outcomes were highest for all TAFE graduates, 88 per cent and 91 per cent respectively. Conversely, the categories of reasons for study that had the highest representation of graduates speaking a language other than English at home, Bridgers (46%) and Career Changers (59%), had the poorest employment outcomes overall.

This chapter reported strong evidence that Australian vocational education and training was not working as effectively for people born in non-English speaking countries as it was for the Australian born population. In particular, they were more likely than Australian born graduates to report that their course had ‘very little relevance’ to them and that they had experienced difficulties with unhelpful attitudes of teachers. While they were more likely to have been looking for work, they represented only 12.5 per cent of graduates who had gained employment despite representing 18 per cent of the graduates who participated in the 2002 survey (NCVER 2003). Those who did gain employment were more likely to have taken longer to do so and to be in part-time work.
Through a review of the research literature, I identified a complex array of factors that impacted on the vocational education and training experience of people from non-English speaking backgrounds, with English language proficiency remaining the most important one. All migrants are likely to face stress and difficulties associated with the actual process of migration and separation from homeland, family and friends. However, people who migrated to Australia through the Humanitarian Program were more likely to suffer, in addition to poor English language skills, the debilitating effects of their refugee experience leading up to arrival (and for some also after arrival on Australian soil), including acute stress, disconnection from work, study and income as well as family, and long periods in ‘limbo’ awaiting visa processing.

To more effectively address the complex needs of those who are the most disadvantaged members of the non-English speaking background group - for example, those who live in poverty, who have migrated as refugees, who are unemployed, or who have low levels of literacy in their own language - support services that were provided during the period leading up to this review needed to be transformed to become comprehensive in scope and integrated with realistic pathways to employment. The challenge remained to provide targeted interventions and support according to diverse needs, while not ignoring the fact that these vocational education and training students share their own, common characteristics of cultural and linguistic difference from the mainstream.

These two reviews that specifically focussed on people from non-English speaking backgrounds have informed the work of other vocational education and training scholars, for example: Baynes, Kilpatrick & Abbott-Chapman (2002); Fraser (2000a, 2000b, 2002); Harris & Simons (2003); Gelade & Stehlik (2004); Lamb, Walstab, Teese, Vickers & Rumberger (2004); Miralles (2004); Sim & Zinopoulos (2004); Guenther, Young, Boyle, Schaber & Richardson (2005); and Kearns (2006). The findings and recommendations that have been outlined have also informed teaching and training practice, for example, through the ANTA (2002/2004) ‘Cross-cultural issues in content development and teaching online’, a teacher/trainer/instructional designer resource of the Australian Flexible Learning Quick Guide Series, produced by ANTA.

The expansion of providers registered to deliver vocational education and training in Australia, beyond TAFE institutes, raised important questions about the capacities of different provider types to deliver quality provision and to effectively cater to the needs of different client groups. In 1997, ‘The national research and evaluation strategy for vocational education and training in Australia, 1997-2000’ (NCVER, 1997), identified a major research focus on

‘the involvement of the adult and community education (ACE) sector in vocational education and training and determining what factors drive this involvement’.

It was clear that adult and community education providers did make a contribution to vocational education and training provision and that clients ‘chose’ these providers. However, it was not clear why they did so, what was the nature and extent of the contribution that adult and community education providers made to vocational education and training, and how adult and community education provision might be different from that offered in TAFE institutes or by Private providers.

An initial national policy for adult and community education had been developed and released by the Commonwealth, State and Territory Ministers in December 1993. However, this was revised by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Taskforce on ACE, to accommodate changes in the vocational education and training landscape following 1993, and endorsed by MCEETYA in June 1997 (MCEETYA, 1997). This policy endorsed a broad role for the adult and community education sector embracing its traditional learner centred, community based approaches to teaching and learning and its significant role in developing work skills as well as personal and social outcomes. It also identified a new role in building more diverse skills and capacities including in enterprises.
The Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (SSCEET) *Come in Cinderella* (1991) report had identified a lack of evidence, beyond the anecdotal, of the role that adult and community education played across Australian states and territories. Two states, Victoria and New South Wales had state-wide and state-funded adult and community education systems and most previous research had been concentrated in these states. McIntyre & Kimberley (1997, p. 15) in reporting the work they conducted in Western Australia, noted that ‘truly national research’ had been lacking. Significantly, different structures for the provision of adult education and training were evident across Australia, as Schofield and Associates (1996, pp. 26-27) outlined. Thus, it was timely for a study to more deeply explore the roles that adult and community education was playing in different jurisdictions and contexts across Australia.

In addition to my scholarly interest which derived from my analysis of adult and community education provision during the longitudinal study described above, I also had a strong personal/professional interest in this field. At this time, I was Chair of the Northern Metropolitan Regional Council of Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) in Victoria (1996 to 2000) and also a member of the Victorian Adult Community and Further Education Board (1998 to 2003).

This fourth research project, also funded by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) through a competitive tender process, was designed to explore the extent and types of vocational education and training delivered by the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector nationally. The nominated publication, *The vocational essence of ACE: the delivery of VET programs by adult community education providers* (Volkoff, Golding & Jenkin, 1999), reported the findings of work that addressed the research brief to: document and describe the extent and types of vocational education and training delivered by the ACE sector nationally; identify the strengths that the ACE sector brought to this provision; and describe the challenges faced by this sector in providing vocational education and training programs.
The research was conducted in three Australian states, Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia to reflect three different types of adult and community education sectors. Findings were derived from analysis of data from: focus group interviews in 35 providers (146 respondents in ACE and 109 in TAFE); written survey responses from 656 learners (298 learners in ACE and 358 in TAFE); survey responses from 42 provider representatives; interviews with ACE sector representatives at state and national levels; and review of research and policy reports and data collections.

The TAFE sample was included in parallel to the ACE sample to facilitate some comparisons across sectors. Both ACE and TAFE samples included a range of small and large size providers, inner urban, outer suburban and rural providers and providers with a special focus on Indigenous and non-English speaking background learners. The TAFE providers were selected in the same general locations as the ACE providers. The learners that were interviewed in both ACE and TAFE providers were enrolled in a broad range of course types: accredited vocational courses; accredited and non-accredited access and preparatory courses; and non-accredited further education courses.

In the absence of a commonly agreed, national descriptor or definition of adult and community education, reflecting the differences in structure, funding, definitions and community perceptions of adult and community education provision across Australian states/territories, we based our definition of an Adult and Community Education (ACE) provider on the McIntyre and Kimberley (1997, p. 3) definition: ‘a community-owned and community-managed organisation delivering educational and other services’. This was closely aligned with the Victorian Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board definition of an adult and community education provider as one which was ‘community owned and managed and not-for-profit’.

Our study found that at that time, accredited vocational education and training provision within ACE providers formed an important part of vocational education and training provision, even within contexts where a formally (state or territory) defined and recognised adult and community education sector was not present. We asserted that the
ACE sector had a valid and valuable place in the national (and state) training systems because there was evidence of the sector’s capacity to: address learning environment and access issues while effectively delivering vocational outcomes; offer initial and lifelong learning opportunities that could provide bridges to further study for learners, both within ACE and to other providers; foster diversity and responsiveness to local demand in communities through its community ownership and management; respond flexibly to the learning needs of specific groups of learners; and attract and cater for a diverse range of learners, including the most disadvantaged of learners (Volkoff, Golding & Jenkin, 1999, p. 57).

We found clear evidence, from a learner perspective, that the ACE sector offered user-friendly, flexible and vocationally oriented learning opportunities. Our learner respondents reported that they actively chose ACE providers, commonly with the aims of achieving multiple rather than single goals, encompassing vocational, social and personal outcomes. The distinctive learner centred teaching methodology, the non-institutionalised setting, the local proximity of the provider to learners’ homes, the prevalence of on-site child care and the relative flexibility of entry to and exit from study were all critical factors in the choice of an ACE provider. The primary focus on the needs of the learner or the learning community positioned the ACE sector well to respond with provision of appropriate programs, in terms of both content and level.

However, there were clear differences evident between the perceptions of learners in adult and community education across states. Where the sector was publicly supported and there was policy and funding coherence, as in Victoria, (rather than Queensland and Western Australia in our sample) it was more likely that affordable, accredited courses at an appropriate level would be available and attract people seeking a vocational outcome but disadvantaged in accessing TAFE programs. In states where there was no formalised ACE sector, providers faced an ongoing challenge to gain recognition of their capacity to successfully deliver accredited vocational education and training programs. This lack of recognition served to inhibit opportunities for providers, for funding and to restrict their entry into accredited provision.
Recognised strengths of providers within the ACE sector that we identified were their offerings of user-friendly, flexible and vocationally oriented initial and recurrent learning opportunities and their expertise in and dedication to working with educationally and socially disadvantaged learners. These characteristics clearly influenced learner choice of provider and offered ‘second chance’ learning opportunities to those who were unlikely to be able to access them elsewhere.

We concluded that there was evidence, from a learner perspective, that adult and community education had the capacity to: implement lifelong learning principles in their broadest sense; play an important part in vocational orientation and preparation; address multiple needs of diverse learners; anticipate the needs of and empower adult learners; and broaden the choices available to adult learners.

Considerable research has been undertaken since 1999, specifically addressing: the ACE sector’s distinctive adult pedagogies (e.g. Sanguinetti, Waterhouse & Maunders, 2004); its capacity to reach disadvantaged communities (Golding, Davies & Volkoff, 2001; Walstab, Volkoff & Teese, 2005, 2006; Volkoff & Walstab, 2007); its critical role in building economic outcomes AND social capital in Australian communities (Falk et al., 2000; Birch et al., 2003; Clemans et al., 2003; McIntyre, 2003, 2005; Kearns, 2005, 2006; Choy et al., 2006; Walstab, Volkoff & Teese, 2005, 2006); its localised nature and important roles in building literacy and numeracy skills, fostering lifelong learning and vocational education and training provision for rural communities not well served by TAFE or private providers (Chapman et al., 2003; Walstab, Volkoff & Teese, 2005, 2006; Volkoff & Walstab, 2007); and its strategies to attract male learners to what had traditionally been a female dominated sector (Golding et al., 2005).

This nominated publication continues to inform researchers in this field, for example: Fraser (2000a); Smith, Ferrier, Anderson, Burke, Hopkins, Long, Maglen, Malley, McKenzie & Shah (2001); CIT (2002); Birch, Kenyon, Koshy & Wills-Johnson (2003); Peters & Lloyd (2003); Foley (2005a, 2005b); and McIntyre (2005).
7. A position on equity

‘Regrouping Equity: a position paper and review of equity research in vocational education and training in Australia’ (Golding & Volkoff, 1999b), was an invited paper presented to the ‘National Workshop on Equity Research’ at the University of Technology Sydney (UTS) Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training in Sydney, in May 1999. This national workshop, convened by Dr John McIntyre, was a round table gathering of Australian vocational education and training researchers who focussed specifically on equity research.

As a position paper, in addition to outlining the research studies we had completed during the period 1996 to 1999, our paper addressed three specific topics: the way in which we had ‘understood’, or framed, equity in vocational education and training within and through our research to that date; our perceptions, based on our research, of the limits and strengths of vocational education and training policy, during that period, for equity; and the priorities, as we saw them, for future research on equity in vocational education and training.

We stated in our paper that we understood equity as *an ‘ideal state in which the abilities, hopes and potential of all people, individuals, groups and communities are developed, realised and achieved’* (Golding & Volkoff, 1999a, p. 44). Thus, equity in a vocational education and training context, was understood as aiming to create that ‘ideal state’ by matching and supporting people’s vocational and educational aspirations with learning opportunities that were appropriate to the diverse individuals, groups and communities.

Our research to that time had assumed that improved learning opportunities resulting in enhanced equity for disadvantaged groups could be achieved through focus on multiple aspects including:

- identifying and addressing the key factors that predisposed individuals, groups and communities to disadvantage;
identifying and addressing factors associated with vocational education and training itself, that exacerbated inequity;
increasing understanding of the nature of disadvantage and inequity through research;
developing government policies and shaping funding streams to address disadvantage and inequity, expanding the lifelong learning options available to individuals and communities; and
increasing the participation of disadvantaged individuals and stakeholder groups in development of and decision making about solutions to inequity.

Within the context of our studies, inequity was something that could be related to people’s membership of a particular group or multiple groups. As groups, in particular some groups such as women, people resident in rural areas and people with a language background other than English, were clearly not homogeneous, so, inequity could vary by sub-group. Our research had also identified that inequity could vary by the sub-sector of vocational education and training that people were studying within. The prevailing pedagogical approach, teacher and administrator attitudes towards disadvantaged learner groups, the flexibilities that were available (e.g. in assessment timelines), the physical environment of the institution itself as well as the teaching and learning spaces, and the level of resources that was committed to supporting learner needs could all, separately and together, make a difference.

Further, inequity might, or might not be directly associated with vocational education and training. It could arise from factors directly associated with the individuals themselves, both educationally-related and life-related, for example, poor previous experiences of education, incomplete schooling, low literacy and numeracy, poverty, homelessness, family care responsibilities, family violence, drug and alcohol addiction, chronic pain or mental illness.

These factors could impact singly or in combination across the vocational education and training journey through access, participation, output or outcomes effects. They could be
ongoing, transitory or recurring. They could also be the result of personal perceptions of self, for example, self-esteem, motivation or image of self as a learner.

In this paper, we proposed that there were six main policy concerns that needed to be addressed. Firstly, there was a need for inequity, as it manifested itself in a wide variety of forms and locations for individuals, groups and communities, to be recognised and addressed.

Secondly, we suggested that there needed to be a stronger focus on the need for a variety of forms of adequately funded, both initial and recurrent, public education and training programs (such as TAFE, labour market programs, adult literacy and numeracy programs) that were accessible to a wide range of disadvantaged groups.

Thirdly, we argued that there needed to be a stronger recognition of the value that lifelong learning, in all its forms and contexts, brought to individuals, the economy and the community.

Fourthly, we argued that in recognition of the multi-dimensional factors that prompted inequity, the solution to inequity also needed to be multi-dimensional, addressed through collaborative action, with responsibility shared across a range of fronts and through a range of means.

Fifthly, we emphasised that it was important to recognise the debilitating effects of multiple disadvantage and inequity, and particularly those associated with poverty, low literacy and numeracy skills and long term unemployment.

Finally we suggested that acknowledgement be given to the role that ‘advantage’ played in inequity. For example, those in secure, full-time employment, male, with high levels of existing skills and qualifications on relatively high incomes were most likely to be funded and to benefit from enterprise supported and based training.
Responsibility to address inequity is shared across governments and providers. Governments can address the factors that lead to inequity through their policies, strategies and monitoring of targets and outcomes. Providers can address them through knowing their students and understanding the economic and social characteristics of their broader catchment communities, facilitating access to learning opportunities, and providing the necessary support, alone or in partnership with other educational providers, welfare agencies, community organisations and enterprises, to promote successful completion and outcomes.
8. Conclusion

The period of time during which the above research and nominated publications were completed was one of rapid and fundamental reform of the Australian vocational education and training system. Hence, research of equity considerations was important to track how the reforms to the vocational education and training system influenced the capacity of the system to cater for the needs of disadvantaged groups of learners and the community. It was also a time of contrasting perceptions of the value and implications of a culturally diverse community and changing concepts of equity and disadvantage.

The publications that I have nominated as substantive works to be considered for the award of Ph.D. have drawn on my research, during the period 1995-2004, that focussed on the experience of members of equity target groups in vocational education and training as well as the role of providers and the impact of policy on equity in vocational education and training.

The findings documented in these publications have contributed to emerging debates about equity in vocational education and training and been built upon by other researchers in their studies, as the summaries of citations that I have documented demonstrate. In particular, researchers have recognised the importance of the compound disadvantaging effects of membership of multiple equity target groups that were identified and explored within the longitudinal study publications.

The nominated works have also had an impact on policy, at the national and state levels. They have influenced thinking about equity in vocational education and training generally and also in relation to particular groups, such as Indigenous people, people with a disability and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. The 'model for accommodating diversity', designed to address the complex relationships between intra-group diversity, group overlap and disadvantage in vocational education and training, documented in the longitudinal study publications, proposed that two groups – Indigenous people and people with a disability – should remain specifically targeted
while the debilitating effects of low basic skills and unemployment should be acknowledged and addressed across all groups of learners. Subsequent research work, and national government equity policies and strategies have recognised and endorsed these findings.

Vocational education and training stakeholders have also drawn on the research findings, for example, the Australian Education Union in development of their submissions to government on the quality of vocational education and training and on Indigenous education. Another example is the use made of these research findings by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training Advisory Council to inform their position paper on development of a national vocational education and training strategy for adult correctional facilities and juvenile justice centres in Australia.

Impact on practice is more difficult to ascertain. However, the nominated publications have informed the production of guides for instructional design, equity management and vocational education and training teachers. Groups such as the Access Training and Employment Centre (now named Equity Research Centre) have also used the findings to identify issues for practitioners and to develop good practice guides.

More work is being undertaken in relation to people with poor language, literacy and numeracy skills. This group was not a defined equity target group at the time I commenced my research. While it was still recently referred to as a ‘hidden group’ (Kilpatrick and Millar, 2004), there is now much broader recognition of the key importance of English language proficiency for success in vocational education and training for people from non-English speaking backgrounds and of the need for cross-cultural issues to be addressed in content and materials development of programs. There is also a much stronger emphasis being placed on the needs for identification of inadequate literacy and numeracy skills among all learners and integration of literacy and numeracy skills support with vocational training, within TAFE institute, Adult and Community Education and private RTO provision.
The Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector’s role as a provider of vocational education and training has been more widely acknowledged and since our study was completed in 1999, considerable research has been undertaken that has endorsed our conclusions about the importance of ACE in extending opportunities for lifelong learning for all.

In Victoria, ACE has strengthened its role as a provider of vocational education and training for the most disadvantaged learners and now caters for more than 17 per cent of all vocational education and training students in Victoria. For some groups, the share of all Victorian vocational education and training students engaged in ACE is even higher: 21 per cent of Indigenous students; 25 per cent of students with a highest school completion of Year 9 or below; 26 per cent of non-metropolitan students, 31 per cent of students with a disability; and 47 per cent of students aged 55 years and over (unpublished AVETTMISS data, OTTE 2005).

The decade 1995 and 2004 was marked by shifts in the strength of the Australian economy, employment rates, the value placed on school completion and post-school qualifications, vocational education and training policy, and also in the drivers of equity, equity policies, approaches and strategies.

The Australian economy has strengthened significantly and unemployment rates have fallen (ABS 2006). However, unemployment rates have not declined uniformly and some groups have not benefited from the strengthened economy to the same extent as others. Nationally, the unemployment rates for people with post-school qualifications have dropped from 5.5 per cent in 1995 to a low of only 3.6 per cent (and in Victoria even further to 2.8 %) in 2005. The picture is different for people who do not have post-school qualifications (see Table 1, Appendix 1, p. 101). While the decline in unemployment for them looks substantial: from 11.1 per cent in 1995 to 7.5 per cent in 2005; it is still more than double the rate for people with post-school qualifications.
There is further differentiation evident if we examine the rates for people without school completion. In 1995, the unemployment rates for people with no post-school qualifications varied only slightly by Year 12 completion – 9.9 per cent for those with Year 12 and 11.7 per cent for those without. By 2005, the gap had widened with the unemployment rate for people with no post-school qualification, but with Year 12, at just 5.1 per cent, but for those without Year 12, at 9.1 per cent.

More than half of Australians aged 25-64 have not undertaken any study beyond school and there is evidence that people who do not finish school are even less likely to return to learning later in life than those who do, thus further exacerbating their disadvantage (Commonwealth of Australia 2004). Within the context of skills shortages in Australia, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG, 2006a) human capital agenda aims to raise the skill levels of our existing workforce and reduce the proportion of working age people not participating in the workforce – long term unemployed people, mature aged people and women. Thus, there is now a clear and emphatic policy focus on ‘continuous and lifelong learning’ to deliver skilled labour to industry through providing people with the capacities to participate in the workforce and to do so more effectively (Volkoff & Walstab, 2007). These trends clearly offer opportunities and pose challenges for the adult and community education sector, TAFE institutes and private RTOs.

Throughout this period, the national vocational education and training system has been strongly oriented towards an industrial training model, supporting skills formation for industry plus providing for individual skills needs at both entry level and on a continuing basis. However, during the last 15 years, concepts of equity and the national and state policies for addressing equity issues have changed. While the National Training Reform Agenda of the early 1990s focussed on youth and on ‘equity within the system’, in the second part of the 1990s there was stronger recognition, documented in Equity 2001 (ANTA, 1996), of the need to focus beyond access, and for equity strategies to address access, quality participation and successful outcomes for nominated equity target groups.
The late 1990s saw a shift of emphasis away from solely focussing on target groups towards a ‘whole of system response’ to diverse client needs (ANTA, 1998). ‘Shaping our future: Australia’s National Strategy for VET, 2004-2010’ (ANTA, 2003), took this shift further and promoted an ‘integrated diversity management’ approach for all learner groups except for people with a disability and Indigenous peoples for whom dedicated ‘whole-of-life’ approaches were developed and documented (ANTA, 2000a, 2000b).

The Commonwealth Government’s current approach to and policy for vocational education and training, documented in ‘Skilling Australia - New Directions for Vocational and Technical Education’ (DEST, 2005), emphasise that ‘Industry and business needs must drive training policies, priorities and delivery’ (DEST, 2005, p. VI). While references are made to inclusiveness and building stronger communities, and particular focus is given to engagement in and outcomes from vocational education and training for Indigenous people, the underlying theme is the need for skills development for industry needs.

Concurrently with national shifts, states and territories have adopted different philosophical frameworks for addressing equity in vocational education and training, focussed on individual characteristics or on structural barriers, each of them with clear limitations for shaping policy (Considine et al., 2005) and promoting inclusiveness in vocational education and training.

While in 1996, the equity drivers were more closely aligned with concepts of social justice, in 2006, more than a decade of industry leadership of vocational education and training sector policy, skill shortages and the COAG human capital agenda (COAG, 2006a, 2006b) emphasis on ‘all hands on deck’ have driven a renewed focus on engaging disadvantaged groups in vocational education and training - now for economic rather than social justice purposes.

Meanwhile, the shift in equity policy away from targetting and supporting specific equity groups in vocational education and training to an integrated diversity management
approach has transferred responsibility for action for inclusiveness more firmly onto the shoulders of providers themselves. Not all providers or provider types have responded with equal understanding of, dedication to, or enthusiasm for such a responsibility.

While the ACE sector continues (at least in Victoria) to engage greater proportions of the most disadvantaged groups seeking vocational education and training, some private providers (RTOs) have shifted their focus further away from disadvantaged groups to enterprise based training. TAFE institutes, as the public provider and recipient of the greater share of public funding, have been required to respond to these policy shifts and develop practices to promote inclusiveness of the diverse learner groups seeking a broader range of outcomes, including skills development.

While the overall social profile of vocational education and training has been more representative than that of higher education (NCVER, 1999), there is evidence that social inclusiveness still weakens, as the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) level of study increases. That is, the more disadvantaged students are likely to study in lower AQF level programs than those who are least disadvantaged. However, rates of completion of lower level qualifications (Certificate I and II), are relatively poor (Stanwick, 2005, 2006) and employment outcomes for those who do complete are also poor, particularly for young people. Further, there is clear evidence that for some disadvantaged groups of people, participation in vocational education and training is still less likely to result in successful progression, completion and employment outcomes, than for mainstream students (Dumbrell et al., 2005).

Patterns of delivery are largely influenced by the decisions that providers make about provision within their regional or local context and the context of broader national and state/territory policies and targets. However, the report of a recent national survey of inclusiveness strategies in 58 TAFE institutes that my colleagues and I conducted (Volkoff, Clarke & Walstab, 2007), revealed that there was an enormous degree of diversity in the approach that each institute took to serving its catchment community, the
way it perceived and played its role as an equity provider, and its capacity to provide training and marketable skills outcomes to disadvantaged groups and individuals.

Our analysis of TAFE self-reported inclusiveness practice and national participation data revealed that TAFE institutes that were proactively seeking and building processes for reliable and effective exchange of information, resources and expertise were enhancing their capacity for social inclusion (Clarke & Volkoff, 2007). However, this study also revealed that only a small minority of TAFE institutes were being highly innovative in their strategies and approaches to social inclusion and there were still public vocational education and training providers that had not yet recognised the need for inclusiveness while others took the view that disadvantaged learner needs ‘competed’ with their core business of delivering skills for industry.

Other studies have also emphasised the benefits of effective inclusiveness practice for vocational education and training providers. Mawer and Jackson (2006) described the ‘stick’ of vocational education and training equity arising from the focus on compliance of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) but the ‘carrot’, in more recent times, arising from the ‘strong emphasis on the business and organisational benefits of responding to the diversity of Australia’s learners and learner needs’ (2006, p. 14). Robertson et al. (2004, p. 12) suggested that the benefits for providers of attracting greater proportions of learners from culturally diverse community groups included attracting a greater share of the training market, creating a competitive advantage as well as meeting their legal obligations.

For providers to improve their inclusiveness practice and establish mechanisms for social inclusion in vocational education and training (and its outcomes) requires not only an awareness of existing learners, but also reliable and rigorous processes for identifying, anticipating and adapting to the needs of their evolving catchment communities and industry landscape (Clarke & Volkoff, 2007). To be effective, inclusiveness practice requires the exchange of knowledge about learner disadvantage and the sharing of resources, and to do so, providers need to proactively pursue collaborative relationships.
with other educational, government and support agencies, especially within the context of diversifying populations and industries.

Ten years on from the beginning of my research into aspects of equity in vocational education and training the onus rests on providers to rethink and integrate their commitments. To be able to identify, anticipate and adapt to changing economic and social demands, that is, to be sustainable vocational education and training organisations, vocational education and training providers now need to view and respond to the needs of individual learners, communities and industry not as competing demands, but as equally valued and interconnected obligations within their education and training provision.
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Appendix 1: Table 1 - An overview of the research context

### Table 1. An overview of the research context: VET policy context; equity concepts, targets and approaches

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<td>- Maximising the value of public VET expenditure</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Achieving Equitable Outcomes</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Supporting paper to ANTA Strategy for VET 1998-2003 stressed the need for ‘increased and improved access to and outcomes from VET in identified areas of disadvantage, including those areas highlighted in this strategy’ (p. 16).</td>
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<tr>
<td>Shaping our future: Australia’s National Strategy for VET, 2004-2010: Four objectives:</td>
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<td>- Industry will have a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy</td>
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<td>- Employers and individuals will be at the centre of VET</td>
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<td>- Communities and Regions will be strengthened economically and socially through learning and employment</td>
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<td>- Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and shared learning culture.</td>
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<td>Skilling Australia – New Directions for VET, February 2005. 1 July 2005, ANTA disbanded and functions become part of DEST</td>
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<td>Three way focus:</td>
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<tr>
<td>- Meeting industry needs, responding to the evolving needs of existing industries, reducing skill shortages and meeting the needs of new and emerging industries</td>
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<td>- Individual skilling needs</td>
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<td>- Developing communities through better linkages with VET.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

#### VET system national priorities and strategies:

- **National VET System Priorities for 1994 – by ANTA (newly established in 1992)**
- **Towards a Skilled Australia** – first national strategy released 1994
- **Nominated Priorities:**
  - Build a client focussed culture
  - Create and promote opportunities for lifelong learning
  - Advance a national identity for the VET system
  - Reward innovation and best practice approaches
- **Equity 2001**: Strategies to achieve Access and Equity in VET for the New Millennium Sept 1996.
- **A Bridge to the Future: Australia’s National Strategy for VET 1998-2003.** Five objectives:
  - Equipping Australians for the world of work
  - Enhancing mobility in the labour market
  - Achieving equitable outcomes in VET
  - Increasing investment in training
  - Maximising the value of public VET expenditure
- **Achieving Equitable Outcomes**
  - Supporting paper to ANTA Strategy for VET 1998-2003 stressed the need for ‘increased and improved access to and outcomes from VET in identified areas of disadvantage, including those areas highlighted in this strategy’ (p. 16).
- **Shaping our future: Australia’s National Strategy for VET, 2004-2010:** Four objectives:
  - Industry will have a highly skilled workforce to support strong performance in the global economy
  - Employers and individuals will be at the centre of VET
  - Communities and Regions will be strengthened economically and socially through learning and employment
  - Indigenous Australians will have skills for viable jobs and shared learning culture.
- **Skilling Australia – New Directions for VET, February 2005.**
  - 1 July 2005, ANTA disbanded and functions become part of DEST
- **Three way focus:**
  - Meeting industry needs, responding to the evolving needs of existing industries, reducing skill shortages and meeting the needs of new and emerging industries
  - Individual skilling needs
  - Developing communities through better linkages with VET.

#### VET policy trends

- **National training reform agenda (NTRA)**
- **National VET system (NVETS)**
- **National Training Framework (NTF)**
- **Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)**
- **Renewed AQTF**

#### Employment trends

- High overall unemployment rates, long term unemployment, youth unemployment in early 90s.
- By 1995, national unemployment rates were: 5.5% for people with post-school qualifications; but double - 11.1% for people with no post school qualifications (9.9% for people with Year 12 completion and 11.7% for those without).
- Lower proportion of people unemployed and long term unemployed, but increased proportion under-employed and in contingent employment. By 2005 2006???, national unemployment rates were: 3.6% for people with post - school qualifications; and 7.5% for people without post-school qualifications BUT much stronger differentiation between those with Yr 12 (5.1%) and without Yr 12 (still 9.1%) – emphasising the importance of Year 12 completion.

#### Equity drivers

- Social justice emphasis on welfare of groups
- Skills shortages, COAG agenda emphasis on contribution of all to industry skill needs

#### Equity approaches

- Target groups – increasingly fragmented and multiplied, recognition of complexity of disadvantage
- Individualisation & user choice – all to be ‘treated equally’ through recognising and managing diversity within a much greater range of RTOs.
- Integrated diversity management – equity embedded in core VET business – provider responsibility – stronger role for some providers and provider types, e.g. ACE; partnerships.
### Stated National Policy Equity Approach and Goals

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stated National Policy Equity Approach and Goals</td>
<td>‘ensure equity within the system’. Primary focus on youth. Reforms focussed on development of the national framework for VET with national standards, CBT, RPL, nationally recognised qualifications and nationally consistent curricula.</td>
<td>Recognition of the need to focus beyond access: (p.3) ‘Strategies for equity… need to encompass all of these goals: equal access, quality participation &amp; successful outcomes’</td>
<td>10 point approach:</td>
<td>1. Improving funding</td>
<td>2. Making training more relevant</td>
<td>3. Improving discriminatory attitudes</td>
<td>4. Increasing levels of LLN skills</td>
<td>5. Improving basic work and life skills</td>
<td>6. Improving student and employee support</td>
<td>7. Improving child care provision for students</td>
<td>8. Eliminating bias in competency standards, curriculum, teaching and course requirements</td>
<td>9. Increasing RPL assessments</td>
<td>10. Improving flexible delivery</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National participation targets</th>
<th>Four groups nominated ‘participation needs’ to be addressed:</th>
<th>ANTA identifies five equity target groups and sets target for participation and attainment:</th>
<th>Five client groups identified for monitoring of participation rates, completions and outcomes:</th>
<th>ONLY two specific client group blueprints initiated in 2000:</th>
<th>People with a disability (whole-of-life approach from 2000 blueprint)</th>
<th>Indigenous peoples (whole-of-life approach from 2000 blueprint)</th>
<th>Integrated diversity management approach’ (p. 15) for people who face barriers due to: age, gender, cultural difference, language, literacy, numeracy, cost, unemployment, imprisonment and/or isolation.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four groups nominated ‘participation needs’ to be addressed:</td>
<td>• school leavers</td>
<td>• ATSI peoples</td>
<td>• People with a disability (Bridging Pathways blueprint)</td>
<td>• Indigenous peoples (Partners in a Learning Culture blueprint)</td>
<td>• People with a disability (whole-of-life approach from 2000 blueprint)</td>
<td>• Indigenous peoples (whole-of-life approach from 2000 blueprint)</td>
<td>• integrated diversity management approach’ (p. 15) for people who face barriers due to: age, gender, cultural difference, language, literacy, numeracy, cost, unemployment, imprisonment and/or isolation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four groups nominated ‘participation needs’ to be addressed:</td>
<td>• the workforce</td>
<td>• women</td>
<td>• ATSI peoples</td>
<td>• people with disability</td>
<td>• ATSI peoples</td>
<td>• people from NESBs</td>
<td>• People with a disability (whole-of-life approach from 2000 blueprint)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix 2. Typologies

### Table 2. Intentions Typology

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WORKER</td>
<td>Person working before and concurrently with course with a focus on study for improvement of their work function. Reasons for participating include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to gain skills for present job</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to get a promotion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to get more skills to be able to do more or different jobs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• because employer wants the study done</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to gain extra skills for self employment.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOBSEEKER</td>
<td>Person previously unemployed or under employed with a focus on study for improvement of employment status. Reasons for participating include:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to get a job</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to gain skills or qualifications to get a job</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to gain skills for self employment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to satisfy CES (Commonwealth Employment Service) requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEARNER</td>
<td>Person with a focus on study for educational reasons, beyond skill and employment outcomes. Reasons for participating include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to gain entry to another course</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to gain a qualification</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to improve educational level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to satisfy a hunger for learning</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• because of interest in the content</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• because required to or urged by others, e.g. advantage in prison, for Austudy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONTRIBUTOR</td>
<td>Person with a focus on study for improvement of personal capacity and/or to contribute to family and community. Reasons for participating include:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to gain skills for parenting</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to gain skills for community service</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to provide a role model for children</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to improve participation in social activities</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• to keep up with changes in the world</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• to feel better about oneself.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• to gain skills for self-sufficiency.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Table 3. Outcomes Typology  
(Golding & Volkoff 1999a, Table 6.2 p.162)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>OUTCOME TYPE</th>
<th>DEFINITION</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WORK RELATED</td>
<td>Self-reported outcomes of study include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a job</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• extra skills for present job</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• better job or promotion</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• more skills to be able to do more or different jobs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• skills for self employment actually commenced</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• self-confidence in the work force.</td>
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<tr>
<td>JOB RELATED</td>
<td>Self-reported outcomes of study include:</td>
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<td>• skills or qualifications to hopefully help get a job or a different job</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• skills for self-employment envisaged</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• self-confidence to apply for jobs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• more positive outlook on job prospects.</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEARNING RELATED</td>
<td>Self-reported outcomes of study include:</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• entry to another course</td>
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<td>• a qualification</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• improved educational level</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• desire to learn more</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• a developed interest in the content.</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONTRIBUTION RELATED</td>
<td>Self-reported outcomes of study include:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• skills for parenting</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• skills for community service</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• becoming a role model for children</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• improved participation in social activities</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• keeping up with changes in the world</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• improved self esteem</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• improved self confidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>MINIMAL OR NONE</td>
<td>Self-reported outcomes of study include:</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• no real progress in relation to personal or vocational goals.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 3: Citation References

The following scholarly works have cited the publications that have been nominated (at the beginning of this integrating essay) as substantive works to be considered for the award of Ph.D.


and Learning in Regional Australia, Hobart: Tasmanian Office of Post
Compulsory Education and Training (OPCET).

Birch, E., Kenyon, P., Koshy, P. & Wills-Johnson, N. (2003). Exploring the social and
economic impacts of adult and community education, Adelaide: National Centre
for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

community-controlled adult education: A project report, Federation of
Independent Aboriginal Education Providers, Brisbane: Australian National
Training Authority (ANTA).

education and training and the changing nature of work: overview of work in
progress, Sydney: NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET).

Campbell, S. (2000). The reform agenda for vocational education and training:
for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research, Canberra: Australian National
University (ANU).

CIT (2002). Who are the students who choose ACE study? Research digest: adult and
community education in Australia, 15, September, Canberra: Canberra Institute of
Technology (CIT).

higher education. Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management, 27(1),
35-46.

Dawe, S. (2004a). Moving on from enabling courses. Why do some students remain in
enabling courses? Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research
(NCVER).


# Appendix 4. Curriculum Vitae

## Veronica Volkoff

### PERSONAL DETAILS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Veronica VOLKOFF</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Contact Details</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Ormond Road, IVANHOE VIC 3079</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telephone: 61 (0)408 622 886 or 61 (0)3 8344 8392 (work)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Email: <a href="mailto:vvolkoff@unimelb.edu.au">vvolkoff@unimelb.edu.au</a></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Qualifications</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1972 BSc University of Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td>1973 Dip Ed University of Queensland</td>
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<tr>
<td>1993 MEd University of Melbourne</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Languages</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>English, Russian (fluent), French (intermediate), Chinese (beginner)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Countries of Work Experience</strong></td>
<td>Australia, China, South Africa, India, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Nauru, Malaysia, Germany, Italy, Norway, United Kingdom, Netherlands; work with study groups from China, Vietnam, India, South Africa, Mozambique, Philippines, Malaysia, Kazakhstan, Thailand, Uzbekistan and Indonesia in Australia.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

### PROFESSIONAL AWARDS and ASSOCIATIONS:

- Member, Equity Research Centre Board, Victoria, 2006 – current.
- RMIT University Research Award, 2002
- RMIT University Teaching Quality Award – Scholarship of Teaching, 2001
- Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services, Teaching Quality Award – Scholarship of Teaching, 2001
- Member - Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, Victoria, 1998-2003
- Member of Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA)
- RMIT Internationalisation Grant (1996)
- RMIT Technology Innovation Grant (1994)
- Commonwealth Post-Graduate Award (1979-81)
- Commonwealth Scholarship for undergraduate study (1968-72)
EMPLOYMENT HISTORY

Since February 2005 - ongoing
Senior Research Fellow, Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning (CPELL), Department of Education Policy and Management, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne.

Responsibilities include:

- providing academic and administrative leadership related to post-compulsory education and training across research, training, teaching and development activities
- developing and preparing research and consultancy proposal submissions
- conducting significant research, providing leadership to research teams and supervising the work of other research staff
- undertaking additional research related activities such as development and presentation of papers and publications
- teaching, supervision and subject leadership in postgraduate programs, including the development and redesign of subjects
- undertaking national and international consultancy work and developing partnerships with government, community and other bodies.

2001-2005 (until 25 February 05)
Program Manager (this title designates Centre Director role), Post Compulsory Education and Training Research Centre, School of Education, Portfolio of Design and Social Context, RMIT University

Responsibilities included:

- PCET Research centre strategic planning and staff management
- management, including budgeting and forward planning, of research centre with a key focus on VET
- planning and reporting on Centre teaching, research and consultancy outcomes
- teaching of subjects in the Graduate Diploma in Industrial Education and Training and Master of education (Workplace Education)
- national and international research in VET and ACE
- design, tendering, implementation and management of international consultancy in VET projects
- development of links and ongoing liaison with collaborating academics and groups within and external to RMIT
• development and teaching of short customised courses for VET staff
• supervision of research students
• tender writing
• design and implementation of Centre courses and services marketing

2000, 2001  **Senior Lecturer, Co-Director, Post Compulsory Education and Training Research Centre**, Department of Industry, Professional and Adult Education, Faculty of Education, Language and Community Services, **RMIT University**
Responsibilities similar to above: 2001-2005.

1999  **Course Co-ordinator and Senior Lecturer, Department of Industry, Professional and Adult Education, RMIT University**
Responsibilities included:
• course co-ordination of and teaching subjects in the Graduate Diploma in Industrial Education and Training
• management of and work on international consultancy projects
• development, co-ordination and teaching of award courses for VET staff
• national research in VET and ACE
• VET and ACE sector policy advice
• supervision of research students

1994-1998  **Course Co-ordinator and Lecturer, RMIT University**
Responsibilities included:
• course co-ordination of and teaching subjects in the Graduate Diploma in Industrial Education and Training
• management of and work on international consultancy projects
• development, co-ordination and teaching of award courses for VET staff
• part-time Visiting Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne (1996-98)
• VET and ACE sector policy advice
• supervision of research students

1991-1993  **Project Officer, NEXUS Project, Faculty of Education, RMIT University**
Responsibilities included: establishment and coordination of education-industry relationships facilitating workplace based project work for teacher trainees.

1989-1991  **Coordinator Research and Development, Australian Children's Television Foundation, Melbourne**. Co-ordinated the research and
pilot program development of the AFI award winning, 52 part Lift Off television series, broadcast on ABC TV.


1985-1987 Lecturer, Stream Coordinator, BA (Communication) Newcastle CAE. This included development of the Media Research Stream program: Years 1-3, and teaching of all subjects.

1982-1984 Education media consultant for Northern Districts Teachers’ Co-operative Resource Centre, Sydney NSW.

1980 Co-ordinator, Educational Television Production Project - Disadvantaged Country Area Program, North East Region, NSW.

1977 Commonwealth Education Officer - Overseas Students Scholarship Scheme and Commonwealth Teaching Service, Commonwealth Department of Education, Adelaide, South Australia.

SELECTED PROFESSIONAL RESEARCH and CONSULTANCY PROJECTS:

2007

- **Lead Researcher**, Setting the scene: investigating learning outcomes with a view to the future, project to undertake investigative background research to objectively inform and advise research priority setting of the Adult Community and Further Education Board, commissioned by the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, Victoria.

- **Facilitator and coordinator**, Master of Education Policy (International) (MEPI) International Study Program. This is a three week intensive program comprising visits to a range of secondary schools, seminars with eminent scholars from research centres and universities, visits to education authorities and student seminar presentations. In 2007, the program will be conducted in Norway, Spain and England.

- **Researcher and presenter**, Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board Victoria, research dissemination project – to present the findings of, and engage stakeholders from all Victorian regions with, the ACE Longitudinal Study and the Setting the Scene Project – through regional ACFE conferences and regional stakeholder breakfast seminars.

2006

- **Lead Researcher**, Setting the scene: investigating learning outcomes with a view to the future, project to undertake investigative background research to objectively inform and advise research priority setting of the Adult Community and Further Education Board, commissioned by the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, Victoria.

- **Researcher**, a Community Studies Approach to Researching Strategic Issues in Adult Community Education (ACE), a three year longitudinal study of learners in the Adult Community Education sector in Victoria commissioned by the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board (Year 3 of longitudinal study).

- **Researcher**, A Well-Skilled Future: Tailoring VET to the Emerging Labour Market, a 2 year research project being undertaken jointly by the University of Melbourne Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning (CPELL) and the National Institute for Labour Studies (NILS), Adelaide for the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (Stage 2).


• **Facilitator and coordinator**, Master of Education Policy (International) (MEPI) International Study Program. This is a three week intensive program comprising visits to a range of secondary schools, seminars with eminent scholars from research centres and universities, visits to education authorities and student seminar presentations. In 2006, the program was conducted in the UK, Norway and Italy.

• **AusAID Education Period Contract** – RMIT International - Categories: (i) Education Policy and Administrative Management at all levels and (ii) Technical & Vocational Education. Provision of education sector expertise for short term assignments.

2005

• **Researcher**, A Well-Skilled Future: Tailoring VET to the Emerging Labour Market, a 2 year research project being undertaken jointly by the University of Melbourne Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Lifelong Learning (CPELL) and the National Institute for Labour Studies (NILS), Adelaide for the **National Centre for Vocational Education Research** (Stage 1).

• **Facilitator & researcher**, Circles of Professional Research Practice: A community studies approach to researching strategic issues in ACE, for **Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board, Victoria** (July 2005-May 2006).

• **Researcher and Project Coordinator**, Effective TAFE/ACE/Private Provider delivery to 15-24 year old cohort, for the **Department of Education and Training, Victoria** on behalf of the VLESC.

• **Researcher and Project Coordinator**, Youth Learning Officers Model Evaluation, for **Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training, Government of Tasmania**.


• **Researcher**, A community studies approach to researching strategic issues in Adult Community Education (ACE), a three year longitudinal study of learners in the Adult Community Education sector in Victoria commissioned by the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board (Year 2 of longitudinal study).

• **Facilitator and coordinator**, Master of Education Policy (International) (MEPI) International Study Program. This is a three week intensive program comprising visits to a range of secondary schools, seminars with eminent scholars
from research centres and universities, visits to education authorities and student seminar presentations. In 2005, the program was conducted in the UK, Belgium, Netherlands and Italy.

2004


- **Co-ordinator**, VET Advocacy and Policy Fellowship Program, AusAID Australia China (Chongqing) Vocational Education and Training Project – a two week in Australia intensive training program for senior VET policy makers from Chongqing and Beijing (March-April).

- **Teacher Development Adviser – AusAID Australia China (Chongqing) Vocational Education and Training Project** – a 5.5 year National VET Reform Project based in Chongqing, China (4 weeks input in Chongqing China (May-June)

- **Co-ordinator**, Best Practice Management Fellowship Program, AusAID Australia China (Chongqing) Vocational Education and Training Project – a two week in Australia intensive training program for senior VET institution managers from Chongqing (July).

- **Co-ordinator**, Jiangsu Province (PRC) Education Department VET Teacher Training Project - 4 weeks of in-Australia intensive training for 21 Electronics VET teachers and 20 Computer Networking VET teachers (Semester 2).

- **Program designer and co-facilitator – Teaching Fellowship AusAID Australia China (Chongqing) Vocational Education and Training Project** – a two week in Australia intensive training program to prepare VET teachers to implement innovations in teaching and provide training for colleagues in Partner Schools.

- **Trainer/Presenter - seminars on VET reform, innovation, quality and teacher professional development for international study groups from China, Malaysia and Indonesia.**

2003

- **Teacher Development Adviser – AusAID Australia China (Chongqing) Vocational Education and Training Project** – a 5.5 year National VET Reform Project based in Chongqing, China (4 weeks input in Chongqing China, November-December)

- **Planning consultant/facilitator – MARA - Malaysia Institute of Marine Engineering Technology – VET teacher development project, intake of 20 Malaysian VET teachers trained for two years.**
• Researcher – National Research and Evaluation Committee Project, Vocational Education and Training for People from a non-English-speaking Background.

• Researcher – AusAID Papua New Guinea-Australia Targeted Training Facility (PATTAF) Project, PNG Australian Development Scholar Bridging Program Needs Research. Included focus group interviews in Victoria and Queensland with ADS participants from PNG and support program coordinators and staff.

• Program designer and facilitator - VET Advocacy and Policy Fellowship Program in Australia for senior national and municipal VET policy advisers from People’s Republic of China.

• Program designer and facilitator (within team) – 6 week Instructional Design Fellowship Program for key VET teachers, Australia China (Chongqing) VET Project.

• Project tender research and proposal developer - Mongolia-Australia Targeted Capacity Building and Small Activity Facility, for consortium of IDSS and RMIT International (included in-Mongolia research).

2002

• Researcher – National Research and Evaluation Committee Project International Perspectives in Innovation and VET

• Researcher – DEET Project – Support for Education and Training Policy Development and Research, as part of consortium of PCET Research Centre, RMIT University, Educational Outcomes Research Unit of University of Melbourne, Monash University – ACER Centre for the Economics of Education and Training.

• Teacher Development Adviser – AusAID Australia China (Chongqing) Vocational Education and Training Project – a 5.5 year National VET Reform Project based in Chongqing, China (12 weeks input in Chongqing China).

• Planning consultant/facilitator – MARA - Malaysia Institute of Marine Engineering Technology –VET teacher development project, two intakes of 20 teachers to be trained for two years

2001

• Planning consultant/facilitator – MARA - Malaysia Institute of Marine Engineering Technology –VET teacher development project, two intakes of 20 teachers to be trained for two years.

• Consultant - UNESCO – VET Innovation and Management Workshop in Astana, Kazakhstan on Australian VET sector initiatives.
- **Consultant - UNESCO -** Organisation of *Abroad Study/Study Visit for Kazakhstan Mobile Training Team in Vocational Education Management and Training*

- **Research centre member (since 1999) - University of Melbourne/RMIT University Centre for Post-compulsory Education and Training – An ANTA Key Vocational Education and Training Research Centre,** funded to undertake a three year program of research 1999-2002.

- **Researcher – National Research and Evaluation Committee Project - International Perspectives in Innovation and VET**

- **Researcher – National Research and Evaluation Committee Project – A consolidation of ACE research 1990-2000**

- **Researcher – DEET Project – Support for Education and Training Policy Development and Research,** as part of consortium of PCET Research Centre, RMIT University, Educational Outcomes Research Unit of University of Melbourne, Monash University – ACER Centre for the Economics of Education and Training.

2000

- **AusAID Education Period Contract** - Categories: (i) Education Policy and Administrative Management at all levels and (ii) Technical & Vocational Education. Provision of education sector expertise for short term assignments.

- **Researcher - National Research and Evaluation Committee research project, International Comparisons of VET systems.** This research project, funded by NCVER, was completed in collaboration with PCET Research Centre and international colleagues.

- **Researcher – National Research and Evaluation Committee research project, Beyond Participation: client group, regional influences and provider strategies in equity outcomes.** This project, funded by NCVER was completed in collaboration with colleagues at University of Technology, Sydney.

- **Consultant – GRM: AusAID Capacity Building in Technical Education in Sikkim Project** (February – December: 6 weeks in Sikkim; 12 weeks in Australia). This project is providing training for VET sector senior GOS officials and master trainers and support for the development of courseware for two new VET institutions in Sikkim. Responsibilities include:
  - development of the technical program
  - consultations with and policy advice to Government officials in Sikkim
  - facilitation of seminars and workshops on VET in Sikkim & Australia
  - design and provision of a 4 week, 3 state, study tour on VET policy and practice
  - provision of an 8 week workplace placement, mentor and workshop program.
  - evaluation and reporting.

• **Consultant – ACIL: AusAID Mozambique Australia Capacity Building Project: AQF Study Tour Program** (July: 2 weeks). This project provided training on the Australian VET system and the Australian Qualifications Framework for senior Ministry of Education and Ministry of Labour officials. Responsibilities included design and provision of study tour program including seminar activities.

1999

• **Consultant and Instructional Design Specialist – AusAID: Chongqing Vocational Education and Training Project Feasibility and Design Mission.** This project investigated the feasibility of, and produced a design for, a five year program of VET reform in Chongqing.
  − Responsibilities included:
  − consultations with Ministry and Bureau officials in Beijing and Chongqing
  − research through site visits and consultations with VET sector staff in Chongqing
  − analysis of program feasibility
  − design and documentation of five year project
  − presentation of design to Chinese officials and AusAID in Beijing and Canberra.

• **Consultant – ACIL: AusAID China Capacity Building Project – VET.** Three activities derived information about the VET system in China, informed Chinese VET officials about the Australian VET system and developed recommendations for downstream activities to support the reform of VET in the Chongqing Municipality. Responsibilities included:
  − design and facilitation of two four-day seminars in Chongqing and Beijing
  − development and provision of 10 day instructional design workshop in Chongqing
  − provision of two week study tour in Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane, Australia
  − consultations and drafting of recommendations with senior PRC Ministry officials.

1998-2001

• **Trainer/Presenter various study tours including**
  Shenyang/Harbin VET Study Tour, Jiangsu Province Education VET Study Tour, Indonesian VET Study Tour, Chongqing VET Managers Study Tour, Chongqing Vice Mayor’s delegation to investigate VET developments.

• **Co-ordinator and Presenter CAAC (Chinese Airlines) Management Training Program: Annual 10 day study tour programs for 20 senior executives of CAAC responsible for training, based in Melbourne.**
1998

• Consultant – GRM: AusAID South Africa Capacity Building Program, Mentorship Program. Responsibilities included: provision of 2 week workshop program in Johannesburg to establish mentoring practice designed to disseminate learning from previous AusAID program.

• Lead Researcher, National Research and Evaluation Committee Major Project: The delivery of vocational education & training in adult community education providers.

• Lead Researcher, National Research and Evaluation Committee Minor Consolidation Project: Vocational education and training for people from a non-English speaking background.

• Visiting Research Fellow, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne (1996-1998), A longitudinal study of the experiences of identified client groups over the course of their vocational education and training courses in Australia, funded by the Australian National Training Authority

1997

• Project Director – SMEC: AusAID Australia-South Africa Distance Education Project, Post-Graduate Diploma Program (January 1997– March 1998: 15 months of program management; 8 weeks teaching in Australia; 3 weeks teaching in SA; 11 months by distance education). Graduate Diploma in Industrial Education and Training program was customised and delivered in Australia and South Africa to 12 South African distance educators. Responsibilities included: project direction, design, consultations, delivery, evaluation and reporting.


1995-96

• Co-researcher - Open Training Services: Workplace Mentor Research and Development Project. Commissioned by Open Training Services (OTS), Victoria, this research and development project examined and supported the use of mentoring as a professional development strategy to enhance work based learning outcomes for both individuals and organisations engaged in vocational education and training.

1994-95

• Project Manager - OTS: Staff Development for Workplace Training Project Commissioned by OTS, the overall project comprised five project briefs to develop and pilot four flexible training modules covering key competencies in the design, development and delivery of flexible workplace training.
RESEARCH AND CONSULTANCY CLIENTS

National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
Department of Education and Training, Victoria
Office of Post-Compulsory Education and Training (OPCET) Tasmania
Office of Training and Tertiary Education (OTTE) Victoria
Adult Community and Further Education Board (ACFEB) Victoria
Australian National Training Authority (ANTA)
AusAID
UNESCO – UNEVOC
Jiangsu Province Department of Education
China Education Association for International Exchange (CEAIE)
MARA Board, Malaysia Government, Malaysia
PATTAF (PNG)
GRM
SMEC
ACIL
Hassall and Associates
RMIT International
RESEARCH REPORTS, BOOK CHAPTERS and JOURNAL ARTICLES


Learner Experiences by Target Group, pp. 190-455) Report of a major longitudinal study of student experiences over the course of their training in Australia, Centre for the Study of Higher Education, University of Melbourne and Brisbane: Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).


Volkoff, V. & Golding, B. (1997). Is access working? An exploration of outcomes for unemployed VET participants. In Good Thinking, Good Practice: Research perspectives on learning and work, Volume 1 (pp. 131-142), Centre for Learning and Work Research, Griffith University, December, Brisbane.


Volkoff, V. (1997). Worklink: Technology assisted mentoring. In Strategic Innovations in Teaching with Technology at RMIT (pp. 6-8), RMIT Division of Academic Services.


CONFERENCES PAPERS and SEMINARS


and Torres Strait Islander Peoples’ Training Advisory Council National Networking Group, 26 August, Canberra.


Volkoff, V. (1994). Developing Field Experience Partnerships with Industry, for Faculty of Education and Training, Southern Cross University, Lismore, April, and Faculty of Education, Griffith University, Gold Coast, April.


**TELEVISION, RADIO and VIDEO PRODUCTION**

*Coordinator Research and Development*. (1989-91) *Lift Off*, early childhood television series of 26 hours for the *Australian Children’s Television Foundation*. Broadcast on ABC TV in Australia, and around the world in English, French and Spanish. Winner of Australian Film Institute Award, United Nations Association of Australia Media Peace Awards, Australian Teachers of Media Awards (ATOM), Japan Prize, New York Festival Award, Cairo International Film Festival for Children Award.


*Researcher, Thin Man*, Penguin Award Winning video program, for AFTRS (1979)

*Producer/Director, Offspring*, a range of short educational video programs for clients including NSW State Development Committee and Schools Commission CARE. Project (1982-84)

*Producer/Director, NEXUS: Creating Connections with Industry* (1991) RMIT

*Producer/Director, NEXUS: Creating Industry-Curriculum Connections* (1992) RMIT.
Appendix 5. Publications Documentation