



report on a **strategic evaluation**
of reframing the future





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Dilemmas: The Theory

The basis for the “dilemmas” approach comes from a combination of four theories:

- The structural model of Charles Hampton-Turner (UK), which he describes as the “horns of a dilemma”
- The cultural dilemmas framework of Fons Trompenaars (Holland)
- The tyranny of the “OR” and the genius of the “AND” of Collins and Porras (Co-authors of *Built to Last*, USA)
- The anthropological behavioural framework of Jerry Glover and Dench McClean Carlson (Australia).

Where there are opposing views or forces, there are three main strategies for dealing with them as shown on the figure following.

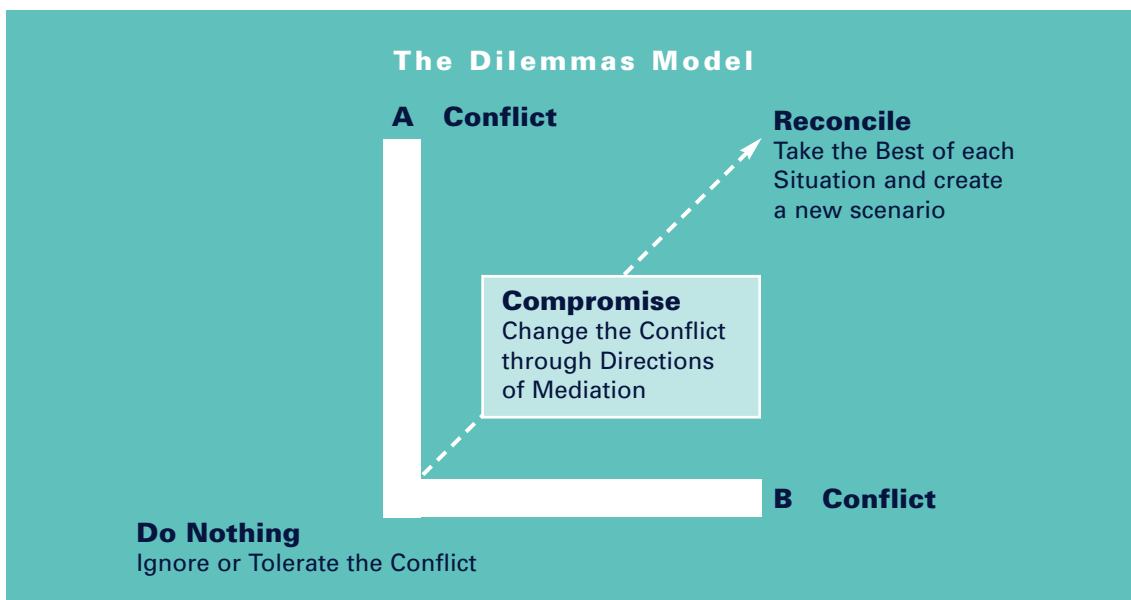


Figure: The Dilemmas Model

The “Do Nothing” strategy can reflect a passive stance (apathy) or a deliberate strategy (the conflict is currently inconsequential, and therefore can be ignored without significant risk or penalty).

The “Compromise” strategy involves a negotiated settlement or solution, but still involves “win/lose” outcomes. While mediation can satisfactorily resolve many of the elements of the conflict, it is generally the case that neither party (or “camp”) is really satisfied, as important issues have had to be “traded off” in order to get a resolution (e.g. property settlements after divorce).

Collins and Porras in *Built to Last* discuss the tyranny of the “Or” and the genius of the “And”, which begins to move towards possible strategies to seek solutions to these conflicting or competing issues.

The “Tyranny of the OR”	The “Genius of the AND”
OR views do not accept paradox A or B, but not both Seemingly opposing values or positions Horns of a dilemma	Yin/Yang dualistic philosophy Ability to embrace both extremes A and B at the same time Not a combination A reconciled, new cultural design

Figure: ‘OR’ and ‘AND’ Strategies

The strategy presented is to consider the strengths and attributes of each position, and to explore how they might be combined to produce a new approach that will offer ongoing benefits and improvements.

Of course dilemmas vary in their current and future importance.

What we have done is flagged some potential problems as identified through our research in the creation of world best practice in vocational training delivery.

We present this as a different way of thinking about maximising the performance of the national training system.

The VET system is good, and RTF has been a significant and positive contributing element.

Current and Future Dilemmas

Existing and potential dilemmas identified by DMC as facing the national training system and RTF follow, and are briefly explained.

The High Priority Dilemmas

We have first described those matters viewed by the consulting team as those that are the most important and /or the most urgent dilemmas. They have been assessed as to the probability of them being a problem and the impact if they do: the ratings are shown after each brief description.

Full-Time Staff



From a history of mainly full-time staff, there is a growing trend to casualisation of the VET workforce.

The polarisation of the workforce into full-time and casual workers has the potential to threaten the quality of service and the well-being of employees in both groups.

Probability High, Impact High. RTF projects need to recognise the need for future flexibility in workforce practices.

Fixed Inputs and Outputs



Traditional learning has been classroom-based with fixed timetables and fixed teaching approaches, whereas industry has different needs requiring more flexible responses.

This goes hand in glove with the previous dilemma, and presents VET managers and teachers with an interesting challenge. The critical question for a TAFE Institute is “Can I enrol and commence this course now?” If there is not a positive answer, the institution is not flexible enough to meet the needs of industry and should consider how it do become so.

Probability High, Impact High. This is a major strategic challenge for VET. Better alignment between Learnscope and RTF would assist the sector to deal with this issue.

Teaching



Teaching is primarily process and Learning is outcome.

When many older teachers were trained, students attended lectures, listened to experts and repeated what they had picked up for the purpose of passing exams. Some teachers have retained this style, which has little regard for the individual differences of students, their different learning abilities, or the value in students analysing and thinking to for themselves. Modern thinking is that people have differing and multiple intelligences, different interests and different learning preferences. The desired outcome is sustainable workplace capability for each individual.

Probability Moderate (lessening over time), Impact High. Teacher accountability has been a sensitive area, but projects that encourage sharing of good practice and the continuous improvement of teaching and learning standards nationally should be supported.

Commonwealth Priorities



State & Territory Priorities

State and Territory Governments are responsible for education matters in their constituencies, and the risk is that they have different priorities from the Commonwealth and from each other.

DMC was concerned to know whether this issue might have been presenting problems for RTF implementations. The feedback from State and Territory RTF representatives was generally very positive, and provided evidence that RTF has presented positive outcomes, especially in relation to staff development and communities of practice.

Nevertheless, there are the some issues concerning the alignment of priorities, the allocation of funds and management and control. This environment will become even more demanding in future, and it is critical that any differences of opinion be discussed and resolved, and developments monitored. RTF needs to meet national AND State and Territory requirements

Probability Low, Potential Impact High. One State indicated that alignment with its priorities has been co-incidental, but all other States and Territories expressed satisfaction with this issue.

Public Providers



Private Providers

The VET system was originally built around TAFE Institutes.

It was seen in earlier national statistics that TAFE has dominated RTF approvals (61%), but the spending on TAFE projects has, in fact, been low compared with students engaged and student contact hours. Private providers are often more flexible and responsive than TAFE Institutes can be because of their sheer size, and the evaluation found that they are achieving outcomes required by industry because of this flexibility. Private providers have emerged as new innovative businesses and should be encouraged to take risks and seek improvements.

Probability Medium, Impact Medium. RTF has to achieve a balance across States and Territories, across industry sectors and across the types of project funded. This is a difficult task, particularly in light of the large unmet demand in 2004 (see Figure 8 in the summary report).

Short-Term Issues



Traditionally VET has been largely tactical, with a short-term focus.

RTF staff have only been funded on an annual basis, and this inhibits them from dealing effectively with longer term issues. An uncertain future provides little guarantee that initiatives will survive and be sustained. Some OD projects and the development of Communities of Practice are good examples of the need to commit to change processes that will extend beyond 12 months. If providers need encouragement to strengthen their commitment to change, RTF staff are unable to provide any certainty about future support.

Probability Medium, Impact High. If the current situation is not changed by DEST when it assumes responsibility for RTF from ANTA, there will be significant opportunities lost.

Process



Educationalists have often been concerned about the process of teaching whereas business managers are concerned about the outcome of workplace performance.

More significant early in the program, RTF staff, ANTA and participating organisations are now very aware of the need to measure the results of activity rather than just the activity. As reported elsewhere, this RTF evaluation has shown that participants have applied funds to genuinely needed SD and OD initiatives and have not just sought to attract funding (although this is partly due to RTF staff having screened applications well).

Probability Low, Impact High. The emphasis by some key stakeholders on the basic or core activities of RTF is to be commended. In complexity direction can be diverted, and it is important to maintain the focus on the fundamental purposes of RTF.

Qualifications



There is a challenge to tailor National Training Packages to specific industry needs.

Providers need to adapt the training packages to align with special needs of end users. The focus has been on VET providers rather than industry clients (which has been appropriate), but there is evidence that end user needs will be an increasing focus in future. Some trainees have seen the qualification as the end in itself, rather than the competency attainment it represents.

Probability Medium, Impact Medium. There have been some good examples of teachers becoming more familiar with the workplaces of industry employers and being able to tailor their work accordingly.

Less critical dilemmas were identified as being:

Theoretical



Obviously there is a need to develop theoretically rigorous but practical RTF projects.

Government Driven



There has been some criticism of approaches being too much driven by government and not sufficiently reflective of industry needs.

Performance Measurement



Teachers are not used to accountability and measurement. Introducing appraisal processes with an emphasis on individual staff development benefits can be a good solution.

Certainty



Sticking to the knitting and sticking you neck out are opposing approaches, but aspects of both are needed for retaining the benefits of experience AND continuing to make progress. It is a matter balancing risk and return.

System Needs



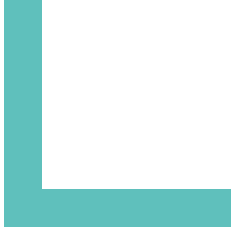
ANTA has (and DEST will have) objectives that will not always parallel those of people in the VET system. Annual reviews of RTF and ongoing dialogue with key stakeholders are needed to assess the value and impact of the program.

Tight Central Control



The system has been "in control" and has determined priorities through funding. In future it is likely that control will be vested in recipients to determine how best to spend funds allocations and how best to measure outcomes.

VET Sector Personnel



Industry Personnel

There is a growing potential pull from people in industry to compete for funds and projects in the industrial workplace, and we see some aspects of this as being a favourable development. Joint projects could be an excellent form of practical cooperation in future.

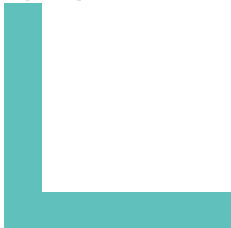
Staff Development



Organisational Development

FTF funding was focussed on SD and RTF has spent more on OD, which is an essential context for SD. Project applications from both perspectives will compete for funds in future, and it is important to support both types of project. There is an argument that government should seed-fund newer initiatives and expect the RTOs themselves to fund initiatives emanating from them.

Industry Experience



Traditional Educational Standards

This dilemma is about decisions based on traditional criteria rather than pragmatic developments at the user end. Again a balanced outcome is needed, and it would be problematic to ignore industry developments / emerging needs and the benefits of the vocational educational standards developed in Australia.

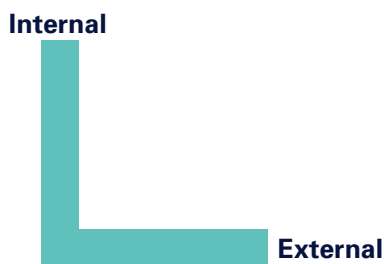


This reflects some of the sentiments expressed in other dilemmas, but highlights the need to use experience of government, the funding body and the end users who are dealing with a rapidly changing environment and the demands emerging from it.

ANTA Priorities



The abolition of ANTA is a major move by the Government, and might reflect criticism from industry that ANTA has not been adequately responsive to their needs. It is important that DEST, which will have an agenda influenced by the political climate, does not lose the excellent work done by ANTA as it assumes responsibility for the VET sector.



Traditionally most RTOs have been weak in understanding their environment and the changes taking place in it. That has changed, but anecdotally, private RTOs seem much more aware and responsive to external issues and are adapting their offers to meet client needs rather than having a “come and get it” mindset.

These dilemmas represent issues competing for management and staff attention, funding and other resources and policy support and can be useful inputs to strategic thinking and future planning for RTF and the national training system.

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