



Cross-cultural training and workplace performance

Robert Bean
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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the author/project team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government, state and territory governments or NCVER

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About the research



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The 2006 census found that around 30% of people residing in Australia were born overseas, a trend unlikely to be reversed in the short-term, given the Australian Government's recent decision to significantly boost the places in the permanent skilled migration program to help employers redress their skill shortages. In light of this, employers are likely to increasingly favour employees who can work and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds.

This study by Robert Bean investigated the contribution to workplace performance of cross-cultural training, a term used to describe training that develops a person's ability to interact effectively with individuals from different cultures and in different cultural settings. The study is based on a survey of 134 vocational education and training (VET) graduates. The practices and views of 38 training providers and 31 employers on the current and future provision of cross-cultural training are also described.

The report highlights the positive experiences of VET graduates with cross-cultural training, as well as employers' support for it. It lists the challenges for cross-cultural training as perceived by trainers, a specific challenge being to ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate cross-cultural training embedded in training packages, particularly those covering sales and service industries, industries with high customer contact.

Key messages

- The increasing cultural diversity of the Australian population and workforce means that the ability to work across cultures is becoming a necessity for many workers.
- While employers acknowledge the benefits of having a culturally competent workforce, they do not yet see cross-cultural competencies as part of a generic skill set. Moreover, the current level of cross-cultural training provision in vocational education and training courses appears to be quite low.
- Acquiring cultural competence is a lifelong process that can be assisted by the formalisation of guidelines and criteria for the provision of cross-cultural training and the establishment of uniform benchmarks for learner outcomes.

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Managing Director, NCVER

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Executive summary

This study investigated the contribution made by cross-cultural training to the workplace performance of vocational education and training (VET) graduates and examined current practice in its delivery in VET. The study also sought the views of employers on cultural competence and the role of cross-cultural training.

Research background and rationale

The role of education systems in contributing to social cohesion has been recognised nationally and internationally in recent years (McGaw 2006), as has the importance of social capital to human capital (Putnam 2000). In multicultural societies in particular, social capital is underpinned by cultural competence, broadly defined as the ability to work effectively in situations characterised by cultural diversity. A review of the Australian and international literature for this study highlighted a broad recognition of the importance of cross-cultural training in the development of cultural competence and social capital.

A recent national study of cross-cultural training in the Australian public sector completed by the author found the training to be effective in improving workplace performance and in contributing to multicultural policy objectives (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006). In that study, as in this, the majority of employers surveyed predicted increased demand for cultural competence and cross-cultural training over the next five years in response to the expanding cultural diversity of employees and customers. Increasing globalisation of business practices was also predicted to affect demand for cultural competence and cross-cultural training. Most employers surveyed included cultural competence in career development strategies and planned to conduct cross-cultural training programs. Cultural competence was also included in recruitment and performance appraisal processes.

As the need for cultural competence becomes more widely recognised, employers in many industries will increasingly look for cultural competence among new recruits and for ways to develop it among existing staff. In anticipation of these trends and demands, this report set out to identify what the VET sector needs to do to better understand the nature, scope and effectiveness of its current and potential capacity to provide cross-cultural training. Decisions to include cross-cultural training in VET qualifications require evidence that it contributes to the performance of learners in their workplaces and careers. A literature review, wide-ranging consultations with key stakeholders and online surveys of VET graduates, educators and employers were conducted to address four research questions:

- ✧ How has cross-cultural training undertaken by VET students contributed to their performance in the workplace and benefited their employers?
- ✧ What is the current extent and range of practices for teaching VET students cultural understanding and developing their cultural competence for employment?
- ✧ What approaches and models of cross-cultural training provision are most effective in particular occupational and industry domains and settings?
- ✧ What strategies and processes will best enable VET providers to develop and offer vocational training leading to cultural competence?

An online survey of VET graduates who had completed cross-cultural training as part of their qualification in the last five years generated 134 responses. The graduates had received an average of 31 hours of training in cross-cultural communication and working with cultural diversity. About 80% were employees in government agencies or private enterprises, the rest working for community and voluntary organisations. The cross-cultural training undertaken focused on general awareness, specific cultures and working with or managing diversity within 12 national training packages.

Sixty-one managers and teachers from 38 training providers who were identified as providing cross-cultural training within the relevant training packages responded to an online survey. Cross-cultural training was also provided as part of English language training, staff induction, professional development, Aboriginal cultural awareness and community programs. The most common objectives of cross-cultural training were to improve: customer service; workplace communication; community relationships; and compliance with equity policies and laws.

A telephone survey was conducted with executives and middle managers from 34 medium-to-large organisations (18 private, 16 public sector), representing a wide range of industries, and four industry skills councils, covering the relevant national training packages.

Contribution of cross-cultural training to VET graduates' workplace performance

Almost 60% of graduates who responded rated their overall satisfaction with their cross-cultural training as above average or excellent. Around 70% stated that the training had greatly or very greatly improved their: understanding of cultural diversity issues; cultural self-awareness; knowledge of cross-cultural communication skills; understanding of other cultures; and confidence in dealing with people from different cultures. Over 80% of graduates rated highly the importance of cultural competence for working with culturally diverse co-workers, clients and customers. These findings were supported by the graduates' qualitative responses, which commonly reported increased awareness, acceptance, recognition, understanding and greater patience and empathy.

These positive messages are reinforced by the findings that over 60% of graduates would like further cross-cultural training, 85% would recommend cross-cultural training to others, and 89% believe cross-cultural training should be mandatory for all employees in customer contact positions.

The findings from the graduate survey are similar to those reported in the survey for the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (2006) report. Together, the two studies confirm the effectiveness and contribution of cross-cultural training, while identifying areas for improvement in the design, duration and approaches of cross-cultural training, organisational support and follow-up, and the professional development of cross-cultural training facilitators.

Current practice in cross-cultural training in VET

The VET providers' ratings of perceived student satisfaction with their cross-cultural training and their improvements in workplace performance were very similar to those given by the graduates themselves. Providers' ratings of the degrees of importance placed on cultural competence also closely matched the ratings given by graduates and employers. This general congruence of ratings across the three groups lends validity to the results, as does their close similarity to the findings of the public sector study (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006).

Over 90% of VET providers who responded expected increased demand over the next five years from employers for VET graduates to be culturally competent, particularly in the areas of community, health, business, government, hospitality, tourism and training. However, the current scope of cross-cultural training provision appears limited. Fewer than 23% of the training providers identified as providing qualifications that include diversity units responded, with several declining to

participate because they did not provide cross-cultural training as such or had not done so in the study period of the previous five years.

While over two-thirds of the 31 responding VET cross-cultural trainers had more than six years cross-cultural training experience, 75% had not received any formal training in this area. Eight in ten indicated they would like professional development and about half recommended the development of training resources reflecting the Australian context. They also identified areas for further research and the need for more consistency in policy and provision of cross-cultural training in the VET system. Their responses closely matched those of trainers in the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (2006) study.

Cross-cultural training effectiveness

The study identified numerous models and learning pathways for cross-cultural training, most of which recognise that acquiring cultural competence is a lifelong process. While there are guidelines and criteria for training and trainer effectiveness, the cross-cultural training field is diverse and complex and, furthermore, contains no universal benchmarks for quality or outcomes of training.

The most common and most highly rated types of cross-cultural training undertaken by the responding graduates were general cultural awareness, working with or managing cultural diversity and culture-specific training. The most highly rated training approaches balanced lecturing and interactive exercises or combined lecturing and fieldwork. The knowledge and skills of the trainers was also rated as one of the best aspects of cross-cultural training.

Satisfaction ratings by graduates for elective cross-cultural training units were 12% higher than for core units. While three-quarters of responding graduates said the duration of cross-cultural training was appropriate, half suggested that increased time would improve the training. They also recommended increased interaction and content.

Strategies for developing cultural competence through VET

Given the positive views on the value of cultural competence among graduates and employers and the significant performance benefits reported, the VET sector should give serious consideration to expanding the current cross-cultural training provision. The policy, curriculum and quality frameworks are already in place. Support for the engagement and professional development of cross-cultural training facilitators would help to ensure capacity and capability to meet the anticipated growth in demand. A study of the quality and availability of existing training resources would assist in identifying areas for new resource development.

VET organisations need to be encouraged to formally review their current practices in the provision of cross-cultural training, in terms of student and industry needs. Using these research findings as a basis for benchmarking, longitudinal evaluations of the vocational contribution of cross-cultural training should be encouraged. The design and delivery of cross-cultural training should also include strategies to increase the teaching and learning focus on the deeper cognitive and attitudinal objectives of cross-cultural training and to ensure support for participants to continue their learning and apply it in their workplaces and communities.

Conclusion

The findings of this study provide further evidence of the importance of cultural competence for individual and organisational effectiveness and for the creation and maintenance of social capital in Australia's multicultural society. The findings also demonstrate the effectiveness of cross-cultural training and its important role in developing cultural competence. The Australian VET sector, in consultation with industry, has a significant role to play in the further development and sustainability of the nation's social capital.

Background and introduction

Cross-cultural training in Australia

In 2003 the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) nominated the need for work on the capacity of education systems to contribute to social cohesion as a major policy issue (McGaw 2006). The Australian vocational education and training (VET) system confirmed its role in fostering equity and diversity in its national strategy for VET 2004–2010 (ANTA 2004).

Underlying social cohesion and equity and diversity is the ‘social capital’ of societies.

Whereas physical capital refers to physical objects and human capital refers to the properties of individuals, social capital refers to connections among individuals—social networks and the norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them. (Putnam 2000, p.19)

Social capital is seen to take two forms. Bonding social capital is established among relatively homogeneous groups. Bridging social capital is established between heterogeneous groups, including ethnic groups (Putnam 2000) and is of particular significance to social cohesion in a multicultural society and its workplaces. A recent study of the social costs and benefits of migration observed that, while there is greater acceptance of the benefits of migration and cultural diversity, ‘at the heart of any consideration of social capital is the question of how well Australia is currently accommodating ethnic groups and categories of visa entrants’ (Carrington, McIntosh & Walmsley 2007, p.55).

VET graduates work in many occupations and environments where the cultural diversity of co-workers and customers directly influences their performance. Employers increasingly emphasise the importance of communication and behavioural skills as critical to employability (Department of Education, Science and Training 2002) and consequently provide cross-cultural training for employees (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006). There is increased awareness of and interest in the concept of cultural competence, particularly in human service industries, such as health and community care (Johnstone & Kanitsaki 2005).

A national longitudinal study produced statistically significant evidence that cross-cultural training is of direct benefit to individual employees and organisations across the public sector and in community organisations (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006). Almost 90% of employees who had undertaken cross-cultural training recommended that it should be compulsory for staff in customer service positions. Nearly 70% believed it should be compulsory for all staff. The study also found high levels of support for cross-cultural training, with 74% of organisations surveyed predicting increased or greatly increased demand for cross-cultural training over the next five years.

These developments and findings confirm the positive impact of cross-cultural training on job performance and its value to employees. As the need for cultural competence becomes more widely recognised as a contributing factor to social and human capital, employers in many industries can be expected to look increasingly for cultural competence among new recruits and for ways for developing it among existing staff.

Definitions

While the cross-cultural training field is diverse and complex, there is general agreement on the following broad definitions of culture and cultural competence.

The term ‘culture’ is used in this report in the anthropological sense and refers to the total learned and transmitted cultural domain of a social group, including social differences stemming from nationality, ethnicity, race, religion, arts, language, gender and generational differences, histories and socioeconomic status.

The term ‘cultural competence’ (also known as cross-cultural or intercultural competence or competency) has come into increased use in recent years, particularly in the health industry, where it has been defined as:

A set of congruent behaviours, attitudes and policies that come together in a system, agency, or amongst professionals and enables that system, agency or those professionals to work effectively in cross-cultural situations ... A culturally competent system of care acknowledges and incorporates—at all levels—the importance of culture, the assessment of cross-cultural relations, vigilance towards the dynamics that result from cultural differences, the expansion of cultural knowledge, and the adaptation of services to meet culturally-unique needs.

(Cross et al. 1989, pp.iv–v)

In this report, the term ‘cultural competence’ refers to the awareness, knowledge, skills, practices and processes needed by individuals, professions, organisations and systems to function effectively and appropriately in situations characterised by cultural diversity in general and, in particular, in interactions with people from different cultures.

The term ‘cross-cultural training’ refers to all modes of training and education aimed at developing cultural competence. It includes workshops, seminars, training courses, coaching, mentoring and formal qualifications. While the terms ‘cross-cultural’ and ‘intercultural’ are either used interchangeably or seen to carry different connotations, this report uses the term ‘cross-cultural’ and does not make a distinction between the terms.

Cultural competence and cross-cultural training and the VET system

In the past two decades, the concepts and practices of diversity management, cultural competence and cross-cultural training have been increasingly considered within the broader context of Australian social and economic trends, with a particular focus on social inclusion and cohesion and organisational development. This mirrors trends in the United Kingdom, the United States and the European Union (Bikson & Law 1995; Chief Executive 2003; Hassid 2002; Valjus 2002; Weber 2006). As discussed above, there is also increasing demand for cross-cultural training and recognition of the roles that education systems play in developing both social capital and human capital (McGaw 2006).

While cross-cultural training has traditionally been perceived as a separate and specialised area of development, in the context of social cohesion it needs to be seen as an important element in the development of cultural competence as a generic capability.

In recognition of these drivers and trends and in response to industry advice, the Australian VET sector has developed 12 national training packages that incorporate units of competency in working with and managing diversity, some of which have been imported into other training packages (National Training Information Service 2007; Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005; Manidis 2005). All of these units can be delivered with varying degrees of focus on cultural diversity and cross-cultural communication. However, this study found that, for

many employers and educators, the position of cross-cultural training in training and development frameworks and strategies was generally not clear and that cultural competence was not yet considered a generic skill in most industries. While the concept of ‘cultural competence’ is recognised in several service industries, many of the VET and employer representatives consulted for this study had not previously heard of it, although they agreed that it was a useful concept and that cultural awareness and cross-cultural communication skills could be seen as competencies.

Units of competency addressing cultural diversity are not commonly included as core units. VET trainers consulted for this and the public sector study (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006) often expressed reluctance to go beyond general references to diversity matters within their training programs, a situation usually attributable to a lack of expertise, resources and the confidence to deal with the complex issues raised by diversity.

Cultural competence as such does not feature strongly in the VET literature, which is concerned mainly with equity and diversity in the broader sense. The national VET strategy 1998–2003 emphasised student equity, declaring that VET ‘is viewed as a means through which to overcome social inequality and achieve an informed and just society (ANTA 1998, p.2). During development of the 2004–10 national VET strategy, support was evinced for a model that would also address the business case for managing equity and diversity and enable VET providers ‘to model good practice in equity and diversity management and to prepare students with the knowledge and behavioural skills to operate effectively, ethically and equitably in diverse workplaces, communities and markets’ (Bean 2004, p.285).

The current National Strategy for VET 2004–2010 recommended that:

The learning needs of people who face barriers due to age, gender, cultural difference, language, literacy, numeracy, cost, unemployment, imprisonment or isolation are addressed through an integrated diversity management approach. (ANTA 2004, p.3)

In support of this approach, several studies and resource development projects focused on the equity strategies of training providers (McIntyre 2004 et al.; Miralles 2004; Robertson & Schlanders 2004). A guide to cultural diversity management resources for VET sector educators and managers (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005) described learning pathways, beginning with cultural awareness at the lower certificate levels, to the leadership and management of culturally inclusive organisational strategies at diploma levels.

Effectiveness of cross-cultural training

Cross-cultural training aims to enable participants to develop the awareness, knowledge and skills required to be culturally competent in cross-cultural situations (Pusch 1981). As with any form of training, cross-cultural training, to be effective, must meet its intended objectives, include some measure of this attainment, actively involve the adult learner and be based on a model or theory of culture that is linked to the objectives. The critical factors in meeting these requirements are effective trainers, good design and suitable resources.

The literature has discussed the attributes of effective cross-cultural training in some detail (Landis, Bennett & Bennett 2004; Paige 1993; Porter & Samovar 1991). There is general agreement that cross-cultural training has a deeper educative role because of the pervasiveness of culture in all human interaction and that ‘intercultural trainers are concerned with human relations ... and making learners aware of the impact of culture on their lives’ (Paige 1993, p.149). Paige has also referred to the ‘transformative nature’ of good cross-cultural training. Indeed, many practitioners refuse to define what they do as ‘training’, as they see the development of cultural understanding and cultural competence as a lifelong process and their roles as far more complex than those of knowledge transfer or skill development.

Cross-cultural trainers face unique challenges in acquiring the relevant competencies. While all trainers need to be sensitive to the needs of learners, cross-cultural trainers must be able to deal with the intensity of emotions that cultural differences can arouse in participants, including frustration, defensiveness or anger. Participants are typically faced with information and situations that may challenge their sense of cultural identity and personal beliefs. The trainer must help participants to understand and recognise other ways of seeing—without sacrificing their own integrity—and assist them to function effectively in situations demanding accommodation of two or more cultural frames of reference.

The design of cross-cultural training programs begins with the recognition of adult learning principles, particularly those relating to participants understanding the reasons for learning, participants being involved in their own learning and their being protected from surprises, embarrassment or confusion. Some of the basic criteria for effective cross-cultural training program design are that it should be of adequate duration to meet its objectives, be provided in a timely manner relative to the participants' needs and tailored to the participants (Graf 2004), principles shared across all training domains.

Although no single study has been able to determine which method of cross-cultural training is most effective or which methods are most effective for particular situations, the literature uniformly points to the superiority of the experiential and interactive approach over the didactic approach (Bennett 1986; Bhawuk & Brislin 2000; Black & Mendenhall 1990; Kohls & Brussow 1994; Paige 1993).

Reflecting the emphasis on interactivity and experience, two recent studies (Berardo & Simons 2004; Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006) found that the main tools used by cross-cultural trainers are: models for understanding culture; case studies; exercises; simulations; role plays; games; and intensive group activities. Both studies reported strong demand for the development of new resources, particularly in relation to conflict resolution, working in multicultural settings, establishing the business case for cultural competence and examining the role of culture in power, privilege and politics.

All of the above studies conclude that the cross-cultural training facilitator's skills and methods of presentation are more important than the quality or extent of the training resources.

... the message can precipitate some changes in cultural diversity sensitivity, but the methodology used to reduce resistance and nurture and reinforce the message has a greater influence. (Brown 2004, p.325)

Several studies have found positive correlations between cross-cultural training and: improvement in participants' interpersonal relationships; changes in their perception of their own and other cultures; a reduction in their experience of culture shock or intercultural conflict; increased capacity to recognise and negotiate any differences arising from cultural background so as to achieve a positive outcome; and improvement in their performance on the job (Black & Mendenhall 1990; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003; Bawhuk & Brislin 2000; Martin & Nakayama 2004).

Any comprehensive evaluation of the effectiveness of cross-cultural training must also take into account the subjective nature of cross-cultural experiences and the psychological effects of experiential training. It is far easier to measure outputs such as types and levels of activity than it is to assess levels of awareness and acceptance, perceived relevance to duties, transference of skills and knowledge to the workplace, and the influence of cross-cultural training on team and organisational cultures.

As the literature attests, because of the ever-changing nature of cultures and the unpredictability of individuals, the acquisition of cultural competence is a lifelong learning process, at no point in which can the learner confidently state that they are fully competent. Furthermore, while cross-cultural training has the potential to transform participants' views of their own and other cultures, its influences may not be immediately perceptible, particularly during or immediately after the training program.

A review of several studies indicates that cross-cultural training seems to be effective in enhancing knowledge and satisfaction, but is much less effective in changing behaviour and attitudes, although it is acknowledged that measuring such changes is difficult (Kohls & Brassow 1994). The Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study (2006) involved 195 training providers and employers and conducted pre-training and immediate post-training evaluation surveys of 515 public sector employees who had undertaken cross-cultural training. Of these employees, 145 responded to a second survey five to ten months after completing cross-cultural training. A comparison of immediate post-training and the subsequent evaluations found that the cross-cultural training had produced statistically significant differences in three areas:

- ✧ understanding of organisational cultural diversity policies and issues (12.3% increase)
- ✧ knowledge of cross-cultural communication skills (17.1% increase)
- ✧ knowledge and understanding of the customs, values and beliefs of diverse cultures (16.7% increase).

Later in this report comparisons are made between the findings from the current study and the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study, both being national in scope and both focused on the VET sector and the contribution of cross-cultural training to job performance. Previous national and international studies of cross-cultural training were predominantly limited to specific occupational fields or focused on specific areas such as Indigenous cultural issues or health services and were generally small in scale. Quantitative studies have proved inconclusive, leading to a stronger emphasis on qualitative data and a study of participants at various points in their development of cultural competence (Black & Mendenhall 1990; Bawhuk & Brislin 2000; Hammer, Bennett & Wiseman 2003; Martin & Nakayama 2004).

Research objectives and methodology

The literature review and consultations identified a number of research challenges to be taken into account in the design and analysis processes. There is considerable diversity in cross-cultural training design, delivery, approaches, trainer qualities and evaluation methodology. Participants and trainers also bring a great diversity of beliefs, perceptions, needs, purposes and expectations to cross-cultural training, which will influence their experiences and evaluations of the training. The degree to which participants are able to apply their learning to job performance is conditional on their personal motivations and the level of organisational support for the development and application of cultural competence. Because informal workplace learning has been shown to be an important element of skill development (Figgis et al. 2006), it is difficult to assess its contribution and that of other non-training experiences to an individual's cultural competence.

The main objective of the study was to determine the contribution of cross-cultural training undertaken by VET students to their subsequent workplace performance. The study also aimed to review the current practice, status and scope of cross-cultural training provided by VET organisations, with a focus on programs within the 12 national training packages that include units of competency in diversity.¹

Consultations and surveys were designed to address four research questions.

- ✧ How has cross-cultural training undertaken by VET students contributed to their performance in the workplace and benefited their employers?
- ✧ What is the current extent and range of practices for teaching VET students cultural understanding and developing their cultural competence for employment?

¹ The 12 training packages are: Business Services, Community Recreation, Community Services, Conservation, Correctional Services, Entertainment, Health, Hospitality, Tourism, Public Safety, Public Services and Training and Assessment.

- ✧ What approaches and models of cross-cultural training provision are most effective in particular occupational and industry domains and settings?
- ✧ What strategies and processes will best enable VET providers to develop and offer vocational training leading to cultural competence?

The project comprised three stages of research, beginning with a literature review of cultural awareness and cultural diversity training in the Australian VET sector for the period 2001–06, discussed above.

The second stage involved consultations with key VET sector stakeholders in multicultural education, curriculum and program delivery about current practice and issues in cross-cultural training. This was followed by an online survey to examine current practice in cross-cultural training delivery and to profile individual cross-cultural training trainers working within the VET system. Invitations to participate in the survey were sent to 166 registered training organisations listed by the National Training Information Service as delivering qualifications that include units of competency in diversity in the 12 national training packages of interest to this study. Sixty-one responses, around 23% of the survey sample, were received from managers, teachers, coordinators and project officers employed by 38 large and small public and private sector training organisations. Many of the invited organisations did not respond and several declined to participate in the survey as they had not conducted any cross-cultural training in the previous five years.

While the sample was representative of those training organisations that provide cross-cultural training in units of competency, it is not representative of the VET system as a whole. However, the use of an online survey creates a voluntary response bias in the sample.

The third stage involved an online survey of VET graduates who had completed cross-cultural training as part of their qualifications. Graduates were contacted with the assistance of several registered training organisations. Through this approach, 255 graduates indicated a willingness to participate, with 134 completed surveys received.² The survey focused on the graduates' experiences and their evaluations of cross-cultural training received in their VET studies, the contribution of cross-cultural training to their workplace performance and their recommendations for future cross-cultural training provision. The survey also elicited information regarding other, non-training and education ways in which respondents may have developed cultural competence.

A national survey of 34 senior and middle managers from medium-to-large organisations (18 private and 16 public sector) was conducted mainly by telephone interview. The objectives of the survey were to assess the importance of cultural competence to employers, their current practices in developing cultural competence and their view of future demand for employee cultural competence. The sample represented ten of the 17 Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification (ANZSIC)³ categories and included the four industry skills councils covering the main national training packages that include units of competency in diversity.

All of the surveys replicated some of the key questions of the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study (2006), enabling some direct comparisons of the findings. The current study differed from the 2006 study in that it covered all forms of cross-cultural training provided through VET, including Aboriginal cultural awareness training, and surveyed VET graduates across public and private sector workplaces, with the graduates in this study receiving an average of 31 hours cross-cultural training, compared with six hours for the 2006 study respondents.

Copies of the surveys and tests of statistical significance can be found in the support document.

² An incentive for participation was offered. This took the form of a draw to win one of 10 \$50 retail chain gift vouchers.

³ The industries represented in the survey of employers were agriculture, mining, manufacturing, electricity, water, wholesale trade, transport, communication services, finance, government, and health and community services.

Contribution of cross-cultural training to workplace performance of VET graduates

Profile of survey respondents

The 134 respondents were predominantly female, with an average age of 38 years. Two-thirds were born in Australia, with 84% speaking English as their first language.

Just over half of the respondents were employed by governments and one-third by private enterprises. The others were employed by community organisations or were volunteers or students. Three-quarters were staff-level employees and one-quarter were middle or senior managers. Nearly all respondents worked with customers or clients from culturally diverse backgrounds and most worked with culturally diverse co-workers. (See appendix C for details.)

Sample bias arises from under-coverage of some areas, in that responses were sought primarily from graduates with qualifications that included cross-cultural training. Further, there may also be a non-response bias, as only 134 of the 255 graduates who indicated a willingness to participate actually did.

Cross-cultural training experience

Three-quarters of respondents had completed their training within the last two years, with only 10% having completed it five or more years ago.

Three-quarters of the cross-cultural training programs were undertaken as a core unit or part of a core unit, with only 16% undertaken as an elective unit or part of an elective unit. The cross-cultural training was also organised as special workshops, group projects or work experience tasks (see appendix C for details.) The cross-cultural training was undertaken in 11 national training packages in shown in table 1.

Table 1 Distribution of cross-cultural training units by national training packages, expressed as a proportion of respondents

National training package	%	No.
Public Services	33.3	44
Community Services	31.8	42
Business Services	18.1	24
Training and Assessment	14.4	19
Health	10.6	14
International Business	8.3	11
Hospitality	7.6	10
Tourism	7.6	10
Community Recreation	3.8	5
Conservation	3.0	4
Public Safety	0.8	1
Other: Teaching English, Teacher Training	4.5	6

Notes: Percentages add up to more than 100% as respondents could choose more than one option.
n = 132

For three-quarters of respondents, the highest level of qualification that included cross-cultural training was a VET qualification, with nearly half completing a diploma or advanced diploma. For about one-quarter of respondents, their highest levels of qualifications, including cross-cultural training, were outside the VET system, mostly in university courses or workplace training programs (table 2). The level of detail and complexity of cross-cultural training increased in line with the level of qualification.

Table 2 Highest level of qualification achieved that included cross-cultural training

Qualification level	%	No.
Certificate I	5.6	7
Certificate II	10.5	13
Certificate III	25.0	31
Diploma	21.0	26
Advanced diploma	13.7	17
Other: High school, BA, MA, MBA, workplace training	24.2	30
Total	100.0	124
Missing		10

Note: n = 124

The most commonly reported delivery styles of cross-cultural training were a combination of lecturing and interactive discussions and exercises and a combination of field or project work and lecturing (table C5 in appendix C). The most commonly reported subject areas covered in cross-cultural training were general cultural awareness and working with cultural diversity. The other reported subject areas, in rank order, were cultural diversity management, Aboriginal cultural awareness, other specific cultures, occupation-specific cross-cultural training and working with interpreters and translators (table C1).

Cultural competence is also acquired in many informal ways. Respondents reported a range of experiences that had contributed to their understanding of cultural differences, including working in Australia with people from different cultures, having friends from different cultures, having family members from different cultures, living or working overseas, learning a language and migrating (table C2). While the contribution of these experiences to respondents' cultural competence cannot be directly related to other survey ratings, the importance of these kinds of informal learning cannot be over-emphasised.

Graduates' evaluation of cross-cultural training

Graduates were asked to rate six key aspects of the cross-cultural training they had undertaken, on a scale of 1 (below average) to 5 (excellent). As shown in table 3, all aspects were rated at 3.5 or above.

Respondents rated their overall satisfaction with cross-cultural training at 3.75. Just over 65% of respondents rated their satisfaction with cross-cultural training as above average or excellent, with approximately 13% rating their satisfaction as below average or poor. While participant satisfaction with training is not a predictor of its contribution to performance, ratings of satisfaction reflect and support other ratings of effectiveness, which underpin ratings of applicability to performance. To explore some of the predictors of participants' overall satisfaction with their training, the percentages of respondents rating their overall satisfaction at 4 (above average) or 5 (excellent) were filtered by mode of training, style of training and recency of training completion. (See appendix C for details.)

Satisfaction ratings of above average or excellent were 13 percentage points higher for cross-cultural training undertaken as elective training than for cross-cultural training delivered as core training (78.9% vs 65.9%; table C4).

Table 3 Evaluations of six key aspects of cross-cultural training programs reported as a Likert scale rating and as a percentage

Survey question	Average rating	%
1 Over all, how would you rate the effectiveness of the cross-cultural training trainers?	3.7	74
2 How much did cross-cultural training improve your understanding of workplace policies and issues regarding cultural diversity?	3.6	72
3 How much did cross-cultural training increase your awareness and knowledge of the ways in which your own culture influences your thoughts and feelings	3.7	74
4 How much did cross-cultural training increase your knowledge and understanding of cross-cultural communication skills?	3.7	74
5 How much did cross-cultural training increase your knowledge and understanding of the customs, values and beliefs of other cultures?	3.6	72
6 How much did cross-cultural training increase your confidence in dealing with people from different cultures?	3.5	70

Note: n = 124

Satisfaction ratings did not differ greatly according to the styles of training delivery. About 70% of respondents who undertook cross-cultural training delivered as mainly classroom lecturing, mainly interactive exercises, or a style combining the two rated their training as above average or excellent, compared with 75% of those who experienced a training style that combined classroom lecturing and field work. Just under 60% gave high satisfaction ratings for training styles comprising only field or project work without classroom learning (table C5).

Looking at the recency of training completion, 63% of those who had received their cross-cultural training one to five or more years ago rated their satisfaction as above average or excellent. By comparison, 52% of those who had completed the training less than one year ago gave similar ratings (table C6). This comparison appears to indicate that the passage of time may increase positive assessments of cross-cultural training experiences, although the small sample sizes limit the validity of this observation. Qualitative comments from cross-cultural training facilitators and participants indicate that for many participants the value of cross-cultural training becomes more apparent as learning is applied to and corroborated by subsequent experiences. However, other factors such as number of contact hours, teaching mode and style, and the degrees to which participants' organisations recognise, support and reward culturally competent performance would also have a significant bearing on this.

More than eight in ten respondents judged the best aspects of their training to be interaction and discussion. Over half also identified the training content of the training and the style, knowledge and enthusiasm of the trainer as positive aspects.

While three-quarters of respondents considered the duration of the cross-cultural training to be appropriate, 23% considered it to be too short. When commenting on ways to improve the cross-cultural training they had attended, half suggested that it could have been improved by increasing the duration. Just fewer than 2% suggested decreasing the time.

Asked to suggest ways of improving training delivery, about half the respondents recommended increased interaction and content. Around a quarter also suggested taking different training approaches, changing course structures or having better trainers.

Contribution of cross-cultural training to workplace performance

In assessing the degree to which cross-cultural training had contributed to VET graduates' workplace performance, the survey first investigated the level of importance that graduates placed

on cultural competence and their perceptions of the level of importance their employers placed on cultural competence.

On a scale of 1 to 5, five being the highest rating, respondents rated the importance of being able to work effectively with co-workers from different cultures at 4.3. Significantly, 84% of graduates rated this ability as of above average or of great importance. They rated the importance they thought their employers placed on this ability slightly higher, at 4.4.

Respondents rated the importance of being able to work effectively with customers and clients from different cultural backgrounds at 4.5, giving the same rating for the importance they believed their managers placed on this ability. Almost 93% rated this ability as of above average or of great importance. About half the respondents said that their ability to work effectively with co-workers and clients from different cultural backgrounds was included as a performance indicator in performance reviews.

These findings are similar to those obtained from the survey of the graduates' employers (see appendix E). All respondents to the employer survey agreed that cultural competence was of importance to their organisations. Having employees with adequate cultural competence for working with culturally diverse clients and customers was rated as above average or of great importance by 86% of responding employers, with 90% of the public sector employers giving this rating, by comparison with 78% of private sector employers. The importance of cultural competence for working with culturally diverse co-workers was rated as above average or of great importance by 80% of employers. Again, a greater proportion of employers from the public sector than from the private sector rated this aspect as above average or of great importance (85% vs 76%). Similar ratings were reported in the public sector study (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006).

As a further indicator of perceived importance, almost three-quarters of responding employers stated that their organisations included cultural competence in career development strategies, although less than half included it in recruitment or performance appraisal criteria. Several respondents commented that, while cultural competence as such was not specified in recruitment specifications or selection interviews, the ability to work harmoniously in diverse workplaces was often considered, particularly for professionals and candidates in customer service positions. Some organisations 'embed' cultural competence in specifications or see it as part of employability skills in general.

These findings indicate a generally strong awareness among these stakeholder groups of the rationale for developing cultural competence, even when taking into account any response bias arising from the social desirability of positive responses regarding cultural diversity.

Turning to workplace performance, responding graduates identified a range of improvements to their work performance they believed could be attributed to their cross-cultural training (table 4).

Table 4 Contribution of cross-cultural training to workplace performance, expressed as a proportion of respondents

Performance improvements	%	No.
Improved services to customers from different cultural backgrounds	76.9	90
Improved workplace communications and relationships	73.1	87
Increased cultural self-awareness	71.4	85
Improved understanding and interactions in personal life	48.7	58
Improved community relationships	42.9	51
Improved compliance with EO, discrimination and equity policies	37.0	44
Improved ability to assist overseas customers or partners	36.1	43
Improved ability to work internationally	28.6	34
Improved marketing/promotion to culturally diverse customers	26.9	32

Notes: Respondents could choose more than one option.
n = 119

Almost 60% of respondents rated the overall contribution of cross-cultural training to their job performance as above average or excellent, with only 12% rating it below average or poor.

Just under 40% of respondents rated the extent to which they had been able to transfer what they had learned to their co-workers as above average or excellent, with about one-quarter rating it below average or poor. While experience shows that transferring the learning from training programs of any kind to colleagues can be difficult, the complex and subjective nature of cross-cultural training is likely to increase this level of difficulty. Many cross-cultural training participants commented that they wished their managers and supervisors had also attended the program, a sentiment reflected in the recommendation by 81% of respondents that cross-cultural training should be mandatory for everyone in their organisation, with 89% indicating that it should be mandatory for employees who were in customer or client service positions (appendix C).

In responses to an open question about the most important things learned from cross-cultural training, graduates who responded nominated, in rank order, increased acceptance, recognition and understanding, increased awareness and skills, greater patience, empathy and tolerance, and increased knowledge and information. There were only two negative comments, both referring specifically to antipathy towards individual trainers.

Representative comments included the following:

[I realised] how set in my ways I was and how much I took things personally, when really cultural differences were at play.

It has given me a higher tolerance and understanding of how hard it is for migrants to integrate into Australian culture.

Even within specific cultures, people are individuals and shouldn't be bundled together in one group.

As a foreign person myself, I can relate and assure [sic] how helpful and important was the study of cultural diversity. It was not only interesting but mainly helpful for me in my adjustment to life in Australia, and also I am sure it opened my eyes for a better understanding [of] people from other cultures.

To be aware, stay aware and understand the different cultural needs in everyone. Everyone is unique and that's a beautiful thing about living in Australia and having dealings with people from all over the world.

It should be noted here that, while the measurement of return on training investment is problematic in virtually all areas of communication and relationship training, the frequency of such comments in cross-cultural training evaluations is a strong indicator that the immeasurable contributions of such training experiences can be profound and durable.

Looking at the impact of cross-cultural training on work performance from an employer's perspective, over 90% of public and two-thirds of private sector organisations conducted cross-cultural training for their employees (appendix E), with most reporting positive feedback regarding increased awareness and understanding of the relevance of cultural competence to work performance.

Two-thirds of responding employers said that the VET graduates they employed demonstrated an understanding of and ability to work with cultural diversity, leading to a range of benefits, improved customer service being most commonly reported. A third of the respondents were unable to comment directly on any benefits from cross-cultural training, several saying they would have no way of knowing if a person's cultural competence was derived from cross-cultural training or if a qualification had included cross-cultural training or whether it was attributable to education and training, personal experiences or individual character.

Almost two-thirds of public sector and a third of private sector employers believed that cross-cultural training should be mandatory for all employees (table E7), with over 90% of public and

two-thirds of private sector respondents indicating it should be mandatory for all employees in customer contact positions (table E8), proportions similar to those reported from the graduate survey. The majority of organisations planned to provide cross-cultural training to employees in the next five years (table E5). Over 80% of organisations were also likely to develop other strategies to develop cultural competence over the next five years, including building cultural awareness into other training, recruiting more staff from culturally diverse backgrounds, providing mentoring or coaching programs and developing policies and procedures for culturally inclusive work practices (table E6).

Demand and recommendations for future cross-cultural training

With respect to future demand, approximately 70% of responding graduates indicated that they would like further cross-cultural training (see appendix C). The types of cross-cultural training preferred, in rank order, were training in specific cultures within the multicultural society, working with or managing cultural diversity, general cultural awareness and communication, Indigenous cultures, specialised training for specific occupations and working with interpreters and translators.

Just over 70% of employers estimated that demand for workforce cultural competence would increase in response to the increased cultural diversity of the workforce, the labour market and the customer base, and increased internationalisation and globalisation (table E4). Other reasons included policy and legal requirements and an increased number of agreements with traditional land owners. Just under a third said demand would stay at current levels. None anticipated any decrease in demand. There were no significant differences in the responses of public and private sector organisations.

The indicators of the perceived importance of and need for cultural competence and positive ratings of the effectiveness of cross-cultural training given above, along with the fact that so many recipients of cross-cultural training believe it should be mandatory, suggest that the leaders and managers of Australian organisations should consider more carefully the role of cross-cultural training in the creation and maintenance of social capital and its contributions to performance.

Comparisons with the public sector cross-cultural training effectiveness study

Most of the findings above are very similar to those of the national study of the effectiveness of cross-cultural training in public sector organisations (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006). The demographic profiles of the employees who responded to the surveys were similar. The 145 public sector employees from the public sector study had received an average of six hours cross-cultural training between six and 11 months before responding to the survey, while the 134 VET graduates had received an average of 31 hours of cross-cultural training, the majority of the training received between one and three years before the survey. Several of the survey questions in this study replicated or closely matched those of the public sector study.

The six questions in table 3 are identical to questions asked in the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study. The average rating on a 5-point Likert scale for all questions in this study was just over 3.6, compared with an average rating in the former study of just under 3.7.

In both studies, overall satisfaction with cross-cultural training was rated 3.7. In this study, satisfaction ratings of above average or excellent for cross-cultural training undertaken as elective training were given by 78.9% of respondents, compared with 65.9% of respondents who had cross-cultural training delivered as core training. In the Standing Committee on Immigration and

Multicultural Affairs study, the average was 76% for voluntary training, compared with 69.8% for compulsory training.

In this study, the average rating of the importance of cultural competence for working with co-workers and customers from different cultural backgrounds was 88%, which is identical to the average rating in the public sector study. In this study, the average rating of importance to respondents' managers was 90%, compared with an average rating of 84% in the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study.

In this study, almost 60% of respondents rated the overall satisfaction with the contribution of cross-cultural training to their job performance as above average or excellent, with only 12% rating it below average or poor. In the public sector study over 40% rated it as above average or excellent, with 13.9% rating it below average or poor. This may be a reflection of the lower number of hours of cross-cultural training received by the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study respondents or attributable to other factors such as organisational support for the application of learning in the workplace.

Just under 40% rated the extent to which they had been able to transfer what they had learned to their co-workers as above average or excellent, with 26% rating it below average or poor. In the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study, 30% gave the higher ratings, with 25% rating it below average or poor.

Almost 70% of respondents indicated that they would like further cross-cultural training, compared with 60% in the earlier study.

Eighty per cent of respondents to this study believed cross-cultural training should be compulsory for all employees in their organisation, compared with just over 70% in the 2006 study. Most significantly for those making decisions about the future provision of cross-cultural training, 89.3% of graduates who responded the current study believed that cross-cultural training should be compulsory for all employees in their organisation who were in customer or client service positions, compared with 87.7% in the 2006 study.

These comparisons between the survey responses of two samples totalling 279 employees lend validity to the findings on the effectiveness and performance contributions of cross-cultural training.

Cross-cultural training practice in VET

Profile of survey respondents

Sixty-one senior managers, teachers, coordinators and project officers employed by 38 large and small public and private sector training organisations participated in the survey. (See appendix D for details.)

The sample is not representative of the VET system as a whole and the use of an online survey creates a voluntary response bias in the sample.

Cross-cultural training provision

The responding organisations provided cross-cultural training at various levels in 11 of the 12 national training packages, including units of competency in diversity mainly at the certificate III and IV levels (table 5).

Table 5 Provision of cross-cultural training in national training package qualifications

Cross-cultural training package	Certificate II	Certificate III	Certificate IV	Diploma	Advanced diploma	Total responses
Business Services	9	12	16	15	3	55
Community	0	1	1	0	0	2
Community Services	7	20	21	13	4	65
Conservation	1	1	1	1	0	4
Correctional Services	3	3	2	0	0	8
Health	4	13	7	5	1	30
Hospitality	5	7	6	5	4	27
Tourism	5	5	5	4	3	22
Public Services	0	5	6	5	2	18
Training and	1	2	17	5	0	25
International Business	0	1	1	2	3	7
Total	35	70	83	55	29	272

An average of 21.7 contact hours per unit was devoted to cross-cultural training in 14 specific units of competency within these training packages. Respondents identified several other areas in which elements of cross-cultural training were provided, including outdoor recreation, fashion design, education, religious studies and arts and media. Some of the cross-cultural training was delivered in the form of units of competency imported from other training packages and some as specialised workshops.

Two-thirds of responding organisations reported that they had also provided accredited and non-accredited cross-cultural training in other training areas, including English language teaching, Aboriginal cultural awareness, staff induction, community outreach and settlement and cross-cultural training courses for external organisations.

The average length of time training organisations had been delivering cross-cultural training in one or more of the training packages was 10.5 years. They had delivered cross-cultural training in the other areas on average for 9.9 years.

Over half used a combination of internal and external trainers to deliver cross-cultural training, while one-third used only internal trainers and 10% used only external trainers. The external trainers came mainly from private consultants, community organisations or other training organisations.

As noted earlier, several VET providers declined to participate in the survey as they did not currently provide cross-cultural training in any programs or had not done so for years. For other providers, the inclusion of cross-cultural training in accredited training programs is not necessarily guaranteed even where it is recommended, as shown in the following quote from a respondent:

I have been working with [organisation] in relation to ways that cultural competence can be addressed in training, particularly for in Certificates III and IV and the Diploma in Business-Front Line Management, and I was frankly rather mystified by the fact that there is no mandatory unit of competency currently in these qualifications that relates specifically to working effectively with diversity. It seems that even offering such a unit from another qualification as an elective is ‘not allowed under the packaging rules’. So I have assumed that the only way to address this situation is to wait until the Business Services package is next reviewed, which I gather may well not be for another couple of years.

Cross-cultural training practice

The responding training organisations mainly delivered cross-cultural training through classroom teaching or specialised workshops. Around 40% also delivered cross-cultural training through external projects or distance learning, while 30% delivered cross-cultural training through mentoring and coaching (table D1).

Over 95% of respondents reported that the main learning objectives of cross-cultural training were to improve customer service and workplace relations (table D2). For graduates, this was seen as the main contribution of cross-cultural training to their workplace performance (see table 4). Around 60% listed the learning objectives of improving community relationships and compliance with equal opportunity and discrimination laws and policies. Approximately 40% listed the objectives of improving marketing and promotion to culturally diverse customers and improving capacity to work internationally. Just over 10% reported other objectives, including confronting racism and improving language and settlement skills.

The most common types of cross-cultural training were general awareness and working with diversity (table 6). In many units of competency and in non-accredited programs there are combinations of these types of training.

Table 6 Types of cross-cultural training included in units of competency or other training, expressed as a percentage of respondents

Type of cross-cultural training	%	No.
General cultural awareness and communication	92.6	50
Working with cultural diversity	87.0	47
Managing cultural diversity	63.0	34
Culture specific: Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander cultures	53.7	29
Specialised: e.g. customer service, health care, policing	44.4	24
Culture-specific: multicultural e.g. Sudanese, Chinese cultures	40.7	22
Working with interpreters and translators	29.6	16
Other: racism and privilege, adult language and literacy, settlement	7.4	14

Notes: Respondents could choose more than one option.
n = 54

Evaluation and benefits of cross-cultural training

The majority of responding organisations evaluated cross-cultural training through post-training feedback and evaluation questionnaires from students and, to a lesser extent, through informal verbal feedback. About one-third of respondents received feedback, mainly verbal, from employers of cross-culturally trained graduates about their ability to work with culturally diverse customers and co-workers. The employers were reported to comment generally on the increased awareness, sensitivity and skills of graduates and on receiving positive feedback from employees who had completed cross-cultural training.

The training providers reported an average student satisfaction rating of 81% across all of the above types of cross-cultural training. This average is just over six percentage points higher than the overall satisfaction rating of 74.6% given by the graduates themselves. The types of cross-cultural training receiving the most ratings of above average or excellent were general cultural awareness, managing cultural diversity and working with cultural diversity. The highest reported student overall satisfaction ratings were for culture-specific training (84.2%) and the lowest for working with interpreters and translators (77.8%).

Eight in ten VET providers said that their students reported that cross-cultural training had helped them to improve their workplace communication. Seven in ten said their students reported improved customer service and cultural self-awareness. The percentages of VET providers and graduates reporting a range of benefits from cross-cultural training is compared in table 7.

Table 7 VET graduates' reported benefits of cross-cultural training

Reported benefit	VET providers		Graduates	Difference
	%	No.	%	%
Improved workplace communication & relationships	80.5	33	73.1	-7.4
Improved services to customers from different cultural backgrounds	75.6	31	76.9	+1.3
Increased cultural self-awareness	70.7	29	71.4	+0.7
Improved community relationships	39.0	16	42.9	+3.9
Improved skills to work internationally	29.3	12	28.6	-0.7
Improved compliance with access and equity policies	26.8	11	37.0*	+10.2
Improved compliance with EO and discrimination laws	22.0	9	37.0*	+15.0
Improved marketing to culturally diverse clients/customers	14.6	6	26.9	+12.3

Notes: Respondents could choose more than one option.

* Graduates' survey question combined the two compliance categories.

VET provider: n = 41; graduates: n = 134

While there are some differences between providers' and graduates' reports for improved compliance and marketing, there are broad similarities across the other categories, indicating the general accuracy of the training providers' assessments of their students' reported learning outcomes.

VET provider perceptions of workplace cultural competence trends and practices

The VET providers rated the importance of cultural competence for working with culturally diverse customers at 4.7 (on the Likert scale) and for working with culturally diverse co-workers at just under 4.5. These ratings were higher than the ratings given by both the graduates and responding employers. Therefore, while there was general agreement that cultural competence is important to workplace performance, VET providers and graduates both slightly overestimated its perceived importance to employers.

Some respondents commented that employers did not understand cultural competence or the nature and aim of cross-cultural training and only wanted their staff to have training on specific cultures. Other VET respondents were concerned that the majority of cross-cultural training programs did not address issues of privilege and power in the workplace.

About 40% of responding training providers stated that employers in the industries they served included cultural competence in their recruitment specifications, while over half did not know. These industries were in community services, government, health and aged care, tourism and hospitality and those engaged in international business. In the employers' survey, 35% of respondents indicated that they included cultural competence in recruitment specifications (table E2).

Nine in ten VET providers believed there would be increased or greatly increased demand from employers for employees to be able to demonstrate cultural competence, compared with 70% of employers. Regardless of this disparity, it is clear that demand will increase, with significant implications for VET provider capacity and trainer capabilities.

Eight in ten responding providers expected that there would be demand for training in specific cultures, general awareness, working in culturally diverse teams and managing culturally diverse workforces. Seven in ten expected there to be demand for Aboriginal cultural awareness training. Over half said there would be demand for specialised cross-cultural training in occupational areas such as health and policing and for building cultural awareness into other training programs. One-third expected demand for training in working with interpreters and translators.

VET providers and employers both attributed predictions of increased demand to increases in migration, international trade, international students, cultural diversity in the labour market, recruitment of overseas skilled workers and higher customer expectations for culturally appropriate services. Several respondents from the training providers attributed the heightened demand to increased recognition of the need to foster and maintain social cohesion and to address issues of racism and white privilege in the community.

Over 90% of public sector and 40% of private sector employers surveyed believed that cross-cultural training should be a core component of VET programs relating to their industries, particularly in international business, export services, community services, health, government and public safety.

In general comments, some respondents from the training providers expressed agreement that cultural competence had become an issue of strategic concern and that cross-cultural training should be a component of workplace training and development. As one commented: 'Changes in the workforce have hit us by surprise'. Another identified a need for organisations to move beyond a 'multicultural deficit model' and address cultural competence in terms of key performance indicators. Another manager remarked: 'The challenge is to keep doing it [cross-cultural training] and revisit and assess the contribution to our performance'.

Cross-cultural training facilitators

Given the current level of cross-cultural training activity and the predicted increased demand for cross-cultural training revealed in this study and the earlier Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study, the supply and quality of training facilitators will be a critical issue for the VET system. The second part of the survey of VET providers elicited 31 responses from people who were currently or had within the past five years been directly involved in the design and delivery of cross-cultural training.

Profile of cross-cultural training facilitators

Six in ten respondents were female. The average age of respondents was 53 years, with only two being less than 35 years old. Just over two-thirds had six or more years experience in teaching

cross-cultural training, one-fifth having over 16 years experience. Three-quarters spoke English as their first language and just over 40% were born overseas. (See appendix D for details.)

The facilitators worked across a number of cross-cultural training subject areas, with over three-quarters providing general cross-cultural training. Two-thirds taught working with and managing cultural diversity and half conducted culture-specific training. Approximately 40% provided Aboriginal cultural awareness training. A third worked in the areas of specialised cross-cultural training, international business, language training and working with interpreters and translators.

Eight in ten cross-cultural training facilitators had a bachelor's degree or higher qualification and the remainder had a VET certificate IV or diploma qualification. However, only a quarter had received formal training in cross-cultural training, mainly within bachelor or masters degree courses or through workplace professional development programs. Three-quarters had received informal training, typically through attendance at workshops, seminars and conferences and non-award or non-accredited courses or training programs, including in-service professional development. Respondents identified a range of professional and life experiences that had contributed to their ability to teach cross-cultural training. These included language learning, working with culturally diverse clients and colleagues, cross-cultural personal relationships, migration, overseas travel and international business experience.

There was a strong sense of engagement and commitment among facilitators. Half reported passion and commitment as their main motivations for working in the cross-cultural training field. Over one-quarter reported being mainly motivated by interest, enjoyment and satisfaction. Fewer than one-quarter worked in cross-cultural training because it was part of their employment responsibilities. These responses are reflected in the public sector study (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006) and in an international study of over 200 cross-cultural training practitioners (Berardo & Simons 2004).

Training approaches and resources

Respondents employed a range of approaches to cross-cultural training, depending on audience and context. One-third described their main approach as a balance of lecturing and interactive exercises, a quarter favoured interactive exercises and discussions; about 15% favoured a balance of field work and classroom learning. Other approaches included project work, individual coaching and informal induction.

The most commonly used training resources or tools, in rank order, were case studies, simulation exercises, models for understanding cultures, role plays, intensive group exercises, checklists and tip sheets, instruments that profile groups or individuals, and assessments of cultural competence. Intensive group exercises and case studies were rated as the most effective tools for cross-cultural training by over 80% of respondents. These rankings also compare closely with those of the public sector and international studies (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006; Berardo & Simons 2004).

Respondents expressed a range of opinions about approaches to cross-cultural training, which reflect the complexity and diversity of the field. Some objected to the term 'training' being applied to what they did, preferring a broader view of cross-cultural training as a dialogue and a lifelong educational process.

I don't call it training. I don't want to deliver structured packages or accredited training modules ... not my area! I like the opportunity to speak frankly and fluidly about what I have learned and what I am constantly challenged by ... and I have had really good feedback from the sessions I have run. I'm not saying there isn't a place for training ... I just don't think it's my forte!

Others saw the need to address issues of power, privilege, racism, politics and policy in cross-cultural training and to adopt ‘strategies for recognising bias, preference, ethnocentric thinking and speaking etc. for EVERYONE—not just Australian born’.

Across the cross-cultural training field there appears to be a widely held view that the best cross-cultural training is not in fact ‘training’ but a designed and facilitated conversation about identity, diversity and social cohesion. The training component—the information, knowledge and skills of cross-cultural communication—is important, but of very limited value without an underlying educational experience that enables participants to recognise the pervasive influence of cultures on perception and behaviour and to make meaning out of a lifetime of experiences.

Professional and resource development

Respondents undertook a range of activities to continue their professional development as cross-cultural trainers. Three-quarters reported working with culturally diverse communities and facilitating training as their main forms of professional development. Over half listed reading and attending conferences and seminars, networking, professional associations and travel. One-third engaged in research in the cross-cultural training field. Only 7% reported undertaking formal study.

About two-thirds of respondents identified future professional development needs in the areas of cross-cultural communication theory and practice, teaching and learning methodology and ethical issues in cross-cultural training. Over half would like professional development in the areas of learning about specific cultures and religions; socio-political issues, including multiculturalism, diversity, racism and discrimination; and developing training resources for these areas. Most trainers expressed a desire to interact with other cross-cultural training facilitators, to share ideas and resources, to pursue professional development opportunities and to support each other in working in a demanding and evolving field. Again, these responses closely reflect those of the previous studies.

Respondents identified the need to develop further tools and resources that more closely reflect the Australian context. They recommended more interactive exercises and resources designed to address specific issues and cultures and the development of a cross-cultural training resources clearing house. They also recommended further research in the areas of: working in multicultural settings; models for understanding culture in the Australian context; the organisational and personal value of cross-cultural training; cultural diversity in the contexts of power, privilege, politics and policy; and cultural competence in team-building and leadership.

Just over half of the respondents believed there should be an accreditation or other formal recognition process for cross-cultural trainers, based on relevant experience and facilitation skills. A few nominated a Certificate IV Training and Assessment as the minimum qualification. The most commonly suggested approach was a registration process requiring demonstrated capability that was similar to registration and membership requirements for other professions and consultancy areas.

Those who were unsure about or opposed to the idea of accreditation expressed uncertainty about what standards or qualifications should be included. They questioned whether cross-cultural training trainer competencies could be clearly identified and measured, and who would judge the judges. One commented that the complexity, tensions and uncertainties of the cross-cultural training learning experience would be impossible to define in terms of competencies. Several expressed the fear that imposing a formal standard may exclude trainers lacking formal qualifications who were otherwise effective facilitators. Others questioned the need for accreditation or specialist qualifications, maintaining that qualified educators would have the professionalism to ensure that they were adequately prepared to teach cross-cultural training effectively.

Challenges and issues facing the cross-cultural training field

Respondents identified a range of challenges for the cross-cultural training field and its future development. Several referred to negative attitudes to cultural diversity in Australia in general, xenophobia and stereotyping in the media and politics, and the failure of leaders and managers to

take responsibility for addressing the consequences of a society lacking cultural understanding and competence.

A lack of consistency in approaches was identified as a challenge, as was the notion that there was one right way to conduct cross-cultural training. There was seen to be a lack of clear policy by state governments and the Australian Government, accompanied by a lack of resources to employ trainers and provide cross-cultural training within relevant VET programs.

The continuing influx of people from cultural backgrounds relatively new to Australia—including refugees, migrants, business migrants, students and overseas professionals—was also seen as a challenge to trainers trying to keep up to date in their knowledge and understanding of diverse groups.

In their final comments, respondents expressed enthusiasm for the future of cross-cultural training, but also concerns that the field needed to be professionalised and the hope that ‘something authentic [would] be done with the information’ gained from this survey.

Comparisons with the public sector cross-cultural training effectiveness study

The findings of this study regarding current practice in cross-cultural training delivery and the public sector study (Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2006) were similar in a number of areas, as they were for the evaluations and benefits of cross-cultural training.

The biggest difference between the provision of cross-cultural training in VET and in public sector workplaces is the number of contact hours, the VET average of 31 hours being more than three times the average 6.1 hours of cross-cultural training received in the workplaces by respondents to the public sector survey.

A comparison with the findings of the public sector study (table 8) shows similarities for most objectives, except that of improving workplace communication and relationships, which was less frequently identified by the exclusively public sector respondents to that survey.

Table 8 Learning objectives of cross-cultural training, expressed as a percentage of respondents and compared with percentages of respondents in the SCIMA study

Learning objective	%	No.	SCIMA %
To improve service to culturally diverse customers	98.2	54	91.6
To improve workplace communication and relationships	94.5	52	64.2
To improve community relationships	60.0	33	54.7
To improve compliance; equal opportunity/discrimination	58.2	32	45.3
To improve marketing to culturally diverse customers	41.8	23	33.0
To improve capacity to work internationally	32.7	18	21.0
Other: confront racism, improve language and settlement	12.7	7	N/A

Notes: Respondents could choose more than one option.
n = 55

Seven in ten respondents to the survey of employers believed there would be increased demand for cross-cultural training, compared with 74% of public sector employers responding to the 2006 survey. These predictions are lower than those of the VET providers, 90% of whom predicted increased demand. However, all three groups agreed that the demand would grow in response to globalisation and increased cultural diversity in the workplace and the community.

Regarding the introduction of an accreditation process, the public sector survey responses were almost the same as in this study. Similar concerns were expressed. However, in the 2006 study, 70% of employers were in favour of an accreditation process.

Developing cultural competence through VET

Implications of the research for VET

Employers and educators alike have identified a growing need to develop workforce cultural competence in response to major drivers that include increased workforce and customer cultural diversity, global labour market mobility and competition for skilled employees. Clearly, cross-cultural knowledge is seen to be highly valued among VET graduates. Given the positive views of the value of cultural competence among graduates and employers, the VET sector can, and should, expand current cross-cultural training provision in the policy, curriculum and quality frameworks already in place. Capability and capacity can be improved using models of good practice and by engaging experienced cross-cultural training facilitators across the sector.

The results and benefits of cross-cultural training can be largely described in competency terms; they meet the required learning outcomes of the relevant units of competency within national training packages. However, while the results and benefits of developing cultural competence through cross-cultural training are demonstrable in quantitative terms, the research findings also point to the deeper sociological and psychological dimensions of the training experience.

It is highly significant for the future provision of cross-cultural training in the VET sector that training participants ranked increased cultural self-awareness almost as highly as improved customer service and workplace relationships, cultural self-awareness being a critical element of cultural competence. It is also noteworthy that a relatively few hours of cross-cultural training can result in the gains attributed to it by participants. This highlights the potential of cross-cultural training to crystallise participants' previous experiences of living and working in a multicultural society and to contribute to positive attitudes and effective behaviours vis-a-vis cultural diversity.

Developing cultural competence through VET

The process of developing cultural competence through VET has recently been described and outlined in a guide to cultural diversity management resources (Department of Immigration and Multicultural and Indigenous Affairs 2005). The guide identifies linkages between diversity and most of the key competencies or employability skills, particularly those of communication and teamwork. It also describes learning pathways that begin with diversity awareness at certificates I and II, progressing through the development of knowledge and skills for working with and managing diversity in teams at the certificate III and IV levels, and culminating in the development of higher management and leadership knowledge and skills at the diploma and advanced diploma levels.

As the findings of this study illustrate, VET students in a range of industry qualifications may complete two or three units of competency that include diversity elements during their courses of study. An incremental approach to developing cultural competence that is articulated with the learning pathway outlined above and closely related to the needs of their target industries would be ideal. Cultural competence and diversity-management skills could also be further developed by incorporating both with closely related topics such as customer service, negotiation, problem-solving, conflict management, compliance with legislation and giving and receiving feedback.

As discussed earlier in this report, VET national strategy objectives call for VET providers to adopt best practice in managing diversity in service delivery and to prepare learners for employment in situations characterised by workforce and customer diversity. Achieving best practice in diversity-management requires, among other things, that VET employees are trained and resourced to do so. Given the cultural diversity of the VET student body and the workplaces for which they are being trained, the obvious implication is that all VET workers should possess appropriate levels of cultural competence.

Another implication of the research findings is that cross-cultural training should be part of core curriculum in qualifications for industries in which customer and client service is a critical skill.

The design and delivery of cross-cultural training programs within VET qualifications should also recognise that the development of cultural competence is a lifelong process. This implies dialogue with industry to ensure that the VET curriculum is attuned to organisational needs and to the development of strategies to ensure support for graduates and their managers to enable them to continue their learning and to apply it in their workplaces and communities. As one senior VET teacher commented:

Insist on application in a real world context. Link cultural awareness training to mainstream learning areas, not for awareness for its own sake, but for the effect that changes in attitude and flexibility in practice can mean better outcomes for all parties.

Recommendations

The findings of this study show that the provision of cross-cultural training in the VET system is diverse, covers a wide range of qualifications and industries, and is well regarded by students and appreciated by employers. The research also indicates a potentially large increase in demand from a range of industries for VET graduates who are culturally competent, with implications for capacity and capability in the provision of cross-cultural training. VET teachers of cross-cultural training have also expressed the need for professional development and the capacity to develop resources and address important social issues.

The findings of this study point to areas for improvement in policy and planning, industry engagement, curriculum and program development, capacity- and capability-building and professional development.

The following broad recommendations are made with acknowledgement that VET organisations and systems and their client industries are at various stages in the delivery of cross-cultural training and in the development of cultural competence and that the policies and strategies to guide and legitimise the implementation of the recommendations are already in place.

VET policy, planning and program quality assurance

- ✧ Organisations responsible for VET policy development and implementation should review the extent of cross-cultural training provision through the VET sector, in terms of its contribution to meeting the relevant objectives of the current national strategy for VET.
- ✧ Individual VET organisations should formally review their current practices for providing cross-cultural training, in terms of the student and industry needs identified in this study.
- ✧ Individual VET organisations should ensure that their equity and diversity policies and strategies include assessments of the levels of cultural competence required by managers and staff who are required to comply with and implement these policies and strategies.
- ✧ Where the need has been identified, VET managers and staff should receive professional development in cultural competence, including cross-cultural training relevant to their roles and responsibilities.

- ✧ VET organisations should establish benchmarks for the quality of their cross-cultural training programs based on the criteria used in this study.
- ✧ Longitudinal evaluations of the contribution of cross-cultural training to VET graduates' workplace performance should be encouraged.

Industry engagement in cross-cultural training program planning

- ✧ VET organisations should consult with their client industries and enterprises to assess their requirements for the cultural competence of VET graduates in order to determine whether adjustments are needed in current programs or if new programs are required.
- ✧ Industry skills councils should be engaged in reviewing industry needs for cultural competence and cross-cultural training in order to advise future VET policy and planning.
- ✧ VET organisations, state and territory training authorities and industry skills councils should develop and promote information and advice for employers on cross-cultural training options and the business case for cultural competence.

Cross-cultural training curriculum and program design

- ✧ The need for cultural competence should be considered in all planning processes related to curriculum and program development, teaching and learning, and student services.
- ✧ Cross-cultural training program design should address the recommendations of participants regarding the interactivity, duration, relevance, and modes and styles of teaching.
- ✧ Curricula should recognise that the development of cultural competence is a lifelong process and include descriptions of learning pathways appropriate to VET qualification levels.

Capacity- and capability-building

- ✧ Where industry consultations confirm increased demand for culturally competent VET graduates, VET organisations should plan to increase their capacity to provide cross-cultural training at appropriate levels and to ensure that teaching staff are capable of conducting cross-cultural training.
- ✧ Registers of qualified and experienced cross-cultural training facilitators should be established and promoted by state and territory VET authorities.

Professional development and resources

- ✧ Introductory train-the-trainer programs should be developed and promoted to VET teachers and students interested in becoming cross-cultural training facilitators.
- ✧ Professional development programs addressing the areas identified in this study should be developed and provided for existing cross-cultural training facilitators.
- ✧ A national database or clearing house of existing professional development opportunities and training resources should be established and maintained by an appropriate government department or research organisation.
- ✧ Training resources reflecting the Australian context should be developed in the areas identified in the study.

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Appendix A

Organisations participating in the survey of VET current practice

Australian Capital Territory

Institute for the Nations, Australia
ACT Corrective Services

New South Wales

National College Australia
YWCA NSW
BCA Training Group
Centrelink
TAFE NSW North Coast Institute
TAFE NSW Hunter Institute

Northern Territory

Arnhemland Progress Association
Employee Assistance Service

Queensland

Academy of Career Training
Mt Isa Community Development Association
NCCL Nova Community Care
Queensland Corrective Services
Training Australia Unlimited Pty Ltd
Diversicare
Royal Brisbane International College
Australian Institute of Management—Qld & NT

South Australia

Department for Families and Communities
TAFE SA South
Personnel Employment
Learning Potential International
Access Training
Cultural Diversity Services Pty Ltd
Equals International
Relationships Australia

Victoria

Box Hill Institute of TAFE
William Angliss Institute of TAFE
Australian Vocational Learning Institute
Kangan Batman Institute of TAFE
International Design School Pty Ltd
Australasian Lawrence Aged Care College
Haley College

Western Australia

Central TAFE
Swan TAFE
Challenger TAFE
Department for Community Development
Diversitat

Appendix B

Organisations participating in the survey of employers

Service Industries Skills Council	St John's Ambulance
Centrelink Queensland	North Metro Area Health Service
Electranet	Brightwater Care Group (WA)
BHP Billiton	Public Transport Authority of WA
Schefenacker Vision Systems Australia Pty Ltd	Codan Pty Ltd
WorkCover Corporation	Alzheimer's Australia (SA)
Ribloc	Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
Insurance Australia Group	Newmont Mining
Australia Post Dandenong	Government Skills Australia
Angus Clyne Australia Ltd	Telstra
Schneider Electrical	Primary Industries and Resources (SA)
Eastern Health	City of Charles Sturt
Mitsubishi Motors Australia Ltd	Innovation and Business Skills Australia
Southern Cross Care	Maroochy Shire Council
Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council	Health Insurance Commission
Elders	SA Metropolitan Fire Service
Dept of Immigration and Citizenship	Queensland Police Service

Appendix C

Findings of the survey of VET graduates

a) Profile of survey respondents

Total respondents:	134
Female:	73.1% (98)
Male:	26.9% (36)
Average age:	38 years

Australian born:	65.7%	(88)
Overseas born:	34.3%	(46)
Born in non-English speaking country:	58.7%	(27)
First language English:	84.3%	(113)
First language other than English:	15.7%	(21)
Employer:		
Private sector	34.3%	(46)
Public sector:	52.2%	(70)
Community organisation	10.5%	(14)
Other (i.e. student, volunteer)	4.5%	(6)
Position:		
Staff	79.8%	(107)
Manager/supervisor	17.2%	(23)
Volunteer	3.0%	(4)
Works with customers/clients from culturally diverse backgrounds:	94.8%	(127)
Works with culturally diverse co-workers:	87.3%	(117)

b) Cross-cultural training experience

Average completed units of competency including cross-cultural training:	2.5	
Average contact hours per unit of competency:	12.6	
Average contact hours per survey respondent:	31.5	
Recency of cross-cultural training:		
Less than 1 year ago	39.1%	(50)
1–2 years ago	35.9%	(46)
3 years ago	12.5%	(16)

4 years ago	2.3%	(3)
5 or more years ago	14.1%	(18)

Status of cross-cultural training units:

Core unit or part of a core unit	72%	(85)
Elective unit or part of elective unit	16.1%	(19)
Special workshops	46.6%	(55)
Group projects	11.8%	(14)
Work experience assignments	7.6%	(9)
Through RPL	.07%	(1)

Training delivery styles

Combination of lecturing and interactive discussions and exercises	52.9%	(65)
Interactive discussions and exercises	39.0%	(48)
Combination of field or project work and lecturing	22.8%	(28)

Table C1 Subject areas included in cross-cultural training programs

Subject area	%	No.
General cultural awareness and communication	89.3%	117
Working with cultural diversity	72.5%	95
Managing cultural diversity	43.5%	57
Culture-specific: Indigenous	38.2%	50
Culture-specific: multicultural	24.4%	32
Specialised cross-cultural training: e.g. health, policing, customer service	19.9%	26
Working with interpreters and translators	16.8%	22
Other: teaching English, training diverse groups	4.6%	6

Notes: n = 131
Respondents could choose more than one option.

Table C2 Other experiences contributing to understanding of cultural differences

Experiences	%	No.
Working in Australia with people from different cultures	78.3%	94
Having friends from different cultures	72.55%	87
Having family members from different cultures	41.7%	50
Living overseas	30.2%	47
Learning a language	30.0%	36
Working overseas	27.5%	33
Migrating	26.7%	32

Notes: n = 120
Respondents could choose more than one option.

c) Graduates' evaluation of cross-cultural training

Respondents rated six key aspects of the cross-cultural training undertaken. A comparison with the ratings of six identical questions from the 2006 Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs study (2006) shows similar results for all questions.

Table C3 Comparative evaluations of cross-cultural training programs

Survey question	Average rating	SCIMA average
1 Over all, how would you rate the effectiveness of the cross-cultural training trainers?	74%	80%
2 How much did cross-cultural training improve your understanding of workplace policies and issues regarding cultural diversity?	72%	70%
3 How much did cross-cultural training increase your awareness and knowledge of the ways in which your own culture influences your thoughts and feelings?	74%	74%
4 How much did cross-cultural training increase your knowledge and understanding of cross-cultural communication skills?	74%	74%
5 How much did cross-cultural training increase your knowledge and understanding of the customs, values and beliefs of other cultures?	72%	72%
6 How much did cross-cultural training increase your confidence in dealing with people from different cultures?	70%	72%

Note: n = 124

Table C4 Comparative satisfaction ratings by mode of training delivery

Mode of cross-cultural training delivery	Respondents	% rating 4	No.	% rating 5	No.	Total %
Core unit or module	55	45.4%	25	23.6%	13	69.1%
Part of core unit or module	30	40.0%	12	20%	6	60.0%
Elective unit or module	15	33.3%	5	46.6%	7	80.0%
Part of elective unit or module	4	75.0%	3	0		75.0%
Specialised workshop	55	34.5%	19	21.8%	12	56.4%

Notes: n = 124

Respondents could choose more than one option.

Table C5 Comparative satisfaction ratings by style of training delivery

Style of cross-cultural training delivery	Respondents	% rating 4	No.	% rating 5	No.	Total %
Classroom lecturing	24	37.5%	9	33.3%	8	70.8%
Classroom interactive exercises	48	39.6%	19	33.3%	16	72.9%
Comb. lecturing & interactive	65	38.5%	25	30.8%	20	69.2%
Field work/project work	17	29.4%	5	29.4%	5	58.8%
Comb. fieldwork & classroom	28	21.4%	6	53.55%	15	75.0%

Notes: n = 124

Respondents could choose more than one option.

Table C6 Comparative satisfaction ratings by recency of training completion

Recency of cross-cultural training	Respondents	% rating 4	No.	% rating 5	No.	Total %
Less than 1 year ago	50	28.0%	14	24.0%	12	52.0%
1–2 years ago	46	47.8%	22	17.4%	8	65.2%
3 years ago	15	20.0 %	3	40.0%	6	60.0%
4 years ago	3	66.6%	2	0		66.6%
5 or more years ago	13	38.5%	5	23.1%	3	61.5%

Notes: n = 124

Respondents could choose more than one option.

Best aspects of training

Interaction and discussion	83.3%	(100)
Content	65.8%	(79)
Trainers' attributes (style, knowledge and enthusiasm)	52.5%	(63)
Guest speakers and panellists	15.8%	(19)

Duration of the cross-cultural training

Appropriate	75%	(96)
Too long	2.3%	(3)
Too short	22.7%	(29)

Recommended ways to improve cross-cultural training

Increase time	49.5%	(54)
Decrease time	1.8%	(2)
Increase interaction	48.6%	(53)
Increase content	46.8%	(51)
Provide different content	24.8%	(27)
Different training approach/style	23.9%	(26)
Different course structure	22.0%	(24)
Better trainers	12.8%	(14)

d) Contribution of cross-cultural training to workplace performance

The following table compares the importance placed on cultural competence by respondents to this study and by respondents to the Standing Committee on Immigration and Multicultural Affairs (SCIMA 2006) study.

Table C7 Comparative ratings of the importance of cultural competence

Survey question	Average rating	SCIMA average
1 How important is it in your work to be able to work effectively with co-workers from different cultures?	86%	88%
2 How important do you think it is to your manager/s that you are able to work effectively with co-workers from different cultural backgrounds?	88%	82%
3 How important is it in your work to be able to deal effectively with customers/clients from different cultures?	90%	88%
4 How important do you think it is to your manager/s that you are able to work effectively with customers/ clients from different cultural backgrounds?	90%	84%

Overall rating of the contribution of cross-cultural training to job performance: 71.6% (3.58 on 5-point Likert scale)

Percentage rating overall satisfaction as above average or excellent 57.5%

Percentage rating overall satisfaction as below average or poor 12%

Rating of extent of ability to transfer cross-cultural training learning to co-workers: 61% (3.05 on 5-point Likert scale)

Percentage rating this as above average or excellent 36.2%

Percentage rating this as average 37.8%

Percentage rating this as above below average or poor 26.1%

e) Demand and recommendations for future cross-cultural training

Would like further cross-cultural training 68.3%

Would recommend cross-cultural training to others 85%

Would not recommend cross-cultural training to others 10%

Are not sure if would recommend cross-cultural training to others 5%

Believe cross-cultural training should be compulsory for all employees in organisation 81%

Believe cross-cultural training should be compulsory for all employees in organisation who are in customer or client service positions 89.3%

Appendix D

Findings of survey of current practice in cross-cultural training in vocational education and training

a) Profile of respondents

<i>Responding VET organisations:</i> (See appendix A)		38
Individual respondents:		
Responses to Part A: Survey of current cross-cultural training practice in VET organisations		61
Responses to Part B: Survey of cross-cultural trainers		57
		31
<i>Location:</i>		
	Australian Capital Territory	3.5%
	New South Wales	26.3%
	Northern Territory	3.5%
	Queensland	17.5%
	South Australia	33.3%
	Tasmania	0
	Victoria	8.8%
	Western Australia	7.0%
<i>Size of workforces:</i>		
	25 or less employees	32.1%
	26–100	8.9%
	101–500	6.1%
	501–1000	1.8%
	1001–5000	26.8%
	5001–10000	10.7%
	20 000 or more	3.6%
<i>Position of respondents:</i>		
	Manager	75%
	Teacher, coordinator, project officer	25%

b) Cross-cultural training practice

Table D1 Modes of cross-cultural training delivery

Mode	%	No.
Classroom teaching	74.8%	41
Specialised training workshops	65.4%	36
External projects e.g. field work	43.6%	24
Distance or e-learning	38.2%	21
Mentoring	29.1%	16
Coaching	23.6%	13
Informal workplace learning/induction	10.9%	6

Notes: n = 55
Respondents could choose more than one option.

Table D2 Learning objectives of cross-cultural training compared with SCIMIA study

Learning objective	%	No.	SCIMA %
To improve service to culturally diverse customers	98.2%	54	91.6%
To improve workplace communication and relationships	94.5%	52	64.2%
To improve community relationships	60.0%	33	54.7%
To improve compliance, equal opportunity/discrimination	58.2%	32	45.3%
To improve marketing to culturally diverse customers	41.8%	23	33.0%
To improve capacity to work internationally	2.7%	18	21.0%
Other: confront racism, improve language and settlement	12.7%	7	N/A

Notes: n = 55

Respondents could choose more than one option.

Appendix E

Findings of survey of employers

a) Profile of respondents

Respondents: 34 (see appendix B)

Private sector: 18

Public sector: 16

ANZSIC (Australian and New Zealand Standard Industry Classification) industry classifications represented: agriculture, mining, manufacturing, electricity and water supply, wholesale trade, transport, communication services, finance, government and health and community services.

Head offices:	South Australia	10
	New South Wales	5
	Victoria	5
	Western Australia	5
	Australian Capital Territory	4
	Queensland	2
	Tasmania	1
	Germany	1
	France	1

Size of workforce:	Fewer than 500	20%
	501–10 000	55%
	20 000 or more	25%

Position of respondents:	Senior executives	25%
	Middle managers	50%
	Training or HR managers	25%

b) Importance and perceived benefits of cultural competence to employers

Importance of employee cultural competence for working with culturally diverse clients and customers: 86% (4.3 on 5-point Likert scale)

Public sector rating: 90% (4.5)

Private sector rating: 78% (3.9)

Importance of employee cultural competence for working with culturally diverse co-workers: 80% (4.0 on 5-point Likert scale)

Public sector rating: 85% (4.25)

Private sector rating: 76% (3.8)

Table E1 Comparison of ratings of importance of employee cultural competence for working with culturally diverse customers and co-workers

Importance	VET	VET graduates	Employers	SCIMA employers	SCIMA participants
Customers	4.7	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.3
Co-workers	4.4	4.3	4.0	4.1	4.3

Note: Ratings on a Likert scale of 1–5

Table E2 Inclusion of cultural competence in human resource management practices

HR practice	Private sector		Public sector		Total	
	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.
Cultural competence included in recruitment specifications	44.4%	8	25%	4	35.3%	12
Cultural competence included in career development strategies	77.8%	14	62.5%	10	70.5%	24
Cultural competence included in performance appraisal	44.5%	8	50.0%	8	47.0%	16

Note: n = 34

Table E3 Workplace benefits attributed to graduates' cultural competence

Workplace benefit	No.	%
Improved customer service	14	41.2%
Increased cultural self-awareness	10	29.4%
Improved workplace communication & relationships	9	26.4%
Improved compliance with EO & discrimination laws	9	26.4%
Improved compliance with access & equity policies	8	23.5%
Improved community relations	5	14.7%
Improved marketing to culturally diverse customers	3	8.8%
Improved skills to work internationally	3	8.8%

Note: n = 34

c) Current and planned cross-cultural training activity

Organisations conducting cross-cultural training for employees: 27 (79.4%)
 Private sector: 66.6%
 Public sector: 93.7%

Types of cross-cultural training provided to employees: Percentage of organisations
 General cultural awareness 50%
 Multicultural culture specific training 47%
 Indigenous cultural awareness 32.4%
 Specialised e.g. customer service training 32.4%
 Working with interpreters and translators 29.4%
 Managing cultural diversity 26.4%

Table E4 Organisational estimates of demand for job applicants and existing employees to be able to demonstrate cultural competence will increase or decrease over the next five years

	Private	Public	Total	% private	% public	% total
Greatly decrease	0	0	0	0	0	0
Decrease		0	0	0	0	0
Stay same	5	5	10	27.8	31.3	29.4
Increase	10	9	19	55.5	56.2	55.9
Greatly increase	3	2	5	16.7	12.5	14.7
Total			34	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table E5 Organisations planning to provide cross-cultural training to employees in the next five years

	Private	Public	Total	% private	% public	% total
No	1	0	1	5.6	0	3.0
Don't know	0	1	1	0	6.25	3.0
Yes	17	15	32	94.4	93.75	94.0
Total			34	100.0	100.0	100.0

Table E6 Other employer strategies for developing employee cultural competence

Strategy	% of employers	No. of employers
Building cultural awareness into other training	58.8%	20
Providing mentoring or coaching programs	44.1%	15
Recruiting more staff from culturally diverse backgrounds	52.9%	18
Developing policies & procedures for culturally inclusive work practices	38.2%	13
Other: e.g succession planning, improved use of language services, helping clients deal with overseas customers.	20.6%	7

d) Positioning of cross-cultural training in VET and the workplace

Table E7 Comparison of percentages of employers and VET graduates who believe cross-cultural training should be mandatory for all employees in their organisation

	Private	Public	Total	% private	% public	% total	% VET graduates	Av. %
No	10	4	14	55.6	25.0	41.2	9.1	25.1
Don't know	2	2	4	11.1	12.5	11.8	9.9	10.8
Yes	6	10	16	33.3	62.5	47.0	81.0	64.0
Total			34	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9

Table E8 Comparison of percentages of employers and VET graduates who believe cross-cultural training should be mandatory for all employees in their organisation in customer contact roles

	Private	Public	Total	% private	% public	% total	%VET graduates	Av. %
No	3	0	3	16.7	0	8.8	5.7	7.3
Don't know	3	1	4	16.7	6.3	11.8	5.0	8.3
Yes	12	15	27	66.6	93.7	79.4	89.3	84.3
Total			34	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	99.9

Support document details

Additional information relating to this research is available in *Cross-cultural training and workplace performance: Support document*. It can be accessed from NCVET's website <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2027.html>> and contains:

- ✧ Primary approach letters
- ✧ Tests for statistical significance
- ✧ Survey of current cross-cultural training practice
- ✧ Survey of VET graduates
- ✧ Survey of employers