

National VET research priorities:
2010 and beyond

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Background

In 2007, the ministers for training in Australia signed off on five research priorities (box 1), which have since shaped much of the research on vocational education and training (VET). In their scope and reach the priorities go beyond the intricacies of the VET sector to explore how vocational education and training interconnect with the economy, workplaces, and other education sectors.

These priorities proved broad enough to accommodate an array of research pertinent to VET policy and practice, enabling a body of evidence to be built up around key themes. Those themes are likely to continue to be relevant beyond 2010 and, while the current research program is investigating various aspects of these issues, there are likely to be questions raised within the current priorities which warrant further exploration.

Box 1 National VET research priorities 2007–10

- 1 **Growing the labour supply:** by examining how VET can support greater participation in the workforce, especially for equity groups whose participation is relatively low
- 2 **Motivating individuals to participate in VET:** by understanding why people choose to, or not to, participate in VET, what drives demand for VET and what outcomes it offers participants in the medium-to-long-term
- 3 **Sustaining a skills base through apprenticeships and traineeships:** by identifying ways of maximising the number of people who complete their apprenticeship or traineeship
- 4 **Enhancing the productive capacity of enterprises:** by ensuring that employers are well placed to maintain the skills of their workers and to adapt to new work practices and technologies
- 5 **Enabling VET providers to compete effectively:** by identifying the barriers VET providers face to operating effectively in a competitive environment.

Work commissioned under the priorities is reported in the appendix. Four leading research centres (the Melbourne Institute, University of Sydney, Australian National University and University of South Australia) are addressing three of the five priorities (growing the labour supply, motivating individuals and enhancing the productive capacity of enterprises). Much of this work is also investigating issues of social inclusion, for example, for low-paid workers and those with inadequate literacy skills. While one program of work, being conducted by the Workplace Relations Centre at the University of Sydney, is approaching its study from the perspective of enterprises, priority four has attracted relatively little interest from VET researchers, perhaps because their attention tends to focus on the training sector rather than on business. This suggests that in the future it would be useful to try to attract scholars interested in industry and workplace issues to engage in VET research.

Other research, funded through open tenders and direct commissions, has looked at specific equity groups (for example, Indigenous learners and people with a disability), and at teaching and learning. Research priority five attracted little interest from researchers bidding for research grants, which is why NCVER approached six people to write essays on this important topic. While little commissioned work is underway on apprentices, this has been a focus of NCVER's in-house research, and future projects will be facilitated by the Apprentice and Trainee Destination Survey conducted in 2008.

There is also a substantial strand of research being undertaken on the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, focusing on youth transitions (box 2).

Box 2 Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) research priorities 2008–10

In 2008, three research priority areas were set for the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY):

- 1 Improve the education outcomes of young people:** by understanding the factors that impact on participation and completion in education and training, especially for those who are disadvantaged
- 2 Provide young people with the skills, qualifications and capabilities needed for the contemporary labour market:** by investigating whether the skills from, and pathways through, education and training are well matched with labour market demands
- 3 Support young people to lead full and meaningful lives:** by gaining a better insight into the wellbeing and social activities of young people.

The speed with which the global financial crisis of 2008 affected economies has highlighted the extent and pace of change which now commonly confronts businesses. However, the current situation has not removed governments' strong emphasis on skills development. The intersection between economic conditions and training will inform future research directions, as will the emphasis on youth transitions and on a more integrated tertiary education sector.

NCVER is embarking on consultations to determine a new set of research priorities which will become the basis for research undertaken through the National VET Research and Evaluation (NVETRE) program. These consultations will also suggest broad directions for our in-house research activities; other agencies and organisations may also elect to frame their research activities within the national priorities. It is envisaged that these priorities will again cover a three-year period and that they will be broad enough to encourage a variety of bold, interesting and relevant research questions. Advice on new priorities will be put to ministers in mid-2010.

Context

One of the changes in the training landscape since the current priorities were formulated is the establishment of Skills Australia, a statutory body charged with providing expert and independent advice to the Minister for Education, Employment and Workplace Relations on matters relating to Australia's current, emerging and future workforce skills and workforce development needs. In setting its 2009 work plan, Skills Australia (2009a) set out five drivers of change that will influence Australia's future skills requirements. These are paraphrased below:

- ✧ *Economic factors:* in addition to dealing with the consequences of the recession, we need to consider how skills will contribute to and sustain a recovery. That recovery will take place in tandem with the growth of other economies, notably those of China and India, which are developing their manufacturing and knowledge-based capabilities, which in turn will drive Australia to increase its skills base.
- ✧ *Demographic changes:* Australia has an ageing population, which will see a decline in rates of participation in the labour market. This will continue to demand creative thinking about our future skills base.
- ✧ *Social considerations:* we must also look at the ways training can assist in increasing participation of those people who are under-represented in the workforce.
- ✧ *Technology:* technology is ever more integrated in everything we do and provides opportunities for improved innovation and productivity if we know how.
- ✧ *Sustainability:* the health of the environment is exerting a growing influence on government policy, industrial operations and consumer choice. Consequently, the nature of many jobs is changing, and we need to better understand what this means for education and training.

The Chairman of the Productivity Commission, Gary Banks, echoed these themes in early 2009, when he put the case for a rigorous, evidence-based approach to public policy:

Australia faces major long-term challenges; challenges that have only been exacerbated by the economic turbulence that we are struggling to deal with right now. When the present crisis is over, we will still have the ongoing challenges of greenhouse, the ageing of our population and continuing international competitive pressures. We should not underestimate the significance of those challenges, which place a premium on enhancing the efficiency and productivity of our economy. (Banks 2009)

This discussion paper—and the deliberations it aims to prompt—is focused on how these drivers relate to priorities for research into post-compulsory education and training in Australia. Much of that research is likely to continue to consider vocational education and training, but, in light of the 2008 Review of Australian Higher Education (Bradley Review) and the growing demand for higher-level skills in Australia, it will also need to investigate how the tertiary education sector more broadly ensures that all Australian adults are equipped with the skills to participate in society throughout their lives.

Banks's discussion of evidence-based policy points to another important consideration for shaping a research agenda, when he claims that: 'Half the battle is understanding the problem. Failure to do this properly is one of the most common causes of policy failure and poor regulation' (Banks 2009, p.8). As Banks notes, research, which involves data-gathering and the testing of evidence, cannot be done overnight. So while the priorities we are seeking to develop must be relevant to policy in the field of education and training, workforce development and social participation, they will be subject to a rhythm different from the three-year political cycle. Moreover, while it is important to undertake research relevant to immediate issues, it is also desirable to have research that more generally deepens our understanding of education and training, and its intersection with the labour market and society more broadly.

Themes

To give some shape to the deliberations about the research priorities, we have taken the drivers set out above and matched these with various issues relating to education and training. This approach is intended to help refine broad issues into manageable research endeavours. It is, however, almost impossible to corral these topics, and it is likely that questions and future research will range across more than one theme.

1 The implications of the economic downturn for education and training

The economic downturn triggered by the global financial crisis in late 2008 has had an immediate impact on policy but is it relevant to research priorities being set in June 2010? The answer is yes, for the following reasons. It is possible that the effects will be long lived. History tells us that it can take many years to reduce unemployment levels, and we have to anticipate the scarring effects on those worst affected by the downturn, for example, young people unable to enter the labour market. There will also be some regions that suffer particular hardship and these may find recovery more difficult. Indeed, parts of the Australian economy are likely to undergo significant structural adjustments as industry adapts to new circumstances. To some extent these shifts may have taken place whatever the economic climate, being driven by factors such as the growth of services sectors and the changing nature of work, but have been accelerated by the downturn. The coming years will allow us to evaluate the robustness of training models in adverse times and the role that training plays in preparing for the upturn. In this context, the development of new models of training partnerships that offer creative solutions for learners and business may be relevant. A salient consideration here is how enterprises and training providers cater to the ever-present need to be agile.

2 Social considerations

The complexity of contemporary life demands much of citizens. Not only do they need essential skills to find jobs, they also require adequate levels of literacy and numeracy to be able to manage their finances and absorb messages about health, the law and so on. It is important to keep in mind these wider benefits of education. Moreover, for disadvantaged learners, the pathway to productive engagement in society may not be straightforward, demanding more sophisticated approaches to funding the system and delivering the training. We do not yet know how best to fashion and implement such approaches.

3 Demographic change

Young people have become a strong policy focus, especially given their vulnerability in times of recession. In the longer term, however, attention must also stay on all those Australians, whatever their age, who do not have the level of skills that help them live healthy and productive lives, both while they are attached to the labour market (which, in the future, may well be when people are in their 60s and 70s) and beyond. This suggests that we should continue exploring the learning needs of older people and their patterns of work. While many older people, for example, self-funded retirees, now need to work more as the recession bites, it will be important in improved economic times to find ways to encourage older people to stay engaged. Nevertheless, the reality is that an ageing society is increasing the demand for community, health and other services. Training the workforce required to meet this demand will be an ongoing challenge.

Other demographic considerations of relevance to training include the growth and decline of various regions in Australia and the question of the role of migration in maintaining a skilled workforce into the future.

4 Technology and innovation

Technology has had many ramifications for the nature of jobs and also the delivery of training. The rapidity of contemporary technological developments means that people are compelled to be lifelong learners with the ability to adopt new skills and adapt to new ways of doing things. More specifically, Australia is set to have national broadband network that aims to connect 90% of homes, schools and workplaces to high-speed broadband services. This will herald new ways of conducting business in many industries, including education. The job of harnessing the power of information technologies remains a huge challenge for the facilitators of learning.

Industry is also being called upon to enhance its capacity for innovation, not only in terms of new product development but also in the ways it approaches management and work processes. This raises the question of how the VET system can instil research abilities and the capacity for creative thinking in learners, both of which will contribute to innovation and productivity.

5 Sustainability

Issues of environmental sustainability directly affect economic structures, the way industry operates and the nature of many jobs. This in turn demands responses from the training system. Two challenges were set out by the President of the ACTU, Sharan Burrow, at the Big Skills Conference in March 2009: to 're-skill workers in existing blue collar jobs to ensure they can manufacture, install and operate new technologies and to educate generations of students and young workers to take up new green jobs'.

6 Supply-side pushes

The Australian Government's ambition is that 40% of all 25 to 34-year-olds will attain a bachelor-level qualification or above by 2025. To reach these targets will require a combined effort by all those involved in education. More immediately, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has put education and training measures at the centre of its response for meeting the challenges

posed by the recession, in particular that of rising unemployment. Recognising the role that training can play in preparing people for work and for retaining jobs, COAG has announced a training and learning bonus to help with education costs for eligible income-support recipients wishing to return to study (February 2009), and, in April 2009, a Compact with Young Australians that gives young people (15–24 years) entitlements to education or training places. The Australian Government has also established the Securing Apprenticeships and Traineeships initiative to help keep out-of-trade apprentices and trainees connected to the workforce and to their training.

A recent Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) report, *Jobs for youth*, highlights that the economic downturn may present an ideal opportunity to address the long-term labour market challenges associated with boosting young people's skills. The recent initiatives targeted to young people noted above suggest that the government may have adopted this approach. Having the right skills in the workforce is also a critical plank in the government's strategy to stimulate the economy by funding infrastructure projects.

7 Social inclusion

Equity is a prominent concern in government agendas, with education and training one important avenue by which to improve social inclusion. Among the targets set by COAG are those designed to improve literacy levels, and reduce the proportion of people without certificate III qualifications. More specifically, COAG aims to halve the gap for Indigenous students in Year 12 attainment or equivalent attainment rates by 2020, and to halve the gap in employment outcomes between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a decade.

8 Reforms in the education and training system

The training system is facing increased competition, with the issue of marketisation clearly on governments' agendas, as is seen most explicitly in the reforms introduced in Victoria, which are based on a student entitlement system. In a recent position paper issued by Skills Australia (2009b), consideration is being given to reforms which would usher in a purchaser–provider model, whereby the state sets targets for student numbers, with clients of the system able to choose the trainer.

This debate on the optimal structure for the training market has highlighted the need for better information to assist the training consumer to make the right choice about the course of learning they undertake. It has also raised the question of how quality of provision is determined and regulated, and about the best ways to deploy both public and private funds for effective skills development.

Other challenges facing VET providers are plateauing student numbers, poor completion rates and a high incidence of mismatch between study areas and occupational outcomes. These issues highlight the need for providers to continually improve the efficiency and effectiveness of their operations.

With a trend towards an integrated tertiary education sector, VET is facing further change. This has given rise to a reconsideration of the governance arrangements for the VET sector, and its intersection with higher education, and will call for greater attention to systems of credit transfer and collaboration to ensure that tertiary providers meet demands for innovation and high-level skills. There is also a trend, which is likely to continue, towards more on-the-job training aligned to workforce development plans.

9 Internationalisation

Another change being embraced by the system is the rise of education as an export industry. It is vital that the provision to international students, on- and off-shore, is of high quality. Conversely, attention to the internationalisation of Australian qualifications is required, not just to allow our workers to compete with others around the world but also to ensure comparability with those who come to Australia to work. A more multinational workforce will also demand higher cross-cultural competence in employees.

10 Teaching and learning

How does the teacher engage the student in the twenty-first century? How do we convert information into knowledge? How do we encourage innovation and creative thinking? What effect does learning in cyberspace have on the social aspects of learning? What electronic products are most useful for building career profiles and reducing unnecessary training? These are the big questions teachers and trainers are asking, and those which have intensified the spotlight on the issue of teacher qualifications.

A review of the training products required for the twenty-first century has set out to improve the flexibility and responsiveness of the VET system and may usher in modifications to the competency-based system. These developments will deserve analysis and reflection, especially as we continue to debate the merits of broad vocational education as opposed to more narrowly focused technical training.

Research consultations: What we are aiming for

The consultations will aim to identify a limited number of research priorities, ideally no more than five, which the NCVET Board will provide to ministers for their consideration. These priorities will be used to generate research and to inform primary data-gathering exercises. Such a program of activity allows research findings to be sufficiently generalised to ensure that they have an impact. NCVET will report annually to ministers on the efficacy of the priorities and will make sure that any gaps in the research are addressed, either through open funding rounds or direct commissions.

Each priority is expected to meet the following criteria:

- ✧ Research priorities should be broad enough to generate several specific research projects.
- ✧ Research priorities must have the potential to meet a policy goal or constitute an improvement in practice. This can include high-level evaluation that develops a better understanding of the costs and benefits of various reform initiatives.
- ✧ Research priorities will be in areas where the existing research and statistical evidence is either thin or inconclusive.
- ✧ Research priorities need to be forward looking—in areas where it is anticipated that, when available, the findings will have high impact.
- ✧ Research priorities require broad support from across the sector.

Timeline for consultations

Interested parties are invited to provide written submissions or contribute to a blog. The address for submissions is:

Renee Lukeman, Research Management Branch, PO Box 8288, Station Arcade SA 5000, Australia
<renee.lukeman@ncver.edu.au>.

Written submissions will close on Friday 18 December 2009.

The blog can be found at <<http://futureresearch.pbworks.com>>.

A free public forum will be held in Melbourne on Friday 5 February 2010 to give stakeholders the opportunity to contribute their views on the future research priorities. Further details of the forum will be made available in due course.

In March 2010 the NCVET Board will consider submissions and the blog commentary, as well as feedback from discussions with researchers and other stakeholders, with a view to putting its advice on a new set of priorities in mid-2010 to the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment. A paper providing a digest of the feedback will be published around the same time.

Appendix: NCVER's current research and statistics

This section provides an overview of the national VET statistics program and of research undertaken by NCVER or managed by it under the National VET Research and Evaluation Program. The following section outlines other statistical collections and surveys and provides an overview to the current survey and collection cycles.

Ongoing statistical collections and surveys

NCVER conducts regular national collections, as outlined in table 1, to provide statistical information about the VET sector within Australia. Each of these collections are research resources in their own right, with tailored tabulations or unit record files available to researchers free or at a marginal cost.

Table 1 Overview of NCVER's statistical collections and surveys

Collections/survey	What is it?	Frequency and scope
National VET Provider Collection (NCVER)	Administrative collection of information on students, the courses they undertake and their achievement. The information is sourced from student enrolment forms and through state and territory training authorities from registered training providers.	Annual national collection dates back to 1994. Scope of collection has progressively widened and broadly covers the 'public VET system'.
MCEETYA VET in Schools Collection (NCVER)	Administrative collection of courses undertaken by school students in recognised VET qualifications, including certificate I, II, and III, including senior secondary certificate of achievement. Sourced from student enrolment records through the board of studies in each state or territory.	Annual collection dates back to 2005. The scope is VET undertaken as part of the senior secondary certificate of education in a calendar year.
National VET Financial Data Collection (NCVER)	Administrative collection of information on the finances of state and territory training authorities and the Australian Government.	Annual, accrual reporting dates back to 1997. The scope is the revenue and expenditure of the eight state and territory governments and the Australian Government.
National Apprentice and Trainee Collection (NCVER)	Administrative collection on apprentices and trainees and their employers. Sourced from state and territory training authorities via Australian Apprenticeships Centres from the apprenticeship/traineeship training contracts registered at the time of commencement and updated throughout the life of the contract.	Quarterly, dates back to 1994. Scope is all apprentices and trainees with an apprenticeship/traineeship training contract.

Collections/survey	What is it?	Frequency and scope
Student Outcomes Survey—previously TAFE Graduate Destination Survey (NCVER)	A self-completion survey of students who completed or part-completed a qualification in the preceding year and left the system. It covers their views on the training they received and their current activity.	Annual, dates back to 1997. It was renamed the Student Outcomes Survey in 1999. Varies in scale from large-sized sample (institutional level) to medium-sized sample (state level) in alternate years. Has had some changes in scope. The current scope (from 2005) is students who completed or part-completed a qualification in the public VET system and left the system.
Down the Track (NCVER)	A national telephone survey following up students who completed or part-completed a qualification in 2001, looking at their longer-term outcomes and benefits from training.	One-off targeted survey conducted in 2004 of 15 to 24-year-old graduates and module completers who responded to the 2002 Student Outcomes Survey.
Survey of Employer Use and Views of the VET System (NCVER)	A telephone survey of employers covering their engagement and satisfaction with aspects of the VET system, including satisfaction with the skills of recent VET graduates.	Conducted in 2005 and 2007 on current scope. Previously in 2001 and before then on a biennial basis back to 1995, with changing scope. Current scope is all employers.
Indigenous Student Survey (NCVER)	A face-to-face survey of Indigenous students, which extends some of the information sought in the Student Outcomes Survey, with a specific focus on Indigenous people and the benefits arising from training.	One-off survey conducted in 2004. Scope is Indigenous students in the public VET system who undertook any training in 2003.
Delivery of VET offshore by public providers (published by AEI, collected by NCVER)	An administrative collection devoted to the offshore activities of public providers of vocational education and training.	Annual. A pilot study was conducted in 2002 and data have been collected every year since then. Data for 2002 are not directly comparable to later collections. Scope is public providers of vocational education and training (TAFE and higher education institutes delivering VET). Report for AEI, not published by NCVER.
Apprentice and Trainee Destination Survey (NCVER)	A telephone survey of the employment and further study outcomes of apprentices and trainees, their satisfaction with the apprenticeship or traineeship, and reasons for non-completion (where applicable).	One-off survey at this stage. Scope is apprentices and trainees who finished their training (either completing or cancelling/withdrawing) in the last quarter of 2007.
Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) ^(a) funded by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), with support from state and territory governments.	A longitudinal survey of young people who are tracked from the age of about 15 to 25 years.	LSAY collects information on youth transitions. It covers a wide range of education, employment and social aspects of the school to work transition.

Note: (a) NCVER is responsible for the analytical program, including making the data accessible to researchers.

Statistical data gaps

NCVER's submission to the national VET data strategy highlighted the following areas where there are little or no data available:

- ✧ VET activity delivered by private providers
- ✧ outcomes for apprentices and trainees (survey ran in 2008 for first time)
- ✧ student pathways

- ✧ characteristics of the VET workforce (a report has been prepared for the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations on considerations for any future data collections)
- ✧ employer expenditure on training
- ✧ longer-term outcomes of participating in VET.

One-off surveys were undertaken in 2004 to gain a better understanding of the longer-term outcomes of participating in VET, and in 2008 to identify destinations of apprentices and trainees and the causes of their non-completion. Data were collected on the TAFE workforce in 2002 and 2008. Work is also underway to capture the fee-for-service VET activity delivered by private providers. Nonetheless, there is still a paucity of information in these areas.

The national data collections and surveys are overseen by the National Training Statistics Committee. The collection instruments are not static and are periodically reviewed to ensure that relevant information can be reported. Topics of national relevance appropriate to the purpose of a collection or survey can be considered for inclusion. For example, in 2009 a new module of questions relating to the recognition of prior learning was developed and included in the Student Outcomes Survey. Similarly, the LSAY instrument is reviewed from time to time to ensure that the questionnaire remains relevant.

Research

The 2007 and 2008 Research Messages publications list the research undertaken by NCVET and published during these years and contain an introductory essay on the highlights of each year. See <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1955.html>> and <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/2096.html>>.

See also NCVET's 2009 strategic plan for work currently underway: <<http://www.ncver.edu.au/publications/1353.html>>.

In keeping with the likelihood that a body of research on a particular topic will have greater impact than a single piece of work, NCVET contracted four leading research centres to conduct programs of research aligned to the 2007–10 research priorities. The work the centres are undertaking is set out in box 3.

Box 3 Research centre activities

Low-paid workers and VET: Increasing VET participation amongst lower-paid workers over the life cycle

The Centre for Work + Life, University of South Australia, is investigating the question of how changing work, home and community structures impact on the participation of lower-educated and low-paid groups in VET.

Enhancing future productivity: The interdependence of workers, employers and VET

The Workplace Research Centre, University of Sydney, is looking at the role of VET in improving workforce participation and company performance, with a specific focus on the childcare and meat-processing industries.

Vocational education and training participation and labour market outcomes

The Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, University of Melbourne, is researching the economic aspects influencing people's decisions to participate in VET and the relationship between VET and various labour market processes.

Securing their future: Older workers and the role of VET

The Social Policy Evaluation, Analysis and Research Centre, Australian National University, is examining participation patterns in vocational education and training among older workers, and the factors which influence those patterns.

The table below identifies which of the 2007–10 national research priorities the current commissioned research work is addressing.

Table 2 Work addressing the national priorities

Title	Authors	Priority
A regional analysis of employment of tradespersons	Phil Lewis et al., University of Canberra	4
Brokering successful Indigenous employment outcomes: Identifying common themes in best practice models	Anne Redman et al., Cultural and Indigenous Research Centre Australia	1 & 2
Competition in the training market: Book of readings	NCVER	5
Crediting vocational education and training for learner mobility	John Pardy et al., Box Hill Institute of TAFE	5
Cultural dimensions of Indigenous participation in vocational education and training	Mike Dockery, Curtin University	1
Directions in European VET policy and practice: Lessons for Australia	Roger Harris and Michele Simons, University of South Australia	5
Enhancing future productivity: The interdependence of workers, employers and VET	John Buchanan et al., University of Sydney	1 & 4
High-quality traineeships: Identifying what works	Erica Smith et al., University of Ballarat	3
Higher education in TAFE	Leesa Wheelahan et al., Griffith University	5
Innovation in teaching and learning in VET: International perspectives	Yvonne Hiller, University of Brighton	5
Low-paid workers and VET: Increasing VET participation amongst lower-paid workers over the life-cycle	Barbara Pocock et al., University of South Australia	2
National research strategy: People with a disability and VET	Tabatha Griffin and Lisa Nechvoglod, NCVER	1 & 2
Practitioner expectations and experiences with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA04)	Berwyn Clayton et al., Victoria University	5
Regenerating the land of professional VET practice: Practitioner-driven changes to teaching and learning	Jane Figgis, AAAJ Consulting	5
Securing their future: Older workers and the role of VET	Chris Ryan et al., Australian National University	2
Vocational education and training and labour markets	Kostas Mavromaras et al., University of Melbourne	1 & 2
What would it take? Employers' perspectives on growing their labour supply with equity groups	Pam Jonas et al., Group Training Association of Victoria	1

Research dissemination and impact

NCVER is committed to ensuring that its research is useful and achieves a practical outcome related to policy implementation and practice. It devotes very considerable effort to the dissemination of the statistics it collects and the research it undertakes and commissions. In a world of information overload, making sure that research findings become known and available to the right people and are useful in informing policy and practice is essential.

To this end NCVER has developed a model for the assessment of the impact of its work (Stanwick, Hargreaves & Beddie 2009). This model recognises the importance of the following factors:

- ✧ establishing the priorities and purpose of the research, with some involvement from end-users
- ✧ multiple dissemination strategies, acknowledging the diverse needs of the sector
- ✧ engagement with stakeholders throughout the research cycle.

Other collections with VET components

This section outlines other statistical collections and surveys and provides an overview to the current survey and collection cycles.

Table 3 Other collections—ABS

Collection/survey	Description	Frequency of collection and reporting
1 Survey of Education and Work (ABS)	A household survey with a focus on educational attainment, participation and transitions. Supplement to the May Labour Force Survey.	Annual. Scope is civilian population aged 15 years and over.
2 Survey of Education and Training (ABS)	A household survey with extensive information obtained on educational qualifications and participation in education and completed training courses in current and previous year prior to the survey.	Quadrennial survey first conducted in 1989 and last conducted in 2005. Scope has widened to population aged 15 years and over.
3 Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey (ABS)	Household survey on aspects of literacy and numeracy, matched with objective assessments of same, allowing international comparisons.	Last conducted in 1996 and 2006. Scope is population aged 15 to 74 years.
4 Training Expenditure and Practices Survey—previously Training Expenditure Survey and Training Practices Survey (ABS)	A business survey, covering training expenditure and training practices.	Irregular; last conducted in 2002, with earlier separate surveys of expenditure (1990, 1993, 1996) and practices (1994, 1997). Scope is all employers, excluding employers in agriculture, forestry and fisheries. No plans at this stage to repeat.
5 Census of Population and Housing (ABS)	The Census aims to accurately measure the number of people in Australia on census night, their key characteristics and the dwellings in which they live. Level of highest educational attainment was introduced in the 2006 Census.	Every five years; last conducted in 2006. The scope is all people in Australia on census night, other than foreign diplomats and their families. Visitors to Australia are counted regardless of how long they have been in the country or how long they plan to stay. Australian residents out of the country on census night are not included.
6 ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey NATSISS (ABS)	A household survey of Indigenous people that focuses primarily on social issues or dimensions. Topics include: family life, health, housing, education, employment, income and demographics. The survey is conducted in remote and non-remote areas in all states and territories.	Every six years. First collected 2002. The scope is Indigenous people aged 15 years and over who are usual residents of private dwellings in Australia (about 60% of the Indigenous population). The survey also collected basic information about the number of children under 15 years of age living in the same household as the survey respondents.
7 Survey of Income and Housing (previously known as the Survey of Income and Housing Costs) (ABS)	A household survey (applying face-to-face interviews) which collects information on sources of income, amounts received, housing characteristics, household and personal characteristics. Main classifications include dwelling tenure type, source of income, labour force status, occupation, industry, educational qualification, state and part of state.	First run in 1994–95, conducted every year to 2003–04 (except 1998–99 and 2001–02) and biennially since 2003–04. The current survey is 2007–08. The scope is residents of private dwellings in both urban and rural areas of Australia. Excludes residents of non-private dwellings (e.g. hotels, boarding schools) and households in very remote areas (e.g. Indigenous communities).

Table 4 Regulatory tools^(a)

Collections/survey	What is it?	Frequency and scope
1 National Training Information Service (DEEWR)	A national register of training organisations and training products that are endorsed by government; gives details of the training products/services of each training provider.	Updated daily. Scope is all registered training organisations (RTOs), national courses and training package qualifications and units of competency. State and territory training authority registering bodies are responsible for RTO and accredited course information and DEEWR for training package information.

Note (a) We have not listed the Training Youth Information Management System used by DEEWR to track apprentice and trainee payments, as reports from this system are not available.

Table 5 Current schedule of collections

Collection/survey	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
1 National VET Provider Collection (NCVER)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
2 VET in Schools Collection (NCVER)				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
3 National VET Financial Data Collection (NCVER)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
4 National Apprentice and Trainee Collection (NCVER)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
5 Student Outcomes Survey (NCVER)											
– TAFE institute level	Grads	Grads		✓		✓		✓		✓	
– state/territory level	MCs	MCs	✓		✓		✓		✓		✓
6 Down the Track (NCVER)			✓								
7 Survey of Employer Use and Views of the VET System (NCVER)				✓		✓		✓			✓
8 Indigenous Student Survey (NCVER)			✓								
9 Delivery of VET offshore by public providers (for AEI)	pilot	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	?	?	?	?
10 Apprentice and Trainee Destination Survey (NCVER)							✓				
11 Survey of Education and Work (ABS)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
12 Survey of Education and Training (ABS)				✓				✓			
13 Adult Literacy and Life skills Survey (ABS)					✓						
14 Training Expenditure and Practices Survey (ABS)	01–02 ✓										
15 Census of Population and Housing (ABS)					✓					✓	
16 ABS National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Survey (ABS)	✓						✓				
17 Survey of Income and Housing (ABS)			03–04 ✓		05–06 ✓		07–08 ✓		09–10 ✓		11–12 ✓
18 National Training Information Service (DEEWR)—regularly updated	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

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