

TAFE as a proactive partner in VET in Schools

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The research focuses on the relationship between TAFE NSW and schools, and was based on a proposition that mentoring was an appropriate definition for significant parts and numbers of those relationships.

A qualitative research methodology was adopted covering:

- A literature review on mentoring
- Interviews with participants in mentoring models using a pilot interview phase, pilot assessment phase and an extended interview phase
- Focus groups involving cross representation
- Collation of above data into a report including recommendations for the implementation of mentoring strategies.

The combination of data gathered allowed the identification of some critical success factors for the relationship between schools and TAFE NSW in the context of VET programs for senior secondary school students.

The NSW schools system and TAFE NSW each have a long history of doing what they do well. In living out of that history each has developed its own unique and appropriate cultures. The challenge is for both to transcend their existing cultures to create a new DET culture.

One of the themes, which run through the research, is the need for trust to be developed between partners, if the relationship is to flourish. The trust needs to be based on a degree of mutual respect, which may not be present in a traditional mentor/protégé relationship in this context. The difficulty arises in identifying which party is to be the mentor, which the protégé.

Against this background, it seems more appropriate to suggest that an effective relationship between schools and TAFE would be of the nature of a reciprocal mentoring relationship. The two partners come together recognizing that they are significantly different in terms of the culture of their organisations and the knowledge and skills they possess. They commit to a reciprocal mentoring relationship, which allows them to benefit mutually, and hence deliver an enhanced product for the students in their care.

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