IDENTIFYING TRADES TUTORS' AND INSTITUTIONS' PERCEPTIONS OF TUTORS' ROLES WITHIN THE ITP SECTOR

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Abstract

Since 1984 tertiary education institutions have been subject to progressive and far-reaching change. Much of this change has been shaped by neo-liberalist agendas which espouse accountability, efficiency, responsiveness, professionalism and managerialism.

This thesis looks at how these themes have shaped or influenced managerial and tutorial perceptions of tutors' operational roles, responsibilities and performance within a selection of contemporary Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITP) teaching environments.

Analysis of the research identifies that scant or poorly prepared institutional documentation around tutorial roles and responsibilities has contributed to uncertainty or confusion, and consequently to individuals adapting their teaching roles to suit themselves.

It has also been identified that managers appointed to the pivotal role of Head of School are stretched in their ability to cope with the demands that are placed on them. This thesis suggests that the increasing responsibilities they carry for managing tutorial staff have contributed to a breakdown in workload planning and performance management processes.

Managers acknowledge that further work needs to be done in defining tutors' roles, responsibilities and performance. But such work presupposes the question: how do managers and tutors perceive tutorial roles in today's ITP teaching environment? Research on this key question and associated issues provides the basis for this thesis.

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Foreword

I commenced teaching in the tertiary sector in the mid 1980s, and have spend 21 years working my way through the system from tutor, programme co-coordinator and Head of Department to my present role as Head of Faculty. Along the way I took the opportunity to complete a Bachelor of Education (Adult) and Postgraduate Diploma in Education (Adult). As I moved progressively through the system from a teaching to a management role, I noticed that my understanding of the expectations of tutors in their roles and performance changed. I came to realise that the manner in which tutors perceived their roles and responsibilities did not always appear to align with that of management. From this initial concern other questions arose, particularly around tutors who had been employed for some time and/or had come from an industry or trades background[1]. At the same time I started to sense that staff had not always kept abreast of the changes happening around them through government legislation and new initiatives in the tertiary sector. Consequently they were not aware if and how expectations had changed, and nor had they been receiving adequate training and preparation that would enable them to discharge the new responsibilities expected of them.

From these initial perceptions I sought to understand whether this was a common situation across the ITP sector, or whether it was isolated to the institution in which I worked. To try to find an answer – or at least discover whether my concerns could be substantiated by the experiences of other staff working in a managerial capacity – I sought comments and advice from colleagues outside of my own institution. I had the privilege of sitting on several national committees and ITPNZ forums, and was able to identify that other tertiary institution managers were expressing similar concerns to my own. Teaching staff were clearly being left confused and uncertain about the nature and implications of

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[1] "Trades" in the context of this thesis refers to a range of vocationally aligned industries/occupations requiring the application of practical skills, usually learnt by way of an apprenticeship or comparable pre-employment training.

their changing world; the additional tasks they were expected to undertake; and the paradigm shifts occurring around them. For trades tutors much of the concern centred on the establishment of ITOs, with the attendant move to assign industry more control of the training, leading to an unknown future direction for trades training in general.

Hence this research proposal was born. How did trades tutors and managers perceive tutorial roles and performance? Was there a difference in their respective perceptions? If such a gap in role and performance expectations indeed existed, how could this gap be narrowed or closed, and would closing it ultimately lead to more effective institutions? In order to source answers to these and related questions, I set out to understand the thinking of tutors and managers working in a 21st-century ITP.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1   Introduction

Since 1984 a continuum of changes has taken place in tertiary education which has resulted in institutions working to meet targets set by shifting political agendas. Throughout the 1990s many of these agendas were shaped by neo-liberalist doctrines. This shift to neo-liberalist agendas, replacing the traditional Keynesian view (Codd, 2005), saw tertiary education starting to focus on decentralisation and marketism, with tertiary education institutions (TEIs) becoming more efficient, competitive and accountable in the way they operated.

After the election of 1999 the Labour-Coalition Government introduced Third Way policies into tertiary education, again signalling a changed political agenda that required TEIs to develop policies which would promote the Government's aim of creating a knowledge society and knowledge economy (Olssen, 2002).

The effect of these changed agendas has been far reaching for managers and teaching staff within TEIs. Common strategic policy directions emerging over the last 20 years espouse efficiency, accountability, responsiveness, professionalism, and managerialism. Within this context a question arises as to how – and to what degree – these themes have shaped or influenced managerial and tutorial perceptions of tutors' operational roles, responsibilities and performance within a contemporary tertiary teaching environment.

1.2   Primary Aim of Thesis

Leading on from this question, the primary aim of this thesis is to establish these respective expectations of management and tutors as to the roles, responsibilities and performance of tutorial staff, through reference to tutors

currently working across four trades-aligned subject areas at three North Island Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics (ITPs). Analysis of the data collected in the course of this research will identify if there are gaps in the way that tutors and managers respectively perceive tutors' roles; if so, where these gaps lie; and if so, how they might affect the outcomes for ITPs in terms of teaching and administrative structures.

This research is particularly timely given the realignment of ITPs' roles as articulated in the latest Tertiary Education Strategy 2007-2012 (Ministry of Education); and the Investment Plans that all TEIs are required to submit to the Tertiary Education Commission (TEC) as a basis for funding over the next triennium. Teaching staff working on trades-aligned programmes must be well versed in the expectation of their roles if ITPs are to meet the challenges that are currently facing them in this ever-changing environment.

This chapter provides a background to the research that is presented in the following chapters of this thesis. Three sections comprise this opening chapter: firstly, an overview explaining the changes that tertiary education – and in particular, trades education – has undergone in New Zealand since the late 1980s; secondly, a review of the effect of these changes on TEIs; and lastly, a summary of the impact these changes have had on the expectations of managers and tutorial staff within the ITP sector today.

From these background considerations three key research questions will be seen to emerge, namely:

- What expectations do ITPs have about the roles, responsibilities and performance of tutorial staff, and how are these expectations articulated?

- What do tutors understand about the roles, responsibilities and performance expected of them by the ITPs in which they work?

- To what extent do the respective expectations of tutors and management concur?

Drawing on the discussion around – and answers to – these questions, it will be suggested later in this thesis that tutorial staff have become uncertain about their roles in tertiary education. Further, that without well-identified key accountabilities and well-understood performance measures this lack of clarity may lead to performance issues which in turn impact upon the effectiveness of the institutions in which they are employed. It will also be suggested that the confusion over role clarification has arisen primarily as a result of the ongoing changes to tertiary education in New Zealand that commenced during the 1980s, and which are reviewed in the following section.

1.3   Changes at National and International Levels

Since the 1980s a continuum of changes has taken place that has led to a paradigmic shift (Kuhn, 1970) on how tertiary education *is* delivered in New Zealand, compared to how it *was formerly* delivered. From the inception of polytechnics (now ITPs) until the early 1980s, polytechnic systems operated in a relatively open environment free of constraints and the flow-on effects of government bureaucracy.

Far-reaching changes to tertiary education commenced after the 1984 election when the Fourth Labour Government, the New Zealand Treasury and the State Services Commission introduced New Right ideologies into education policy (Giddens, 2001).

Giddens (1998) suggests that the introduction of New Right policies saw an end to the old style bureaucracy of the Keynesian welfare state. The New Zealand

Treasury argued that reform in tertiary education was necessary because the highly centralised tertiary education sector was failing to respond to the changing economic climate (Codd, 2002). The welfare state was about to be replaced by an economic environment shaped by a range of new academic, social and philosophical perspectives with core common assumptions that could be attributed to a strain of liberal thought referred to as neo-liberalism (Burchell et al, 1991; Rose, 1993).

Olssen (2002) suggests that neo-liberalism recognises:

- Individuals are economic, self-interested subjects, and the best judges of their own interests and needs.

- The self-interest of individuals corresponds with the interests of society as a whole.

- The best way to allocate resources is by way of a deregulated market economy.

- Laissez-faire attitudes best promote a self-regulating free market and limit government welfare.

- The high desirability of free trade with the abolition of tariffs and subsidies.

The neo-liberalism policy context of the 1990s defined the direction of all TEIs and formed the basis of tertiary education policy over the next ten to 15 years.

1.4   Reframing Tertiary Education: A Series of Reports

A series of reports published in the late 1980s – the Treasury Report to the Incoming Government (1987), The Hawke Report (1998); Learning for Life: Education and training beyond the age of fifteen (1989a); and Learning for Life Two (1989b) – were the first to introduce neo-liberalist policies into tertiary education. Of central importance to these reports were the issues of efficiency and accountability (Giddens, 2001).

In order to enable TEIs to be efficient and accountable, the environment in which they operated needed to change. Where previously ITPs, colleges of education and universities had operated independently of each other, the new policies would in future apply "across the portfolio" (Olssen, 2002, p. 27). The intention of creating a level playing field, however, also had the effect of introducing competition between TEIs in their efforts to attract more students.

To improve efficiency, TEIs were to be bulk funded on the basis of numbers of Equivalent Full-time Students (EFTS). This move led to "corporatisation" of TEIs, effectively turning them into mini-businesses and changing the way in which they were managed.

The process of corporatisation was further bedded in with the introduction in the Education Amendment Act (1990) of a system of charters and profiles that would provide a direct link between the Minister of Education and the institution. In practice this system – rather than promoting institutional autonomy – actually increased the level of Government control (Olssen, 2002).

1.5 Reframing Tertiary Education: The Green Paper (1997) and the White Paper (1998)

The Tertiary Education Review (Green Paper) released in September 1997, emphasised the neo-liberalist themes of accountability, responsiveness and transparency; and sought to increase student participation levels in tertiary education while limiting and containing costs.

The Tertiary White Paper that followed in October 1998 noted that: "A well-performing tertiary education sector will play a key role in securing New Zealand's future" (p. 3). The White Paper went on to suggest that assuming this key role would require tertiary institutions to adapt to meet the challenges and opportunities created by expanding frontiers of knowledge; by the changing needs of students; and by the emergence of new learning technologies. TEIs would also need to better inform students of the nature and intended outcomes of the training which they were offering.

Together, these two Papers reinforced the neo-liberalist themes of:

- Increased monitoring and managing of tertiary funding.
- Greater student choice.
- A more equitable treatment of private and public providers.
- Increased competition between providers.
- A greater alignment of funding across the tertiary sector.
- Student centred funding models in contrast to bulk funding.

1.6 Introduction of Third Way Policies

After the 1999 election the Labour-Coalition Government signalled a change of direction for education policy. Neo-liberalism with its focus on decentralisation

and marketism had formed the basis of education policies through the 1990s and was about to be replaced by a new political agenda described as Third Way (Codd, 2005). The Labour-Coalition Government in declaring its commitment to reforming tertiary education saw tertiary education as central to its overall strategic direction of social inclusion, civic renewal, national identity, economic prosperity and globalisation, which were the core themes and values of Third Way politics (Codd, 2002; Thrupp, 2005).

Third Way politics promoted "a vision of social inclusion, pluralism, and democratic participation within a cohesive society based upon norms of trust and social responsibility" (Codd, 2005, p. xiv). Education policies were developed which would shape the knowledge society and knowledge economy; and foster social and moral responsibility, and community and democratic citizenship (Codd, 2005).

New Zealand's version of Third Way was promoted through the establishment of the Tertiary Education Advisory Commission (TEAC) which was to develop a new strategic direction for tertiary education. TEAC produced four reports from April 2000 to the end of 2001. These reports proposed a new vision for tertiary education and suggested mechanisms to help guide the system towards achieving this vision. One of the main recommendations from the reports was to set up the TEC. Among its responsibilities the TEC was charged with implementing the Government's Tertiary Education Strategy 2002/07 and Statement of Tertiary Education Priorities. A collateral role of the TEC was to advise the government on policies, priorities and sector performance, and to negotiate a system of charters and profiles that would steer the tertiary sector.

In presenting an alternative to the neo-liberalist policies of the past decade, the TEAC proposals were consistent with the general direction of Third Way politics. These proposals, however, promoted a system which was highly centralised and

heavily regulated, and which would ultimately have a marked effect on the way tertiary institutions were to operate.

These centralised and regulated systems are still evident today. They are seen through the continued drive for accountability and efficiency; for managers to be entrepreneurial; and for the focus of tertiary education to be on developing people in preparation for the workplace (Olssen, Codd, O'Neill, 2006).

1.7   Policy Changes Which Have Affected Trades Training

As this thesis focuses primarily on tutors teaching in trades areas it is appropriate to look briefly at the background to the changes which have affected teaching in these areas. Major changes in the way trades training was undertaken were heralded with the Education Amendment Act 1990 which established the New Zealand Qualifications Authority (NZQA). This organisation was to become the Ministry of Education's single, centralised qualifications accrediting body; just as the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) was designed to regularise the content of all New Zealand's tertiary qualifications within a single, cohesive model of progressive skills and knowledge acquisition.

NZQA introduced a competency based model of training in trades areas, whereby each industry "owned" a series of unit standards (covering particular knowledge and skills) which were written by industry representatives.

At the same time as the NQF was being established, further legislation was introduced which played a major role in the future direction of trades training, namely: the Industry Training Act 1992. This Act provided for the recognition and funding of organisations (to be called Industry Training Organisations [ITOs]), which were responsible for sector leadership, setting skills standards and administering the delivery of industry based training. The changes heralded by

these reforms were to have a profound effect on ITPs and on the way they traditionally delivered trades training.

1.8   Impact of NZQA and the TEC

With the introduction of the two regulatory organisations NZQA and the TEC, key elements of neo-liberalism and Third Way were invoked which required TEIs to develop new frameworks for their operational management.

The key areas of change were:

1.8.1   Emphasis on new managerialism

Traditional notions of management espoused professional standards that promoted the values of equity, care, co-operation and social justice. New managerialism saw a shift to: management as customer oriented; decisions that were driven by efficiency and cost effectiveness; and a strong emphasis on competition – especially free market competition – to attract students (Biesta, 2004).

1.8.2   The development of an audit culture

Accountability, together with quality assurance, formed the main drivers of new managerialism (Biesta, 2004). For an organisation to be accountable, a means of verifying whether set standards or performance indicators had been met was necessary. An audit culture grew out of this requirement. Subsequent experience strongly suggests, however, that quality assurance has become more about systems and processes than outcomes (Biesta, 2004). If the aim is ultimately to lift the quality of education, a major rethink of these systems and processes is required.

1.8.3 Performativity

The advent of key regulatory agencies such as the TEC and NZQA saw the development of new measures under which institutions could be held accountable. New managerialism saw managers operating under key performance indicators or performance measures which included specified targets and timeframes. Failure to meet these targets could adversely affect key elements such as funding and accreditation.

1.8.4 Professionalism

Blackmore & Blackwell (2006) suggest that the teaching role in TEIs is in flux, and becoming more fragmented. They also identify that world wide there is a trend to professionalise – and increasingly to "manage" – academic work. They further suggest that the boundaries between academic positions are now more permeable, and that the distinguishing characteristics of teacher, manager and administrator are being eroded. This erosion of traditional boundaries around work roles is seen as having a negative effect on the way that TEIs operate. Further studies suggest that accountability cultures framed in neo-liberalist agendas may inhibit working relationships based on professionalism (Zepke & Leach, 2005).

1.9   Changes in Tertiary Education World Wide

While New Zealand was realigning its tertiary system, so, too, were most English speaking countries including Britain, Ireland, America and Australia; and the New Zealand situation that led to reforms and strategic shifts found its overseas corollaries. In Britain the concept of "lifelong learning" was introduced and formalised; higher education institutions opened their doors to wider participation by increasingly more heterogeneous sectors of the population; inequitable

funding issues presented themselves; "globalisation" became the buzz word; and suggestions of registration for tertiary teachers came under debate. Many practitioners and theorists felt that increasing expectations of teaching staff to upgrade their qualifications should also require them to undergo formal teacher training and registration.

It was also noted that for some time the very nature of higher education had shifted from knowledge generation to transmission of knowledge (Colbeck, 2002). Although primarily affecting university education, this change in perspective did, nevertheless, have a flow-on effect into the polytechnic sector. The lecturer (tutor) who was formerly seen as the repository and dispenser of knowledge, was now seen as a facilitator of knowledge in and for others.

1.10   Changes at Institutional Level within New Zealand Institutions

Twenty years of change at a national level witnessed an obvious trickle-down effect on TEIs, and to the way they planned and operated.

With a reorganisation of the tertiary sector came the creation of various compliance and regulatory bodies including NZQA, Institutes of Technology and Polytechnics of New Zealand (ITPNZ) – itself replacing the Association of Polytechnics of New Zealand (APNZ) – and various ITOs and National Standards Setting Bodies. ITPNZ requires each member institution to develop policies and procedures around 12 Academic Quality Standards, against which it is audited on a three-year cycle. The Government White Paper "Tertiary Education Policy for the 21st Century" (1998) announced that in order to succeed, TEIs needed to have sound management, effective long-term strategic planning, and governance and accounting structures with sufficient flexibility to meet future challenges. The

degree of compliance required to meet these various expectations has been shown to increase workloads significantly at all levels within an institution.

1.11   The Effects of Change at Governance and Management Levels

The intention that all TEIs should operate under the same set of rules (Olssen, 2002) – working in a competitive environment under neo-liberalist agendas and subsequent Third Way policies – naturally led to changes in governance and management practices.

In the case of ITPs, at governance level Councils were to become smaller in size and include Minister of Education appointed members. Roles and responsibilities were to be clearly identified and members held accountable for meeting those responsibilities (Olssen, 2002). Councils also assumed contractual responsibility for appointing the CEO, and for monitoring performance in accordance with an agreed set of performance measures. The CEO, in turn, assumed responsibility for appointing teaching and administration staff responsible for the operational running of the organisation (Olssen, 2002).

Along with improved efficiency came a driver to restructure the reporting lines within ITPs. A diversity of structures proliferated, with some institutions developing flat management structures, and others adhering to more traditional hierarchical models. Reporting lines became increasingly important, as did the allocation of tasks to meet targets identified as part of an accountability agenda (Blackmore & Blackwell, 2006).

The introduction of an audit culture led to a perceptible change in workloads. Blackmore & Blackwell (2006) identify that managers reported increased levels of paperwork, and increased difficulty in simply managing the processes involved,

not assisted – in some cases – by poorly developed institutional policies and procedures.

In terms of human resource management, each ITP developed accepted professional practices, ethical standards and codes of conduct for its staff. All divisions of an institution were required to work to higher professional levels, and to maintain what became known as paper trails to evidence work undertaken. The provisions of current legislation became increasingly significant to the employment of new staff.

Accompanying these changes was a move towards increasing institutional efficiencies, particularly in terms of operational costs. Given that the largest component of an operating budget is usually salaries, staff reductions and rationalisation, and efforts to reduce teaching costs, became priorities for most managers. Where once academic managers were appointed primarily because of their academic knowledge, a more competitive environment saw managers requiring sound financial knowledge and experience, as well as a background in education.

In terms of expectations, managers – particularly at senior levels – experienced the influence of neo-liberalist and Third Way agendas through the inclusion of performance indicators in their job descriptions, against which they were regularly evaluated. Indeed, regular performance appraisals of all staff became the accepted norm. Where formerly teaching staff and managers were left to develop their own goals and targets for work outcomes, under the new cultures these targets were set for them. Poorly perceived performers were managed to improve their performance in line with stated institutional goals.

The move towards TEIs competing on a level playing field led to an increasingly competitive market (Thrupp, 2005); and greater efforts were required to encourage students into each organisation. Within ITPs, the marketing role was

often co-ordinated from a central area, but all staff – including the managers – were expected to assist in promoting their particular departmental programmes. Managers were also required to develop strategic planning skills in order to keep programmes current, up-to-date and industry relevant.

To maintain industry relevance managers needed to keep close contact with their particular industries and to be responsive to identified training requirements (Smelt, 1995). Institutions also needed to remain responsive to their other stakeholders including secondary school students, regional businesses and local iwi.

Under the new audit cultures TEIs were required to become transparent in their operations (Smelt, 1995); particularly in terms of internal processes, decision-making and communication. Within their respective areas managers were given the responsibility of ensuring that approved processes and procedures, ethical standards and codes of conduct were upheld.

Accompanying the rising costs of education was an expectation that institutions themselves would generate some form of revenue (O'Neill, 2005). Managers' KPIs would often include a requirement to source funding to offset programme costs which were traditionally seen as the responsibility of the State. If opportunities arose to recover programme costs, such as selling food in a restaurant run by the students and staff; or if services performed by students could recover materials costs, then these initiatives helped to offset the costs involved in delivering the programme.

Senior managers, supported by staff within each TEI, were charged by the Minister of Education with developing various documents which defined that institution's specific nature, function, role and goals, namely: Charters, Profiles and Mission Statements (O'Neill, 2005). These documents have largely been

replaced by Investment Plans, but institutions must still develop strategic plans setting out their key goals and targets.

One of the most significant challenges for managers in recent times has been to manage institutions within the tight funding regime of Equivalent Full-time Students (EFTS) (Olssen, 2002). A pattern of declining EFTS has impacted negatively on many institutions in recent years; but new funding models and the recently-introduced Investment Plans are expected to improve the financial position of TEIs in general, and of regional ITPs in particular.

Another change relates to the qualifications and training of managers within the ITP sector, many of whom had worked their way up the tertiary system or moved out of the secondary school system. New demands upon them to operate increasingly as business managers saw workload priorities change and workload pressures grow. As management layers became deeper to offset increased workloads, it was not always obvious which roles and duties were being performed, and where the responsibility to fulfil them actually resided. Uncertainty and confusion because of poorly defined roles often created gaps which led to significant areas of non-compliance during external academic audits (Tierney, 2001; Chapman & Austin, 2002).

The training of tutorial staff within ITPs also witnessed changes. In the 1980s tutorial training was well organised under a centralised system. The decision to regionalise training in the late 1980s, however, raised concerns (Viskovic, 1994); the underlying fear being that training could suffer if left in the hands of individual institutions. In hindsight these concerns at the time were justified, as ITPs did not always demonstrate that they were best placed to train new recruits to the teaching profession, particularly in the early years after centralised training was abolished. More experienced tutors, too, who were required to undertake new tasks – developing flexible delivery modes, writing unit standard assessments, assimilating QMS processes etc. – also needed ongoing training if they were to

meet changing institutional expectations through the late 1990s and early 2000s. Nor were institutions always adroit at communicating changes arising from new government directives to their staff. Later chapters will explore the question of how gaps in training and poor communication may have led – or contributed – to differing perceptions of roles and performance issues.

Tight government fiscal policy through this same period – late 1990s and early 2000s – led to an actual financial shortfall for a number of TEIs, and creative ways were sometimes devised to close the gaps (Salmi, 2002). Some ITPs gained additional funding through rapid expansion of community courses, extensive sub-contracting arrangements, and out-of-region provision in selected areas for which they sought a national mandate. Others resorted to internal restructuring and reorganisation of roles in an attempt to save money by paying fewer staff. Institutions once again did not always communicate these new roles and responsibilities consistently and clearly, leading inevitably to confusion as to who was responsible for what.

Further tensions arose when resources were not adequately replaced or improved in times of fiscal constraint, and teaching at the "front line" was often the first to suffer. Teachers who were asked to cater for growing numbers of students per class under the EFTS-funding model became frustrated and annoyed when their needs were not met (Chapman & Austin, 2002; Salmi, 2002). As the following section will show, however, a lack of resources was not the only issue to impact significantly on tutorial staff working within ITPs.

1.12   The Effects of Change at Department and Tutorial Levels

The changing face of tertiary education ultimately led to corresponding changes in the way tutors in the ITP sector delivered their programmes. While many tutorial staff met the challenge of change and flourished under these new requirements, others found it difficult to adapt and evolve. Traditional notions and

perceptions of the tutorial role and of pedagogical issues bound up with this role were constantly being questioned, leading to new priorities and expectations around programme planning and delivery.

Chief among these new priorities and expectations was increased accountability for performance at all levels. Systems of evaluation were consequently implemented within ITPs to manage and track performance; and the effectiveness of these systems was tested under external academic audit.

The nature and expectations of students entering tertiary education has also shown a marked change over recent years, with many arriving at institutions well versed in the new technologies that were progressively being introduced into the tertiary curriculum, and expecting them as a matter of course. In the case of ITPs, this expectation was particularly apparent in trades areas where staff had not necessarily been trained in using computing technology during their school life, nor while training for – or during employment in – their particular industry. Compounding the issue, tutors from a trades background often had firm ideas on how teaching should be undertaken, frequently grounded in the way they themselves had been taught.

The implementation of flexible delivery modes and introduction of new technologies into teaching have also proved challenging to staff accustomed to traditional teaching methodologies and approaches. The issue for many tutors was not simply keeping up with new classroom-based technologies, but also the technologies that industry was fast moving to employ. If the skills and knowledge taught were to improve New Zealand's competitive edge, and promote economic growth, employment opportunities and productivity, staff delivering this training had to acquire the latest knowledge and skills available.

Compounding this situation was more rigorous evaluation of training from stakeholders. Since the inception of trades training in the late 1960s,

polytechnics (latterly ITPs) – along with the Trades Certification Board – had been able to direct the training of apprentices. Increasing involvement and influence from industry (particularly from ITOs), however, left some staff feeling threatened and vulnerable in their roles.

Another change lay in the expectations around qualifications, as many teaching staff entering an ITP – while highly experienced and skilled in their particular subject area – did not have experience or qualifications in teaching. Many had experience with training apprentices on the job but soon discovered that this experience differed markedly from teaching 16 to 18 students in the context of a formal classroom setting. As compliance became a significant issue, and as expectations of performance lifted, it became imperative that staff were trained in the art of teaching. As a consequence, ITPs gradually started to require teaching staff to gain a recognised qualification in adult education.

Other effects of changes have been seen in an expanded administration and compliance workload for tutorial staff: producing resources; participating in quality management processes; coping with reporting systems; and working on programme documentation. Often a reluctance to undertake administrative tasks due to the perception that they are not relevant to teaching can be traced back to the way tutors perceive their identity. If they carry the notion that they are trades teachers, their perception of this role will frequently differ from those who consider that they are teachers of a trade. Hence the conundrum: is a trades tutor first and foremost a teacher or an industry practitioner?

Although workloads increased, annual leave entitlements under successive collective agreements remained relatively high, and tutors have had to compress more work into a short academic year. A progressively greater emphasis on stakeholder engagement in the last two decades has also seen staff involved in forming and maintaining partnerships with stakeholders through industry and school visits, advisory committees and memberships of relevant organisations.

Lastly, notwithstanding the increasing provision of specialist student support services, a significant component of the identification of student needs and monitoring the flow-on effects in academic performance continues to lie with tutorial staff. Similarly, although most ITPs have active and proficient marketing divisions, the move towards providing more detailed information to prospective students has led to having teaching staff – rather than marketing department staff – readily available to discuss the content of programmes offered by the particular ITP.

1.13 Conclusion

The information presented in this background chapter suggests that TEIs (and in particular, the ITP sector) have undergone continuous and significant change in the way they are funded and organised. This change, which became most apparent from the 1980s, is ongoing, and ITPs have had to adapt systems and staff capability to cope with a dynamic working environment. Targets are now being set to ensure that initiatives implemented after the tertiary education reforms are being met. A whole new realm of accountability has been initiated, and new government priorities have meant that many staff at all levels have had to adapt their roles to fit with the expectations attendant on the new environment.

As ITPs have grown and become more complex, so too has the day-to-day working environment. In this situation, poorly understood hierarchical structures, problematic working relationships, a larger and more diverse student cohort, and internal power struggles, all become more apparent and more difficult to resolve.

As will be demonstrated in the following chapter, it is unclear as to whether ITPs have undertaken sufficient work to structure themselves in the most effective way within this new tertiary environment; whether role responsibilities are being effectively communicated to staff; and whether there is a common view held by

tutors and managers as to the responsibilities, roles and performance of tutorial staff in a 21st-century ITP.