

## Research Paper

# Great Expectations: Building Research Capacity in Vocational Tourism and Hospitality Institutes

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**Abstract:** Significant changes are taking place in post-secondary tourism and hospitality education in Australia. Along with an expansion of degree offerings by universities, vocationally focused degrees are also emerging from Vocational Education and Training (VET) organisations also registered as Higher Education Providers (HEP). Among the many implications of this emergence is building research capacity in the HEPs. This exploratory study reviews experiences in other countries to identify considerations for building research capacity in the emergent VET environment in Australia where hospitality and tourism degrees are offered. Using William Angliss Institute as a case study, these considerations are drawn together to develop a model to drive the research capacity for VET HEPs delivering tourism and hospitality degrees in Australia. Applications and implications for the direction of research capacity development among other like institutions are discussed.

**Keywords:** Research capacity, hospitality and tourism, Higher Education Providers (HEP), Vocational Education and Training (VET)

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## Introduction

While training in hospitality and tourism has traditionally been the domain of Vocational Education and Training (VET) institutions, the growth of hospitality and tourism degree programs in Australian universities has been rapid and extensive (Paul, 2010, Breakey & Craig-Smith, 2008), Educational sectors are now distinguished by an institution's research role rather than orientation (vocational or higher education) or

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student enrolment (Moodie, 2008). In Australia, *Transforming Australia's Higher Education*, was a major catalyst towards de-commissioning Australia's education divide (Vocational and Higher Education) away from institutional structures and towards educational relationships (Bradley, 2008).

Academia in higher education institutes pursue 'learning as empowerment' (White, 1997) embedding teaching, scholarship, subject development and research as an expectation. The role of teachers in VET institutions has traditionally been aligned to interpreters of curricula, broad and flexible teaching practices and assessment requirements rather than researchers and originators of knowledge. As a result, offering degree courses beyond universities highlights a need for the advancement of research capacity in VET HEPs. VET providers are faced with a number of challenges as they broaden their scope beyond vocational, skills-based training into the academic arena. These include teacher identity and professional status, curriculum and assessment issues and changing learning environments.

One specific challenge for building VET HEPs' research capacity in hospitality and tourism is to identify and define the research discipline itself. In the Australian context, many current hospitality and tourism university programs developed from colleges into the university space during the 1980s and 1990s and have moved to "differentiate themselves from the delivery of 'vocationalism'" (Robinson, Breakey & Craig-Smith, 2008). It raises the questions of how VET HEP institutes, in the current environment, can carve a research space and how they can develop capacity that creates purposeful and applicable research outputs. The aim of this study is to draw on theories of research capacity building and overseas experiences to develop a model within which research capacity and a research culture can be developed in Australian VET HEP institutes.

This paper thus forms part of a deepening discussion on developing research capacity in Australian VET institutes and is organised as follows. First, a review of literature, including overseas experiences, identifies considerations for building research capacity in the emergent VET environment in Australia where hospitality and tourism degrees are offered. In the second part of the paper, the exploratory case study reviews William Angliss Institute in order to further refine these considerations. The discussion for this section proposes a model to drive the research capacity for VET providers delivering tourism and hospitality degrees in Australia. The final part of the paper discusses applications and implications for the model in the development of research capacity among VET HEP institutes.

## **Background**

In Australian post-secondary education, there are two opposing trends which are having a significant impact on studies of tourism and hospitality. On one hand VET

providers, who have traditionally offered more lower-level, practical and applied vocational qualifications, have been expanding their qualification offerings upwards to include associate degree and bachelor degree courses. At the same time, there is a growing trend of universities pushing downwards to include qualifications at the lower end of the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF), such as diplomas. In 2011, there were 96 institutions in Australia which were accredited to offer both vocational and higher education qualifications (Moodie, 2010). In the state of Victoria, there were 18 publicly funded TAFE institutions, including six VET HEPs. The ambiguity of educational sector divisions is indicative of a merging single tertiary education sector that remains highly stratified and ill defined. It equates to VET providers offering advanced qualifications and the universities increasingly competing in vocational education, for example Monash College as the vocational arm of Monash University.

The broadening of scope for vocational institutes to include degree programs is not a new trend. Over recent decades, similar changes have taken place in many countries including the United Kingdom, Hong Kong, South Africa and New Zealand. Each of these offers lessons for the emerging Australian experience. A key commonality has been the emphasis on research in what have been traditionally vocationally orientated institutions.

## **Literature Review**

Research, in the traditional university context, describes the process of systematic inquiry which results in the discovery of new facts or relationships (Veal, 2005). It encompasses knowledge transfer, innovation, dissemination of findings as well as underpinning teaching and quality graduate attributes. A review of the literature provides some insights into the research capacity in those institutes that do not share the same research tradition as universities.

### **Research Capacity Building Models**

Research, as an activity, is not the exclusive domain of universities. Government and private institutions also establish research centres which require development of capacity in order to achieve outcomes. The literature offers a number of models which, in essence, consider environmental (external), organisational (internal) and individual factors. The following section highlights developmental or structural models offered by different research areas. Commonality is highlighted and then the development of research capacity specifically in education is discussed. There are various models that apply in the emerging VET HEP landscape.

The area of health research offers a number of structural models of building research capacity, such as Birdsell et al. (2005) who offered the 'box' model. This

model attempted to identify internal, external and moderating factors which could be tested for their contribution to health research use. The authors also outlined the 'circle' model suggesting five interdependent groups (structure, culture, people, political dynamics and external environment) by which research factors could be categorised. Crisp, Swerissen & Duckett (2000) suggested that there were four domains of intervention: top down, bottom up, building partnerships and community organisation. In the agricultural research environment, Horton (2003) offered a structural framework which focussed on organisational capacity (organisational performance, organisational capacity, external operating environment and internal environment). Focus on the organisation and the extent to which the organisation interacts with the external environment is a common theme among these models.

In family medicine research, Del Mar & Askew (2004) proposed different levels of research engagement, categorising users, participants and leaders and suggested that research capacity can be a temporal development over the three stages. Heinemann (2005) described contributing factors (such as research training, infrastructure, funding) and outlined metrics for measuring outputs. Stineman & Kennedy (2005) responded to Heinemann with a broader 'panoramic' view of research capacity development. Their dynamic cycle model was aimed at building strong and sustainable research capacity. These temporal or developmental models reflect the issues of growth and sustainability which are, arguably, not evident in the structural models.

### **Building Research Capacity in Education**

Puryear (2005, p. 94) defined education research capacity as, "a productive, modern, internationally connected, diverse and self-producing community of professionals conducting research at quality levels comparable with peers elsewhere in the world." The ideas of sustainability and growth from some health sciences developmental models are also important in education research capacity.

The review of educational literature suggests that the factors influencing the development of research capacity are linked to over-arching forces such as government structures and perceived prestige and credibility. Shamai & Kfir (2002, p. 398) noted that "any higher education institution worthy of its name must promulgate research and a research culture." Research is seen as a key criterion for scholarly recognition and promotion (Harman & Harman, 2003) as well as central to academic practice and informed teaching in higher education (Turner, McKenzie, McDermott & Stone, 2009b). An understanding of how the Australian university sector develops research culture and capacity may inform the way in which VET HEPs can fit within this mould.

Brennan (1995) identified two elements of a research culture in the Australian context. At one level the research agenda is determined, operationalised and funded

at a national level, largely undertaken by the Australian Research Council (ARC). Then there is the activity undertaken at institute level. There are many examples which tie funding from national bodies with university research outputs. Geuna & Martin (2003) offer a detailed discussion of different models used across Europe, United Kingdom, Asia and the Pacific (including Australia). The literature discusses how international reforms to higher education have impacted research capacity, culture and outputs. In the UK, for example, the introduction of the Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) in 1986 linked the quality of research outputs with government funding. The environment became more competitive when British polytechnics were granted university status (in 1992) and joined the competition for unregulated research money (Li, Millwater & Hudson, 2008). Although these so-called 'new universities' have not benefited greatly from a funding perspective in this system and, as Geuna & Martin (2003) noted, this has resulted in more institutions applying for the same source of research funding.

New Zealand has also experienced a similar situation when its tertiary sector underwent reform in the 1990s which resulted in an openly competitive environment in higher education. In a competitive system for research funds, the polytechnics were effectively 'forced' into developing a research culture. Middleton (2005, p. 7) noted of New Zealand's research scheme that "vocational education institutions faced the dilemma of joining this scheme in order to contest for relatively small amounts of funding and risk reputational damage of the inevitable low rankings when the results were published." He went on to note that 20 of the 22 institutes and polytechnics opted not to participate and, that the rankings in 2004 revealed that the bottom nine institutions were all vocational education institutions. This suggests a reluctance to have research imposed and a lack of success in those instances where it has been.

Research outputs and funding have been linked with prestige. In his evaluation of research performance in the 2002 UK Research Assessment Exercise (RAE), Page (2003) noted that tourism research outputs can enhance the public image of an institute and Law & Chon (2007) stated of hospitality and tourism research that, "good performance in research... tends to help them receive more funding from their government and/or related industry." Linking outputs and funding with prestige presents two challenges for VET HEPs offering degree courses in tourism and hospitality. Firstly, the institutes offering these courses do not, in the Australian context, qualify for funding under the Excellence in Research Australia (ERA) Initiative. Secondly, they are not viewed by the broader or academic communities as prestigious. These VET HEPs are private colleges (with a tradition of fee for service education) or TAFE (Technical and Further Education) which are government supported vocational institutes but in both cases there is disconnect between research outputs and the broader community.

Hazelkorn (2005) argued that institutes need to connect their own research activity with commercialisation, national benefit and competitiveness. This reflects the 'bottom-

up' approach and connecting with the community featured in some of the research building capacity models. Rather than VET HEPs having a research culture imposed by a national framework of funding, the research indicates that an organic, individual institute-based model provides the opportunity to connect with other institutions and the national system.

Further examples in the literature include Middleton (2005) who discussed research as a second career for teachers in the VET sector, focusing on Auckland College of Education. Hornblow (2002) attributed direction and leadership at the Executive Director level as the key to the gradual development of research capacity at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. Mercer (2002) identified that 'support and mentoring' and attendance at research meetings foster research practice at Eastern Institute of Technology (NZ). Research meetings, or communities of practice, have also been discussed in the Australian context. Renwick & Burrows (2008) used Box Hill Institute, a TAFE provider which has been delivering accredited degrees since 2004, to discuss the use of an Applied Research Community of Practice. They noted that they used a wiki (a type of internet site) to facilitate four meetings a year and that the membership was 'organic'. Issues identified by Renwick & Burrows (2008) including organisational and professional identity of teachers, and the capacity of this cohort to move beyond pedagogical expertise into shaping their work towards scholarly collectives, informs much of the current Australian debate on VET HEPs and research.

Commonality among the examples in the literature is the gradual pace and organic nature of building research capability within these VET HEPs. This is partly due to the professional role of teaching, and the requirements for accountability and productivity within vocational education (Lorrimar, 2006). Organisational structures are geared towards teaching rather than research (including but not limited to, teaching loads, availability of study leave, industry focus of professional development activities and lack of financial and non-financial incentives).

These examples reflect the nuances surrounding the changes to vocational and higher education and the inter-related nature of the culture, environment, institutional direction, resources, community perception, individual interests, skills and constraints. In this environment there is no one single, simple research capacity model (structural or developmental) that can be applied in the Australian situation.

## **The Study**

The literature highlights the difficulties in applying any one model of research building capacity. The aim of this study is to reflect on and propose an alternative model for the development of research capacity for VET HEP institutes offering tourism and hospitality degree courses. It should be noted that Australia has a two tiered system of post-secondary education; higher education (HE) and vocational education and

training (VET). There are also universities which have both a HE and VET division. Such institutions are referred to as dual sector. These were not considered in this study for a number of reasons including this observation: the HE divisions of these institutes qualify for federal funding and have a tradition of research activity (these institutions self-accredit their degrees) and the VET divisions can utilise existing research infrastructure (such as library resources) and expertise (such as researchers on campus). As such these institutions develop research capacity differently from those which are VET HEPs. However it is important to acknowledge these institutions, their structures and how they contribute to the system of education and research being studied.

William Angliss Institute was used as a case study (Yin, 1999) in this research. A case study approach was deemed suitable because the relevant context is paramount and unclear boundaries pre-dominate the investigation. William Angliss Institute is a government recognised 'Specialist Centre' in foods, hospitality and tourism and has a 70-year history of training in these areas. The institute is a VET HEP provider based in Victoria, offering a Bachelor of Tourism and Hospitality Management and Bachelor of Culinary Management. Like other VET HEPs, William Angliss Institute is required under the conditions of its HE registration to demonstrate scholarly activity and research. William Angliss has approached the development of research capacity by nurturing existing interest, skills and talent. Broadly, the institute has a focus on applied research linked to its area of specialisation.

## **Methods**

Data were collected in three stages: first, a review of the literature with a focus on the role of research development among VET HEPs offering degree courses and, where possible, in the tourism and hospitality fields. Second, qualitative data was collected via observation and semi-structured interviews (Carruthers, 1990; Veal, 2005). The researcher commenced the role at William Angliss Institute in August 2010 with one responsibility of the role being to review and develop a research strategy. For the period of August 2010 to September 2011, the researcher has been involved in discussions regarding research issues and considerations both inside and outside the organisation. A schedule of questions was designed in April 2011 for the purposes of semi-structured interviews with individuals from other Victorian VET HEPs. These interviews took place with the Higher Education Manager of William Angliss Institute and representatives of two Victorian TAFEs offering tourism and hospitality degrees. Others were reluctant to speak 'on the record'. It was suggested that the competitive nature of the current tourism and hospitality education market coupled with sensitivities around the degree accreditation process were contributing factors. Instead, the researcher engaged in non-transcribed 'conversations' with key themes, concerns and considerations being noted. These conversations were, in effect, overt

participant observation, with respondents having the nature and purpose of the research disclosed at the commencement of the conversation.

Thirdly, a series of William Angliss Institute internal documents were sourced and analysed (Veal, 2005; Yin, 2009). These included strategic planning documents, previous research strategies, plans and activities, minutes from Research Committee meetings and other relevant governance boards and committees and a review of policies and procedures. Consistent with the case study approach (Yin, 2009), the data were analysed and themes drawn from the data were categorised and contextualised within the parameters of the Australian education landscape to develop a model of research capacity.

## **Developing an Alternative Model**

### **Findings**

The literature review suggests that attempts by VET HEPs to develop research capacity in tourism and hospitality in Australia will be faced by a number of external challenges. On one hand, VET HEPs do not fit into the national structure of research funding (ERA), nor do they have the prestige associated with the history and contribution of research by universities. The organisational cultural differences of the sectors slowing the emerging VET HEPs from any over-arching scholarly framework is reiterated (Wheelahan, Moodie, Billett & Kelly, 2009b). The semi-structured interviews reflected this with all participants noting an absence of a research culture in their respective institutes. Some of the terms used by participants to describe their institute's attempts at building research activity included; 'piecemeal', '*ad-hoc*' and 'sporadic'; another common theme was the lack of a consolidated approach and commitment to developing research.

This suggests limitations of the 'top-down' approach for developing research capacity at such institutes. On the other hand, the 'bottom-up' approach appears to offer a means of developing research capacity at a pace and within the resource constraints of these institutions. A number of participants noted financial support at their institute for staff to undertake higher degrees. However, the absence of time-release was also noted. It reinforces a view that the motivation to undertake scholarly activity and research rested primarily on the individual teacher especially to meet the demands of a course or maintain current subject knowledge in their own time (Turner, McKenzie & Stone, 2009a). In the case study institute, the ineffectiveness of the top-down approach was also highlighted. For example a Research Strategy had been prepared but was two years out of date at the commencement of this study (2010), during which time both internal structures and external factors had changed

considerably. Moreover, the outdated strategy did not specify roles or responsibilities and only discussed research in broad, non-specific terms.

The interview data reflected a lack of research collaboration activities with other institutes, other universities or like-institutes. Several respondents acknowledged that collaboration and relationship building was an important start as “we are all in the same boat”, but a tradition of competition coupled with an increasingly unstable external environment and a lack of leadership by any single institute meant that this did not eventuate. In the case study institute, the outdated Research Strategy notes as an objective to “establish research partnerships with government bodies, industry, universities and other providers in the VET sector”, although a review of the Institute’s Research Committee minutes 2008-2010 did not detail how this objective would be met.

Detailed analysis of documentation of the case study institute and semi-structured interviews and observations in the other institutes in the study support the contention that attempts in VET HEPs to develop research have been largely window dressing. Boyer’s (1997) theory of scholarship was used as a guiding framework in one institution. Beyond this, there did not appear to be a theoretical underpinning from which research capacity itself could be built. Arguably, any research strategy or plan which does not take into consideration the issues of capacity or culture is unlikely to be successful.

### **A Proposed Model for Building Research Capacity**

The first step in developing a model in the case study was the identification of those factors specific to the wider research landscape. The literature points to a number of factors which influence the development of research capacity in VET HEPs offering degrees in Australia.

#### *1. National research agenda.*

In Australia, the ERA is the national structure for research funding in tertiary institutions. The ERA, however, disallows research funding to be linked to VET HEP research outputs, effectively limiting resourcing and the prestige traditionally connected with the research activity and funding.

#### *2. Industry relationships and engagement*

Given the historically strong relationships between VET providers and the hospitality and tourism industries, there is a need to maintain the connection between the two. Moreover, industry may provide an audience for research outputs. VET institutions, by their nature, have strong links with industry and VET HEPs could direct research outputs towards industry applicability. An applied research focus could strengthen this relationship, create value (if not prestige) for research outputs and possibly provide a funding source from industry (Law & Chon, 2007).

3. *Individual researchers*

Those who are conducting research in VET HEPs are, effectively, the ‘building blocks’ of research capacity and the motivation, capability and interest of these individuals is critical. Many currently in this sector come from a vocational background and hence lack the skills, experience and (in many cases) the initiative to embark on research activity. Considerations of recruitment (future composition of the VET HEP research workforce), ‘importing’ research skills and development of existing staff are all important issues.

The organisational structures and factors necessary for developing capacity at an institutional level were identified. Salazar-Clemeña & Almonte-Acosta (2003) took a similar approach in their operational construct of research culture in Filipino Higher Educational Institutions.

The model (see Figure 1) proposes an institute specific approach to developing research capacity in VET HEPs of degrees in tourism and hospitality. This model uses the considerations outlined in the section above as ‘Environmental Considerations’, then ‘Institutional Factors’ required for building research capacity are outlined. Finally,

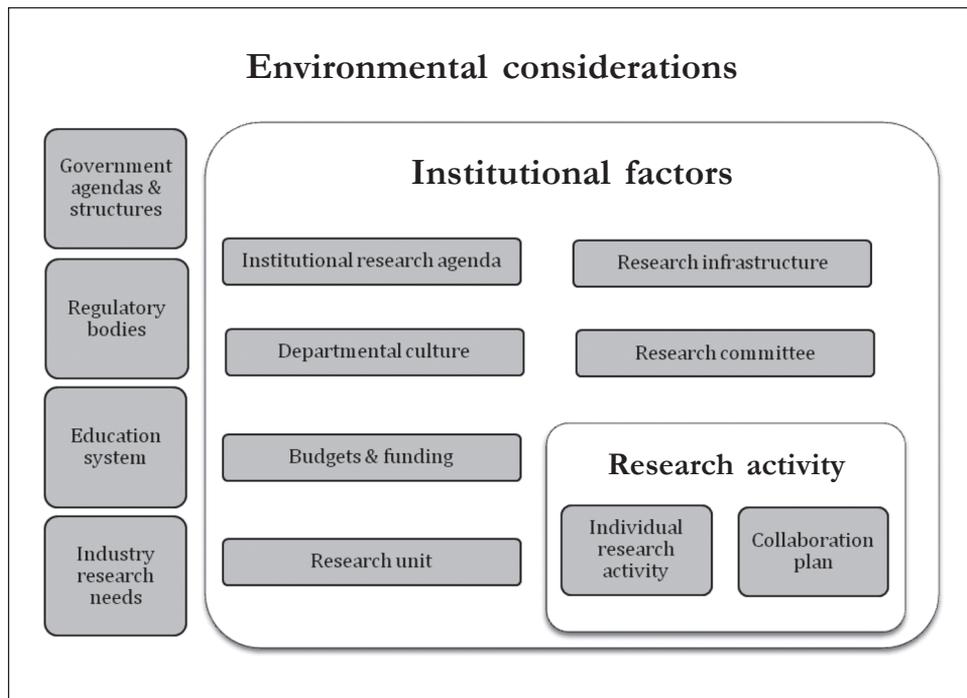


Figure 1. Model of VET research capacity building

the model suggests that the operationalisation of these factors, 'Research activity', is nested within the two.

The model acknowledges the shortcomings of the 'top-down' approach from the overseas vocational education experiences and the limitations of the 'bottom-up' approach in the current environment of rapid change. Moreover it builds the external factors (environment) and internal factors (organisational structures) from the models in the literature. The end result is a structural model of building research capacity that is integrated with research activity and focused on research outcomes.

Effectively, the model supports a concurrent development of building research capacity. One where the environment (current and predicted) sets the parameters for institutional factors to develop which, in turn, builds research capacity and drives activity. At the same time, individual and collaborative research activity contributes to institutional factors and 'organically' develops research capacity. Arguably, research activity will carve out a 'natural path' of research from existing skills, interest and demands. At the same time, research capacity building at an institutional level will be directed (to varying degrees) by that path.

### **Implementing the Model**

Figure 2 reflects how William Angliss Institute defines and operationalises the 'Institutional Factors' from the model for the purposes of building research capacity. This model is currently being used by the research unit of the institute to drive the development of the institute's research strategy. While the list below is represented linearly, in reality these institutional factors are inter-related and co-dependent. Further, they are being developed and directed by both environmental considerations (present and some future) and the current research activity.

### **Practical Implications for Development of Vocational Research Capacity in Hospitality and Tourism**

The Institute has an important role in shaping the direction of research and contributing to the development of research capacity. In practical terms, however, few VET HEPs have the resources to tackle all these factors concurrently. Instead a review of existing resources and priorities at an institute level may provide the starting point. For example, an institute may 'import' research expertise by recruiting staff who are PhD qualified. This necessitates an academic promotion policy and articulation of working conditions (such as study leave). Another approach may be the development of a 'visiting scholar' program, which would require adequate research resources (e.g. databases, library facilities) to result in research outputs. Along with raising the profile of the institute, such a strategy would foster collaboration and present staff mentoring

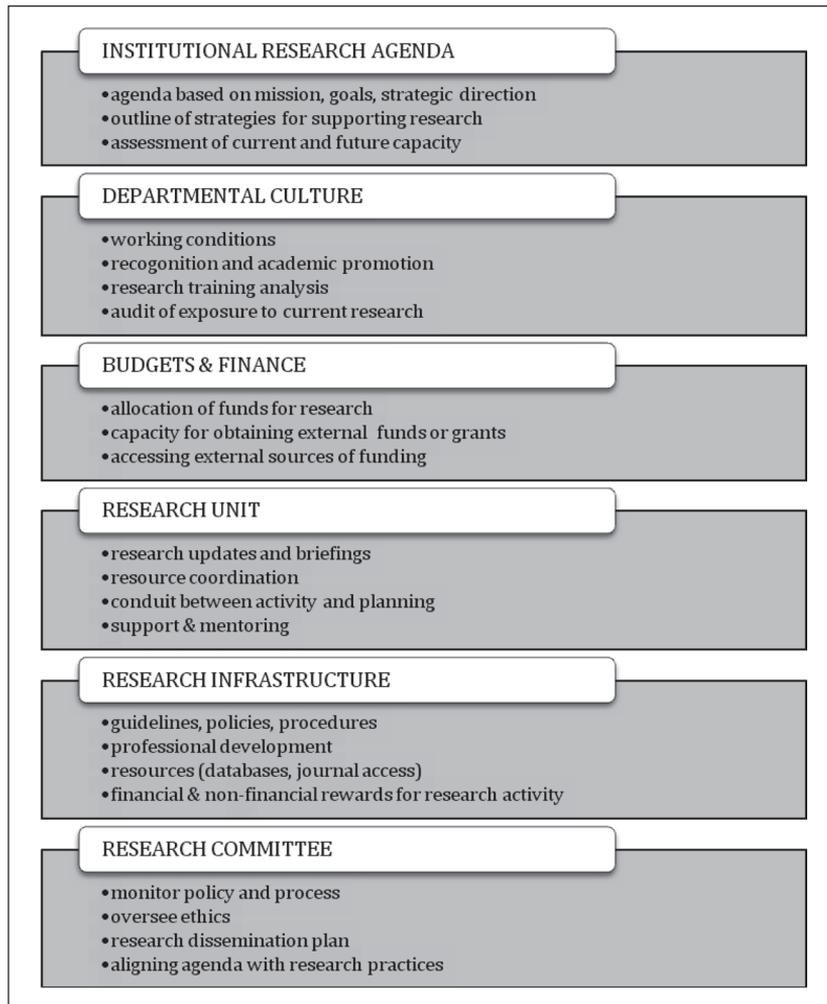


Figure 2. Institutional factors of VET research building capacity at William Angliss Institute

opportunities. A further strategy may cultivate research capacity of existing staff through professional development, time release for research activity, financial support towards staff higher research degrees and enabling staff collaboration (through both academic networks and internal groups). Some institutes may be in a position to use funds to stimulate research capacity, such as financial incentives for staff to generate research outputs or development of internal competitive grants.

These approaches show how the model allows flexibility and a degree of innovation to be applied in the development of research capacity at an institute level.

Sectoral reform prescribes some of the parameters for the development of research capacity (top-down) but an innovative approach (at institute level) can foster the development of research that is both staff-driven and appropriate for the institute.

### **Outcomes of the Model in the Case Study**

One outcome of the implementation of the model has been embedding in institutional key performance indicators (KPI), a defined set of peer review publications or presentations to encourage research responsibility and commitments on the part of teachers and other staff. For example, at William Angliss Institute an expected 30% increase in this KPI since 2011 offers a qualitative indicator illustrating partnerships between teachers, the research office and the broader teaching and learning community. Staff initiated research, especially in defined areas of the Institute's expertise, furthers not only discipline strength and integrity, but also consolidates a research profile and the possibility of external collaboration and funding opportunities. Fowler et al. (2009) noted that capacity is built most effectively when provision responds to the needs of the workforce and builds upon the foundations already in place. At William Angliss Institute, the encouragement of research output can be facilitated through both financial and time support policies. A proposed study time release policy provides the potential for staff to engage more fully in research capacity building activities. Recruiting more senior academics with research experience into the Higher Education department will provide support for research mentoring amongst staff, as well as building an academic culture. Three 'academic disciplines' – tourism, hospitality and events, gastronomy and management have been established. Not only do these groups meet to discuss pertinent research issues collaboratively but are beginning to drive the emerging research agenda. There is also a commitment that senior academics will be appointed to each of these streams in the near future to provide academic leadership.

### **Contribution of the Model**

The model developed through the case study draws elements from a number of research capacity building models offered in the literature. This is a structural model, which is flexible enough to adapt with the changing external forces over time. The integrated nature of the model has been reflected in the outcomes outlined in the previous section. These preliminary findings suggest that an approach which considers top-down, bottom-up, internal and external factors in an integrated manner may offer a way forward for the development of hospitality and tourism research development in the VET HEPs in Australia.

A limitation of the research is that the proposed model is specific to a single institution in its implementation. However, the section above outlines possible application in other VET HEPs, which could then be further refined and developed.

Also, the model does not explicitly detail VET employment conditions (study leave, lessening teaching loads and so on) although, arguably, this could come under ‘Government structures’, ‘regulatory bodies’ and/or ‘education system’. This issue has been discussed widely in the literature and examples of how existing VET structures and working conditions have challenged the development of research capacity overseas are plentiful.

There is a pressing need for a discussion around the approach of VET HEP research building capacity in Australia. This study suggests that existing research capacity building models cannot successfully position research in vocational institutes in terms of building capacity, delivering outputs or attracting the prestige of their university counterparts. An alternative is offered to develop research capacity necessary for both the evolution of tourism and hospitality studies in Australia and broader scholarly discussions. First, this study acknowledges the research presence and emerging contribution of VET HEPs to tourism and hospitality degrees. In doing so, it identifies a potentially wider application for research outputs and acknowledges ‘new players’. Additionally, it contributes to the debate around whether tourism (Tribe, 1997) or hospitality (Ottenbacher, Harrington & Parsa, 2009) are discrete academic disciplines and what implications this has for research. While the value of scholarly pursuit and research in these areas is supported by the academe, it raises the question of flexibility, openness and alternative research applications within the discipline. Finally, much discussion has been focused on the changes to tourism and hospitality degree programs in Australia over recent years (Breakey & Craig-Smith, 2008, Robinson et al., 2008) and the growth of VET HEPs offering degrees in this discipline cannot be overlooked, and their capacity to build research should be included in this discussion.

### **Conclusion**

The approaches to building research capacity drawn from the literature appear limited when applied in a dynamic environment such as the one faced in Australia. For example, changes at a government agenda level (like the introduction of ERA in Australia) may significantly shift the landscape of research activity when the foundations for research may have been laid under a prior research agenda. This study acts as a starting point for weaving VET HEPs’ research capacity into some wider philosophical discussions. By identifying considerations, the proposed model lays the foundations for how VET HEPs can approach the development of research capacity.

It also opens the door to research outputs and the role VET HEPs can play. The discussion of cross-institutional collaboration and industry engagement are worthy of further exploration. VET HEP institutions are not eligible to develop their research capacity within the confines of the ERA, but are in a position to be responsive to industry research needs. This suggests that there may be a place for VET providers,

offering vocational tourism and hospitality degrees to provide applied research for industry. Potentially, this could be a source of funding which, along with the development of an approach to building research capacity, could advance the disciplines in Australia.

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