THESIS

Vocational Education and Training, Impacts, Values, Disinterest, Prejudice and the Politics of Employability.

A dissertation submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education within the Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne.

Date: November 30, 2003

Kevin R Beck

Candidate No: 32421
DECLARATION

This is to certify that:

This thesis comprises only my original work towards the Degree of Master of Education and due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used and the thesis is less than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Kevin R Beck
ABSTRACT

This study questions the proposition that undertaking vocational education and training (VET) enhances the likelihood of getting a job. The research opines that the perceived impact of VET in the employment decision is ideological and based on circumstantial evidence not measurable in the absence of specifically focused, large scale, longitudinal research. The research contends that unemployment, and the role of education and training in reducing unemployment, intersect in a highly politicised and manipulated environment lacking the necessary data and research to inform public policy and that this environment has spawned a new class system in Australia — "Employability".

The research states that, in Australia, too many individuals and employers exhibit little regard for the value of education and training preferring experience and attitude, whilst the government makes little effort to instil a desire for life long learning engaging instead in denigration of the unemployed and shaping of public perception whilst frustrating independent analysis of its claims for success in dealing with this social enigma. Work, according to this researcher, has been elevated to the point of becoming a religion and humanity is now valued by business, and government, solely for its "employability" in an act of faith policy set that allocates education and training to a role subordinate to, and supporting of, employability. Decisions on the value of education are left up to individual choice in a narrowly focused set of policies shackled by economic overtones and a failure to promote life long learning.

The research locates these, and other assertions, in a conceptual framework that explores the intersecting themes of society, economics, politics, education and training, through hermeneutical interrogation of empirical, theoretical and philosophical research using content, thematic and materialist semiotic analysis within an ethnographic — inductive design.

The study surfaces the proposition that research and balanced economic and social evaluation techniques, together with a sophisticated debate and a set of values and policy of life long learning, does not shape public policy and action. Instead, the drivers are primarily narrow ideologies, acts of faith, unproven assumptions and the objectives of politics and capital. The researcher ultimately concludes that the decision to employ is more influenced by the external complex interactions of agency, practice and social structure and the singular conditions of interview.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION .............................................................................................................. 2

ABSTRACT .................................................................................................................... 3

ABBREVIATIONS ......................................................................................................... 8

1  INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH ............................................................. 10
    1.1 General Aims of the Study ........................................................................... 10
    1.2 Summary of the thesis structure .................................................................. 12
    1.3 Research Rationale, Study Contexts and Limitations .................................. 14
    1.4 Positioning the researcher ........................................................................... 20

2  LITERATURE REVIEW ....................................................................................... 21
    2.1 Introduction .................................................................................................. 21
    2.2 Sources ....................................................................................................... 23
    2.3 The Literature ............................................................................................. 24

3  CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ......................................................................... 68
    3.1 Theoretical Basis For This Study ................................................................. 69
    3.1.1 The Outer Framework ........................................................................... 69
    3.1.2 Inner Frameworks .................................................................................. 73
        3.1.2.1 Working Nation Model – A Labor Government Initiative ............... 73
        3.1.2.2 Job Network Model – A Coalition Government Initiative .............. 79
    3.3 Summary of the Conceptual Framework ....................................................... 82
    3.4 The Research Questions .............................................................................. 83
        3.4.1 The primary question: .......................................................................... 84
        3.4.2 The supplementary questions: .............................................................. 84

4  RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES ............................................. 87
    4.1 The design and type of study ....................................................................... 87
4.2 Rationale for the selected methodologies..............................88
4.3 Data, Surveys and Interview Cohorts. .................................95
4.5 Validation and Control Techniques....................................98
4.7 Deconstruction and Analysis Techniques of Interview Content... 102
5 DATA, SURVEYS, ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION........................109
  5.1 Dimensions of Unemployment........................................110
  5.2 Dimensions of Job Network..........................................114
  5.2.1 DEWR published Job Network Report, 2002.........................126
  5.2.2 Independent Review of Job Network by the APC..................131
  5.2.3 Government Response to the APC Review of Job Network.......140
  5.3 Researcher’s perception of the government claims.................141
  5.4 Values and perceptions of the worth of education and training. ..144
6 INTERVIEWS, DECONSTRUCTION AND ANALYSIS .......................162
  6.1 Deconstruction & analysis of the interview with Respondent 1....163
  6.1.1 Content Analysis..............................................163
  6.1.2 Language and Binary Meanings..................................164
  6.1.3 Words, derivatives and frequency ................................165
  6.1.4 Thematic Analysis...............................................167
  6.1.5 Materialist semiotics analysis .................................175
  6.1.6 Summary of key points from the interview with Respondent 1 ....179
  6.2 Deconstruction & Analysis of the Interview with Respondent 2 ...180
  6.2.1 Content Analysis..............................................180
  6.2.2 Language and Binary Meanings..................................181
  6.2.3 Words, derivatives and frequency ................................181
  6.2.4 Thematic Analysis...............................................183
  6.2.5 Materialist semiotics analysis .................................187
  6.2.6 Summary of key points from the interview with Respondent 2 ....192
  6.3 Deconstruction & Analysis of the Interview with Respondent 3 ...193
  6.3.1 Content Analysis..............................................193
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6.3.2</td>
<td>Binary meanings</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.3</td>
<td>Words, derivatives and frequency</td>
<td>195</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.4</td>
<td>Thematic analysis</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.5</td>
<td>Materialist semiotics analysis</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.3.6</td>
<td>Summary of key points of the interview with Respondent 3</td>
<td>204</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4</td>
<td>Deconstruction &amp; analysis of the interview with Respondent 4</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.1</td>
<td>Content Analysis</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.2</td>
<td>Binary meanings</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.3</td>
<td>Words, derivatives and frequency</td>
<td>208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.4</td>
<td>Thematic Analysis</td>
<td>209</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.5</td>
<td>Materialist semiotics analysis</td>
<td>215</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.4.6</td>
<td>Summary of key points from the interview with Respondent 4</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.2</td>
<td>Overview findings as to the questions</td>
<td>221</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH</td>
<td>245</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>BIBLIOGRAPHY</td>
<td>247</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>APPENDICES</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 1</td>
<td>Mail Out Inviting Participation</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2</td>
<td>Backgrounds of Contributors and Interview Transcripts</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2.1</td>
<td>Respondent 1</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2.2</td>
<td>Respondent 2</td>
<td>278</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2.3</td>
<td>Respondent 3</td>
<td>286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix 2.4</td>
<td>Respondent 4</td>
<td>289</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
LIST OF TABLES

Table 01 - Job Network Training ................................................................. 45
Table 02 - Methodology Approaches ........................................................... 88
Table 03 - Interview invitations and responses ........................................... 96
Table 04 - Techniques in analysis and deconstruction ............................... 102
Table 05 - DEWR published performance data ......................................... 119
Table 06 - DEWR published vacancy data ............................................... 123
Table 07 - Labor's assessment of the success of Job Network .................... 124
Table 08 - Perceptions of VET ................................................................. 145
Table 09 - Investment in knowledge as a % of GDP .................................. 147
Table 10 - % of GDP in knowledge versus physical ................................... 147
Table 11 - ACCI survey on the importance of training .............................. 149
Table 12 - Education qualifications profile, Victoria, 2000 ....................... 151
Table 13 - Primary motivation for participation in VET ............................. 156
Table 14 - Who got a job when they finished? ......................................... 156
Table 15 - Student outcomes for training and employment 2002 .............. 157
Table 16 - Employment opportunity and outcomes .................................... 158
Table 17 - Graduates obtaining employment ............................................ 160
Table 18 - Content analysis ..................................................................... 163
Table 19 - Content analysis respondent 2 ................................................. 180
Table 20 - Content analysis interview with Respondent 3 ......................... 193
Table 21 - Content analysis for respondent 4 .......................................... 206
ABBREVIATIONS

ABS  Australian Bureau of Statistics.
ACCI  Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.
ACOSS  Australian Council of Social Services.
ACTU  Australian Council of Trade Unions.
ALP  Australian Labor Party.
APC  Australian Productivity Commission.
Coalition  Comprising the Liberal and National Parties of Australia.
Centrelink  A federal statutory authority, manages the gateway to federal government service access and the welfare payments system.
CES  Commonwealth Employment Service.
DEET  Department of Employment, Education and Training (NSW).
DETYA (federal)  Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
DEETYA  Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (federal).
DEST  Department of Education, Science and Training (federal).
DEWR  Department of Employment and Workplace Relations (federal).
ESRA  Employment Services Regulatory Authority (federal).
IA  Intensive Assistance.
IRJN  Independent Review of Job Network by the Australian Productivity Commission.
ISR  Industry, Science and Resources (federal department).
Industry, Tourism and Resources (federal).

Industry Training Advisory Board.

Job Matching

Job Network
Administered by DEWR, created in 1996 for the delivery of employment services by private providers funded by the Commonwealth, under competitive tendering conditions.

Job Search Training.

Australian Labor Party – see also ALP.

Life long learning.

National Centre for Vocational Education Research.

Long-term unemployed, twelve months or longer.

Training and Further Education (state owned institution) delivering nationally accredited VET style courses.

United Kingdom (denotes Great Britain or England).

Vocational Education and Training delivered by a nationally registered and state accredited provider.

Initiative of the Australian Labor party (1994) for the delivery of employment services and the mandatory application of VET in programmes funded by the Commonwealth. An open market, competitive model, allowing participation by CES, DEETYA, private and public sector contractors, industry, VET institutions, employers, apprenticeship providers and regional community employment cooperatives.
1 INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH

1.1 General Aims of the Study

The primary research aim is to question, and test, the validity of the proposition that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job by seeking to determine what value individuals, politicians, governments and employers, place on Vocational Education and Training (VET) and other levels of education in Australia. The study will examine definitions of VET, its role and purpose within a conceptual framework of politics, society, public policy and employment. The starting definition of a skilled vocational qualification, for the purposes of this study, is:

"... a skilled vocational qualification requires two to three years of full time study and leads to a vocation or trade qualification with a basic qualification being one year or less, of full time study providing only the necessary skills for employment", (Transition from Education to Work, Australia, ABS. cat. no 6227.0, May 1997).

VET and public policy are inextricably linked and for this reason the study will look at the structure, operation and impact of two competing government policies, Working Nation and Job Network, and the rationale behind funding or refusing to fund, the inclusion of VET which may be seen as downgrading its role within the changing definition of skills and training assessing which might be, on balance, the better of the two models. As part of this examination the study will explore
the beliefs and drivers that may shape public policy as well as looking at beliefs and drivers on the employer side of the equation.

Seeking to meet the aims described above, the thesis will examine a body of published writings, and research, concerning the social enigma called "unemployment" and its interplay with education and training within a broad mosaic. The research engages with materialism in its analysis of government policies and their impacts on particular groups within Australian society whilst surfacing the nature of the adversarial system of Australian political governance and the subsequent tensions that are caused in the creation and implementation of public policy regarding unemployment, all the while interrogating published materials and the claims for the success of policies and initiatives, by governments, and the political inclination to mask intentions and outcomes.

Concurrent with unraveling the VET question, the researcher wants to know how the unemployed are described and depicted within Australian society and whether language, public policies and actions promotes, maintains or inflames the tendency to place a stigma on unemployment (Mackay, 1999, p.47) shaping and exploiting peoples' attitudes through criticism and blame, reinforcing old notions of class system rather than addressing, in a constructive way, a problem that should be solved through collective endeavour.
1.2 Summary of the thesis structure

Chapter one defines the specific research proposition and general aims, the limitations imposed on the research, the context and the thinking that motivates this research some of which is drawn from the researcher’s background, locating it in a specific time and experience frame, outlining the economic, social and political dimensions.

Chapter two is a critical review of chosen literature indicating how the material examined has informed, shaped and guided the research pathway, thinking and exploration. Literature of the 1930s, relative to politics and society, and later material covering the period of 1970 – 2003 dealing with VET, higher education, employment, work and public policy has been extensively examined to assist in the conceptualisation of the theoretical framework and to inform the researcher’s knowledge and thinking specifically in relation to the primary and supplementary questions contained in chapter three which describes this conceptual framework, the theoretical basis of the study, the hypothesis and problem statements expressed as questions to be answered.

Chapter four describes the methodologies, and the strategic approaches, used in this post structuralist research, which is presented through an ethnographic –
inductive design, as a tool to analyse the enigma of the socio-political relationships and the politicisation of unemployment and through unemployment and work, the ultimate politicisation and narrowing of the purpose of education. This chapter also deals with the scope, instrumentation, tools, definitions, limitations, validation and control techniques for the hermeneutical interrogation of theoretical and philosophical tradition in the intersecting fields of politics, society, economics and education. It sets out a methodical approach to the interrogation of data, literature, research and interview theorising the relationship to authority in a transformation of political hegemony and the management of community attitudes by government. If unemployment is to be presented, by political parties, as a solvable problem within the domain of their capabilities then the researcher sees the attitude and perceptions of the community as being indispensable to the political objective.

Chapter five presents, and interrogates, a cross section of data and information regarding the performance of the Coalition's Job Network services model, presenting statistics on outcomes and claims of success. There is material on individual participation in education and training and selected individual and employer surveys on attitudes and values, all of which make a contribution to providing answers to the questions posed within this study.
Chapter six contains the deconstruction and analysis of transcripts of interviews with four people who have involvement with, and knowledge of, the issues challenging this research. Through this chapter, the researcher seeks to relate the literature review, the data and surveys, theories and research, to the personal attitudes and experiences of stakeholders and to test, albeit in a small sample, the validity of some of the material presented in chapters two and five. This chapter unpacks the contributors' responses, examining their personal experiences, views and attitudes to the primary question of the impact of VET in the decision to employ, how they might value VET generally and their knowledge of, interest in and contribution to public policy relating to employment or unemployment. Chapter seven presents the findings, discussions and conclusions with recommendations for further research listed at chapter 8.

1.3 Research Rationale, Study Contexts and Limitations

The academic discipline within which this research resides is the Faculty of Education and more specifically, Vocational Education and Training, however it does have resonance with Political Science and Sociology disciplines as defined in the conceptual framework outlined in chapter three. The research has been located within a political environment because VET and employment services consume billions of dollars in government funds. For example in 2001, the
government funded three hundred and fifty million hours of VET to one million, seven hundred and fifty thousand students (NCVER, 2002, foreword) and contracted one billion dollars worth of employment services from a cross section of providers (APC, 2002). Politics is also a definable, and observable, system of agency, practice and social structure (Frolich, 2001, pp.776-797) having a major, if not dominant influence on the nature, perceptions, fears, thinking and direction of Australian society. This research is located within a time of great change and tension, wrought by global economic and cultural forces, competition policy and restructuring, resulting in the loss of major sectors of employment such as manufacturing, textiles and many lower skilled occupations. In 1998 F. Argy wrote “Australia at the Cross Roads”, proposing that Australia was at the cross roads of accepting a radical free market, or progressive liberalism, in its approach to education and employment and this research will show that by 2002 all governments had chosen their road, engaging in extensive competitive reforms of every facet of public policy and action. Education is moving along the road towards a “user pays” model driven by budgetary, commercial and ideological considerations away from a “free of cost” public system funded by governments clearly evidenced when, on Thursday 29 August 2002, Jenny Macklin, Deputy Leader of the Australian Labor Party told the Australian parliament that Australia had the highest cost for personal participation in higher education in the world.
Within these contexts the migration from school to work, or from unemployment to employment, are complex matters bound up in individual notions and values including the respect of, and desire for education, the function of social welfare, work itself and through work acceptable participation in, and contribution to, society. As far back as 1942 Ashenfelter in “Economic institutions and the demand and supply of labour”, theorised that free market ideology supported growth in income tested social programmes and was an integral component of strategies for social welfare, mutual obligation and participation and it has taken just over half a decade to reach a point where this proposition is at its zenith in Australian public policy. The ALP, initiated, and the Coalition has escalated, competition policy and the targeting of deserving social need in Australian society (McRoberts, 1998, p.71) with employment services preparation processes (McGlynn, 1998, p.86) being deemed by the two dominant political parties as essential to establishing effective policy frameworks for adaptation to change (Tanner, 1999, pp.64-72). This targeting has occurred as an outcome of the burgeoning cost of welfare and a change in the attitude, by politicians and governments, towards welfare recipients and a previous non-discriminatory and passive payment approach to welfare. There is tension between directing people towards personal development through training, as Labor did, in Working Nation and the market theories of choice (Edsall, 1998, p.4) espoused by the Coalition in their Job Network initiative. The Labor government had a powerful belief in the value of VET,
"If a person undertook further education and training their prospects for gaining and holding a job would be enhanced", (Working Nation, ALP policy, 1994).

Economic rationalism and attention to the high levels of spending by Labor on Working Nation were the focus of the Coalition government when it came to power in 1996.

"A major consideration was the $1 billion per annum in expenditure savings achieved by abolishing the Job Compact and introducing competition in the provision of public job matching services. As a result, in 1997-98 employment assistance outlays for jobless people were cut by approximately 50 per cent", (ACOSS, 2002, p.54).

The Coalition espouses individual choice as to whether people engage in training and through this VET has been eliminated as a mandatory component of the services being delivered to the unemployed and evidence indicates that a large number of Australians choose to exercise choice by not engaging in training and education.

"Of 5,426,700 people who had undertaken no training 48% said they had no need and 54% said nothing would encourage them" (ABS, 1999, 42240).
A federal government Senate Committee (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, pp. xxviii) says that "user choice" remains not with the individual, but rests entirely with employers and this has the potential to distort the objective of flexibility and portability of skills and qualifications resulting in training that is narrowly enterprise specific.

It is vital that researchers engage the issues, test and analyse the implied, or stated, beliefs and the theories that inform the policy makers, exposing the processes and published claims of governments, the information and outcomes they promote, in a society where both government employed and independent media have a dominant role in information dissemination. Given the expenditure on VET across Australia, in the past Working Nation model and generally within the system, and the competing political ideology and changes in strategy and attitudes to date, it is valuable to know if VET actually enhances opportunity and if so, under what likely circumstances and conditions. It is also beneficial to know whether there is a broad integrated strategy by government to promote life long learning and human capital development or if they see work as the primary pathway to, and measurement of, a better quality life and society. Investigation and balanced assessment of major policy models created to deal with the social enigma of unemployment is vital to assessing the ongoing worth and actual performance outcomes of public policy and action by governments, particularly when they appear to be limiting their education vision to narrow strategies of
"employability", focusing on the competencies industry want, rather than balancing this demand with a deeper and broader education from which the nation as a whole may benefit.

There is a multiplicity of influences and dynamics that necessitate new research agendas of post-compulsory education and training (Bates, 1997, p.313) beyond the scope of this work and there is a myriad of directions that might have been followed into workplace learning and training (Garrick, 1999, p.7). Not all literature and data remotely relevant to the proposition, questions and themes can be covered within the scope of this work. For example economics plays a key role in government policy and action and a positive economic climate, creating employment, will alter political prerogative and action. During periods of high economic growth youth employment rises and cyclical variations are much more marked in the youth labour market (Borowski 1984, pp. 30-36 & OECD, 1994) than in the adult market. This research does not extend to analysing all of the influences of the economic factors that might work as drivers for determining government policy agendas and the task of surveying large numbers of employers to extract the reasons for the employment decision and the attitudes of people generally, are beyond the timeframe and this study's research focus.

This research intersects with the epistemology of politics and ideology in terms of the limitations of knowledge, understanding and experience including innovation, and the extent of data and fact collection, within government, bureaucracy and
industry. Knowledge limitations, affecting this research, are exacerbated by the loss of intrinsic knowledge of history and processes occurring as a result of downsizing, attrition and changes in the mode of operation of the public service and industry together with disinterest in the past and a disinclination to evaluate whether decisions and policies have actually delivered the benefits or outcomes that were originally touted to justify them and the disinclination of politicians, employers and others to contribute and participate.

1.4 Positioning the researcher

The researcher holds undergraduate units in business and computing studies, a Diploma of Teaching and two postgraduate qualifications in vocational education and training and is a candidate for the award of a Master of Education at the University of Melbourne. He was a senior manager, within a Tafe Institute, and of government contracted employment services to some 2,000 unemployed persons incorporating intensive case management and formal VET. The researcher has negotiated and implemented competition reform in the energy and education sectors and has publications, listed in the biography, on the themes of privatisation and government policy outcomes and has regularly contributed to public policy debates submitting to, and appearing before, parliamentary committees and enquiries and authoring articles (listed in the bibliography) on privatisation and its impacts on the economy and society and government policy and action in other sectors of the nation.
2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one has provided the aims and dimensions of the research positioning it within a time and a political context and indicating the researcher's background, experience and engagement with the study topic. The differences in approach to the delivery of unemployment services, by two governments, will be shown to be linked to a policy of fiscal rectitude (Weatherly, 1994, pp.153-173), national competition policy and the demand for mutual obligation where the Coalition government has adopted a business oriented approach to public policy implementation, as if it were a private sector entity responding to interested shareholder's demands rather than a government enacting policy for the benefit of a nation of citizens, of varying disposition and circumstance.

The literature review will first examine theory and writings that are relevant to the social and political dimensions of this study. It incorporates an examination of work, theory, practice and research relevant to the proposition that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job exploring within limitations since much of the research on the proposition that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job is focused on empirical data and surveys and this material is examined in chapter five.
The literature review outlines examples of projects that use intervention techniques such as case management and VET to assist the unemployed, especially those who may be disadvantaged, into work. This material provides the reader with a reference point to compare the differing approaches of the Labor and Coalition governments in framing their employment services initiatives during the 1990s up to the year 2003. The review looks at the federal government’s role in unemployment, education and training and the influences and methodologies that inform policy and action including political objective and interest. Within this latter theme, the review will present a picture of the manner of deployment of authority as a tool within the culture of politics (Weiner, 2001, p.1791A) where the payment of unemployment benefits to the individual and the collective cost to the nation, are packaged and presented by governments to shape the behaviour, responses and the contribution of recipients of welfare and the attitude of the community, in a policy framework which Burgess, Watts, Mitchell, O’Brien and Ferguson (2002, pp.173-188) labelled “Workfare” policy.

The literature review surfaces the tendency in society to use labels (Becker, in Lima, 2001, pp.185-201) and the use of instruments of mass persuasion and reinforcement such as legislation, regulation, media and wedge politics (Wilson, 2001, pp. 384-402), as unemployment is portrayed as a solvable exercise within the domain of economic policy and the unique, as they would have us believe, abilities of a political duopoly, which occupies government in Australia on a
rotational basis of varying durations. Within this political context the review will present examples of the adversarial conduct of politics and government.

2.2 Sources

It is incumbent upon researchers to search far and wide for the sources that inform their study, balance their views and expand their knowledge whilst adding to the body of original work. Using the electronic facilities of the ‘Buddy’ resources of the library of the University of Melbourne the researcher reviewed a total of 2,347 journals, 757 abstracts, 190 specific research papers published in the USA, UK, Europe, Canada, New Zealand and Australia between 1934 and 2002 to gain a broad overview of foundations and transformation in political and social theory and how those disciplines may have shaped thought, concepts, interests and public policy within the world of education and employment. During the course of this research a total of 96 books have been read along with relevant reports of the Australian Senate. The researcher has read key policy publications of the Australian Labor party pertaining to Working Nation and the publications of DEWR and the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations and number of other relevant Ministers. Reference has been sought within the Hansard (records of Australian government debates in the House of Representatives and the Senate) for the period 1994 – 2003 with these records being held in the physical archives of the National Library in Canberra, Australia.

2.3 The Literature

“It is an inspired critique of the prevailing political economy”, so said A.D. Morton (1999, pp.1-8) in his treatise on the works of Italian sociologist, and Marxist contemporary, Antonio Gramsci (1831 – 1937), whose theories and opinions, conceived in the 1930’s possesses a prescient and contemplative view of government and society, as if they had been written recently in Australia, and not seventy years ago in Italy. Gramsci revised Marxist thought on the relationship between state and society, culture and ideology and, stressed “the autonomy of the political process from the economic base”, (Moran, 1998, pp.159-164). This autonomy may have been the case in Gramsci’s time but in the governments of
today, in Australia, there is a blending of the objectives of politics and economy engaging with materialism, adopting the free market, competitive ideology of capitalism and choosing to intervene only when it is politically expedient to their interests and not necessarily the interests of the general public or, in this case, the afflicted in our society, the unemployed. Consistent with the writings of Gramsci, the researcher observes an age of advanced capitalism, marked by the further expansion of civilised society (Burawoy, 2003, pp. 193-261) in which the government is intervening to stabilise relations, as it senses a rising tide of opinion that the expansion of markets threatens society (Polanyi in Burawoy, 2003, pp.193-261) and the pace of reform is debilitating with the greed of the corporate world becoming so blatant as to persuade the government to create balancing mechanisms using regulatory bodies such as the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission and the Australian Security and Investments Commission. Political parties and governments, according to Gramsci, are guilty of masking intention and reality and he theorised the coercive and consensual control mechanisms of the state, which the researcher sees as residing within the two government models for addressing unemployment and services, Working Nation and Job Network. The researcher perceives that government policy and statements exhibit a paternalistic, and somewhat authoritarian, approach to governance and public policy, in an environment where social exclusion is nurtured, and maintained, in the interest of the power collective. This social exclusion is taking new forms as the forces of globalism
exclude people from the world of work eliminating their jobs in the name of efficiency, competition and progress, creating a growing underclass of unemployed.

To learn about the proposition, that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job, the researcher surfaced literature focused on VET, and higher education, seeking to know the type of training that was being embraced as the foundation for equipping people for employment and the literature informs that it is generic skills (Khadria, 2001, pp.45-71) that are seen as fundamental to employability. This trend towards generic competencies contrasts with the literature on outcomes for higher education published by the NCVER (Ryan, C, 1999) which finds that employment opportunities are slightly higher, fifty eight (58) percent versus fifty one (51) percent, for graduates of higher education, subject to the course and individual circumstance. The generic approach also contrasts with extensive empirical studies undertaken in the United Kingdom which demonstrate that investing in human capital pays for those with higher qualifications, such as degrees, diplomas and good school leaving qualifications (Harkness & Machin, 1999, Report 25) through higher relative earnings and enhanced employability. This literature states that people with these qualifications have relatively better prospects of finding work when searching for it, and retaining it when they have found it.
Despite this assertion, Bennett, Glennester and Nevison (1995, pp. 279-298) identified significant differences in earnings returns from the same qualification across the regions of the United Kingdom and the researcher found no empirical evidence in the United Kingdom literature search that indicates learning has paid off for everyone in higher education since some groups of young workers, participating in schemes to enhance employability, experienced neither increased earnings nor enhanced employment relative to their peers who opted not to participate (Bynner, 1998a, pp. 5-15, Bynner (1998b, pp. 262-266, Dolton, Makepeace & Treble, 1994, pp. 629-657).

This material initially served to confuse the researcher as to what might be the primary objective of public policy in Australia regarding education and training? Is the objective to entice the individual to undertake deeper learning and the acquisition of knowledge in line with the UK experience or to accept, and promote, that competency training in generic skills and work are adequate for the development of the nation's prospects and within that policy, employers and the forces of capitalism, through their demands may set the framework, responses and extent of education and training for their own purposes and interests?

The researcher can find numerous sources of literature and research that point to a purported insatiable demand for skills in Europe and the USA but research is not so prolific in Australia. According to the UK literature there has been a major increase in demand for those people with skills, or the capacity to acquire skills through training,
and a corresponding decrease in demand for those who offer neither skills nor any general educational qualification that indicates a capacity to acquire skills (Sutherland, 1999, p. 5). It is reported within a number of studies of economics and education (Keep and Mayhew, 1999, pp. 1-15, Keep, Mayhew, Ahier & Esland, 1999, pp. 113-140) that industry is moving from lower level skills to much higher ones (Finegold and Soskice, 1988, pp. 21-53) yet the researcher finds, that in Australia, the literature on public policy creates a confused picture of lack of direction and consistency, with much of the nation’s effort going on continual reexaminations and reorganisation of education policy, related systems and government agencies, along with the promotion of lower level competencies and generic skills. There is a demand for trade and specific technology skills, medical practitioners and other professionals in the rural and regional areas across Australia, which is not being met. Metropolitan lifestyle and the coastal areas of the nation beckon with competing interest and opportunity as the cities grow at the expense of other regions. The researcher’s readings indicate that lifestyle culture in Australia is a powerful factor that shapes attitudes to many things including study, employment and the social status that work provides.

The Australian literature is interpreted to imply that, If the free market, does not deliver jobs, in an economy of diminishing public sector presence, then there is no integrated strategy to bring individuals, communities, governments and business together in a common objective to achieve comprehensive human capital
development throughout the nation by alternative job creation programmes. A picture emerges of the progressive breaking down of careers into narrow competencies and fields of work in a system where the worth of an individual is defined in terms of their economic contribution to the employer and through employment to the nation. Indeed the literature informs quite strongly that it is the policy intent of governments to instill 'employability' characteristics, and skills, in the individual. “Employability” is not a policy invention, driven by the globalism imperatives of the nineties, or this specific Coalition government. It is inherently found within all governments' attitudes as far back as the late 1970s when Argyris and Schon (1978) wrote that education was being framed with the single dimensional objective of fitness for employment. Under the competition policy and reforms initiated by Labor, and accelerated by the Coalition, the role and purpose of VET is defined to be a narrow objective. In a keynote speech given, at a conference at Darling Harbour Sydney in January 1998, attended by the researcher, Mr. Terry Moran, a former Chief Executive of the Australian National Training Authority made the purpose and objective quite clear through this extract, “the purpose of the reforms has been to enable vocational education and training, to more directly support, national economic objectives,” (Tafe's Role in the New World, 1998).

Australian Senate publications expand on this purpose statement leaving no doubt of the primary role of education and the objectives it serves in the nation.
The National Objectives provide the raison d'être for the vocational education and training system and the context within which policies and programmes are designed and implemented:

- Equipping Australians for the world of work.
- Enhancing mobility in the labour market.
- Achieving equitable outcomes in vocational education and training.
- Increasing investment in training and,
- Maximising the value of public vocational education and training expenditure" (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, xv).

Any reference to the role of VET being a gateway to life long learning, within this document, comes with a caveat:

"Vocational education and training that enhances their capacity to participate in society" but with the proviso following to "take advantage of emerging opportunities in employment and in further education and training. Vocational education and training is one of the fundamental strategies for coping with changes within Australian society and the new globalism" (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, Overview and recommendations, xv).

The proposition that VET enhances the chances of getting a job was, and still is, well and truly embedded into the political psyche of Labor policy makers indicated in the Working Nation manifesto which, inter alia, contains these words, "a heavy emphasis on entry-level training" (Working Nation, 1994, p.19). It is not
clear to the researcher how VET might provide a mechanism to cope with changes in society since globalism has reduced the number of job opportunities for a large segment of the population and VET is focused particularly on the practical aspects of competency rather than the more intangible study of equipping people to deal with life's complex issues, stress and challenges. Rather than implying that we should study courses in yoga and self-realisation perhaps the Labor policy makers are referring to VET as a life long learning process aimed at employability and not a holistic study of how to live a fuller life and cope with change, by something other than work.

The Coalition government devalues Labor's perception of VET, questioning its impact and value in terms of its cost and its contribution to the decision to employ. It was important to the researcher that this interpretation of the literature be further explored and if possible verified, and so the researcher contacted the Minister for Employment advising of this research and its topic, seeking to know the basis of his views and of government policy. He kindly responded, in writing by email, on August 29, 2001. Below is the full text of that communication.

"Training is important but it's not the only thing. I'm not sure it's possible to make finely calibrated distinctions between the factors, which make a decision to employ or not to employ. The government's general view is that training is desirable but not necessary as part of employment service programmes. It's quite wrong to think that training is a 'magic wand' to transform job seeker's employability. On the other hand, access to training programmes is important if a particular form of training is strictly necessary for a job. These are the kinds of decisions, which Job Network Agencies are well placed to make."
This is an important document for the research for it encapsulates the thoughts of a senior policy maker and Minister in the Coalition government and member of Cabinet. The response has logic and the researcher's reading of literature supports the Minister's proposition that training is not a magic wand. Coalition political literature states that work is a form of training and the pathway to a better life describing the training fallacy, training for training's sake within a conspirational theory of how Labor policy is influenced and formed.

"Working Nation was based on the "training fallacy" – the notion that providing long-term job seekers with certificates of competency in basic tasks makes them attractive to employers. Training is important, but not training for training's sake. Working Nation projects often catered to the union-dominated TAFE sector as much as to the real needs of the unemployed. The Howard Government has dramatically boosted training (apprenticeship and traineeship commencements have tripled since 1995) but training linked to employment rather than training as an end in itself. The Government’s approach is training through work rather than training then work. Labor’s message to job seekers was that government-provided training would solve their employment problems. This Government’s far more challenging message is that a demonstrated work ethic counts more than a training certificate and that an element of self-help is the key to a better life.” (Personal web site of the Minister for Employment and Workplace Relations, the Honourable Tony Abbott, accessed June 2002).

Coalition (liberal) philosophy supports individual effort and determination and there are examples of wealthy and successful people who have never had an education beyond rudimentary schooling and this notion of individual success
may be a factor in the valuing of work ethic above education. The content of Mr. Abbott’s statement opens a window to perceptions of the value that powerful influences and decision-makers may place on learning for learning’s sake and the role of VET and the minister is not alone in the debate and questioning of VET’s value and its return on investment by governments, past and present.

On the one hand, there is the proposition that vocational education adds value and assistance (Smith, 1998, p.18) whilst according to others it improves the chances of a person gaining employment and is perceived to be one of the “ways that work” (Ball, 1996). On the other hand, there is Professor Karmel’s dissertation (1995) on the economics of education and training which questions the fundamental acceptance that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job. These are contrary views, which cannot be ranked one over the other in merit and accuracy because according to Wooden and Ryan,

“There is very real lack of research into the factors that impede employment, and the real contribution of vocational education and its impact.” (Wooden, 1999, p. 37).

“In terms of simply obtaining a job participation in a Tafe course did not improve the job chances of some individuals”. (Ryan, C., 1999, pp.115-126).

The impact of VET is further challenged by the extent of disadvantage (language, ethnicity, disability, time unemployed among other factors) which is proffered to be the defining difference between persons who have undertaken similar courses in
VET, or higher education, and their relative success rates in getting a job and not the training content itself. The researcher's own experience in observing severely disadvantaged, labour market programme participants, would suggest that the end result is a product of institutional climate, appropriate example, mentoring and support of the individual by staff, together with a sense of personal agency and customised training. The probability of success for unemployed youth to reenter education or employment is addressed in Hammer's work (2003, pp. 209 –223) based on Bourdieu's and Coleman's theories, where he states that entry is dependent on the possession of education capital (Bourdieu), such as the parent's own education and the parent's support together with social capital (Coleman) and these influences are explored more fully by McMillan and Marks (2003, pp.13-32) in their longitudinal study of Australian youth participation.

Again, being contrary, the literature implies that there is no definitive research in Australia of outcomes for differing social groups (NCVER, Ryan, 1999, 115-126).

People turn to VET for many reasons.

"From the perspective of the participant, the principal driving factor of participation in training and education appears to be a lack of employment opportunities (Wooden, 1999:2) where composition of demand for labour favours more highly skilled workers", (Wooden, 1999, p.1).

"For older people with degrees, enrolling in further study, either at a VET or higher education institution, might reflect a change of direction in their careers to keep pace with the needs of a changing workplace."
For younger students, the increased tendency for those with a degree to then seek a VET qualification (sometimes called 'reverse articulation') could be born of the perception that gaining a more practical qualification can enhance a 'theoretical' one and make them more competitive in the labour market*, (Australian Social Trends, ABS, 2000).

Regardless of the above, education, from the government and industry perspective, is about educating people for the 'work ethic' and VET is just another factor in the decision process. The belief system that education is about work, is quite distinct from a focus on investment in human capital, knowledge and learning and education is not seen, through the prism of the literature review, as a pathway to nation building unless it is education for work through paid employment. It is difficult to surmise that employers will be influenced by the possession of a VET qualification, when the climate of attitudes towards VET ranges from support, through antipathy into ambivalence, in an environment where the Senate (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, p. 111) identifies significant impediments to the development of a national training culture including lack of awareness, understanding or acceptance of changes in training, confusion created by change, suspicion of motives, perceived lack of relevance, unsatisfactory experiences, too much paperwork, bureaucracy and alienation.

Current Coalition government's policies were examined to learn if there were public policy and initiatives for the development of human capital within a strategy of life long learning integrated to other policies creating some form of blue print. The researcher could not find any such policy sets or strategies of any
comprehensive depth that might support such goals. The most current, and all encompassing, document of this type found is Labor's Knowledge Nation, launched by Barry Jones, just prior to the last federal election in 2000. The Coalition government demonstrated some antipathy to the concept of integrating public policy into a blue print by deriding the document in the media, as a spaghetti drawing. It was never seriously examined or publicly debated in the parliament, or the public domain for that matter demonstrating the destructive nature of adversarial politics.

The researcher turned from political party policy literature to the work of key government agencies, particularly the Australian National Training Authority, seeking awareness of national policy and action in relation to education and training. This was indeed an enlightening search, for it was not until 1998 that the ANTA Ministerial Council, comprising all federal, state and territory government ministers, decided to take a social marketing approach to the challenge of building a learning culture in Australia and ANTA undertook, and published in 1999, a literature review as a part of its National Marketing Strategy for Skills and Life Long Learning. The full report can be viewed on the Internet at http://www.anta.gov.au. In that publication ANTA cited other countries' aims of instilling the desire to acquire skills that are valued to engage in life long learning, indicating this should be an aspiration for the Australian community. They cited other countries' experiences and strategies because Australia has no experience of its own regarding a public policy to promote LLL. ANTA is advocating a
customer centred approach where initially created projects draw together what Australia may know about life long learning, which inter alia, according to them is that "learning is the central dimension in the pursuit of economic resilience, individual confidence and social cohesion". A centrepiece, in the introductory section of this particular paper, is a quote from Lewis Perelman, (School's Out) which says that, "learning has become the strategically central enterprise for national economic strength". However the report content shows that this comment relates to nations other than Australia since this nation, will be shown through this thesis to possess no training culture. The researcher is not sure what it is about LLL that daunts Australian policy designers and it is incomprehensible that ANTA had not addressed the fundamental and vital concept of national life long learning until 1999 and then only by a literature review. This may have occurred due to the absence of a practicing teacher or professional educator on the ANTA Board which is Australia's premier advisory body on training to the national government, federal liaison entity to state authorities, to industry and the industry training boards. The extracts below is apologetic, offering excuses for the lack of initiative by Australia's governments, past and present:

"It is difficult categorically and confidently to prescribe the elements of a life long learning policy framework or, more practically, what exactly it is governments at all levels should be doing", (p. 21).

"The problem is these attributes are in various stages of being defined and tested... some aspects of the role and process of government are becoming clearer and ... requires a new policy approach", (p. 23) and in a footnote they state, "There is a lack of commitment to training and learning in many lean and downsizing corporations", (p. 32).
The attributes referred above, which are in various stages of definition and testing, are:

"Shared vision
Consistent national frameworks
Funding that empowers learners
Bias towards investing in front end education (primary and secondary schooling)
Business and work culture that values and contributes to learning
Willingness to undertake reform
Information and feedback"

ANTA proposes a marketing and public relations campaign to commence the task of engendering a desire for broader participation in education. The researcher believes that such glaring omissions in the development and application of sophisticated and integrated public policy have helped shape attitudes to education and training in the community and assists those argue that engaging in VET does not, on balance enhance the likelihood of getting a job. Learning for learning's sake, or rather training for training's sake, is not supported or condoned by the Coalition government and there is a trend towards the "erosion of values distinctive to education by the application of economic, financial and organisational imperatives" (Taylor, W., 1992), together with an ever increasing
predominance of managerialism within the public service (Pollitt, 1990) dictating the profession of education and the content and depth of its curricula.

Compounding the problem is research that suggests that people do not complete training due to the poor quality of delivery, content and capability of providers and this is a point made by the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee in its report into the quality of VET in Australia (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, R.19, p. xxxiv) however a survey by the Australian Council for Private Education and Training, tendered to the Senate, referred in the report (p.51), claimed that only twenty one (21) percent of respondents attributed non-completion to poor training delivery with other factors attributed such as not being suited to the work, lack of employer support, poor quality information to prospective students and employers on courses, misuse of government monies paid as incentive to employers, personality conflicts and poor attitude. Still twenty one percent is viewed as quite a high number of dissatisfied people and bad experiences can be strong shapers of attitudes.

Of greater interest to the researcher, than the quality issue and attitude of students, is the attitude to training exhibited by employers and the place VET holds in their decisions to employ people and this particular Senate review has highlighted the constant and ongoing reform of VET at every level, by every government in Australia, which in itself could be a contributor to negativity regrading VET. This unprecedented level of reform which Eardley (1997) calls “a
marketisation agenda of contracting out services for the unemployed", is borne out in a "Stock-take of Progress in Micro-Economic Reform" undertaken by the Australian Productivity Commission in 1996. Hand in hand with the frenetic, competition policy approach to reforming VET comes a parallel agenda of the 'electronification' of education using emerging Internet technologies where governments, according to the work of Hickman (1999, p.17), are relying heavily upon technology-assisted distance learning to deliver to a wider audience, at substantially reduced cost, securing employment outcomes. If VET was not accessible to these people then it was not a consideration in the employment decision and since over half of the population has no formal education beyond secondary school it is expected that a large number of rural dwellers have gained employment without VET's assistance.

Despite the common political view of the need for reform of VET, there are policy tensions between governments in relation to vocational services, especially for young people and according to Wooden, in his review of research into the impediments to the employment of young people (1999, p.1), the systems for delivery of vocational education and training vary significantly between the states and are poorly adapted to user's needs affecting the ultimate opportunity of participants. National standards of delivery and funding do not currently exist (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, pp. xvi & xviii) and further compounding the problem is the behaviour of the Ministerial Council, which creates the national policy framework has a membership of all states, territories and the federal
government. The Council can impede progress in developing national public policy when one or more may dissent, or object to, a decision and decide not to proceed to implementation or may decide to proceed in a limited way (Senate Committee, p.61, 6.6). The nature of the operation of our federation, whilst it may place constitutional limitations on the power of the Commonwealth, can serve to exacerbate disadvantage, poor quality and inconsistency. Under these conditions the likelihood that VET has a key role in the decision to employ logically varies according to the standard and state of VET in each jurisdiction. Though the VET systems and the resultant quality and outcomes may vary between the states, and despite the ideological packaging of success by each government congruent with audience and demand (Yagcioglo, 2001, pp. 817-852), two consistencies emerge through the literature review, upon which the researcher can rely. The first is, that the Australian workforce is viewed as units of 'employability' for short-term pieces of work undertaken at the behest of employers influenced and impacted by the forces of the market, and the second is, the framing of policy and action by the federal government, in relation to unemployment services and the role of VET is largely an act of faith in the righteous belief in ideology.

"Its (Job Network) creation was an act of faith based on reason: faith in the ability of private sector, community-based and religious organisations to deliver better services than an over-stressed and inflexible bureaucracy". (Media release, by the Minister for Employment, Mr. Tony Abbott, Nov.1, 2000).
"The results confirm the system is now consistently outperforming the old CES by almost 50 per cent. The 300 community based, charitable and private sector organisations that make up Job Network are now very significantly better than the old CES at getting people into jobs," Mr. Abbott said. "That's good news for the unemployed. Figures show that outcomes under Job Matching are 51 per cent better than the old CES. At 48.6 per cent, outcomes for Job Search Training compare favourably with Job Clubs. And Intensive Assistance Job Network members are achieving 60 per cent more outcomes than Case Management. Part of Job Network's success has been getting employers to use the system," Mr. Abbott said. "In the last year Job Network has registered over 175,000 more vacancies than the CES in 1998. This suggests that employers are making more and more use of the system. There were 295,535 Job Matching placements for eligible job seekers in 1999-2000, 14 per cent more than the number of similar placements made by the CES when at full strength in 1995-96. The success rates for both Job Search Training and Intensive Assistance are higher than those of comparable labour market programmes. Compared to an outcome of 37 per cent for the Working Nation Job Clubs programme, 46 per cent of Job Search Training participants were in jobs or education and training places three months after leaving assistance. Around 41 per cent of Intensive Assistance participants attained the positive outcome of a job or education/training place three months after leaving assistance while the outcome level for comparable Working Nation programmes in 1995-96 was 35 per cent."

From the researcher's perspective this is not founded a balanced comparison since there is an omission of any reference to the condition of the labour market, and the economy existing at the time of Working Nation. According to the Australian Productivity Commission's Independent Review of Job Network (2002, s., 5.71) labour market conditions were more buoyant for Job Network than Working Nation. Further, the Minister is not comparing identical systems, particularly since Job Network contains no mandated and federally funded VET or case management. The assertions made are selective and of little worth to the effective and unbiased determination of one public policy model over the
other. In a speech delivered at the Wesley Mission Conference, November 17, 2001, the Minister continued the theme of adversarial politics and the denigration of the former CES.

“Her (Ms Cheryl Kernot) claim on incommensurate data, she says that the Job Network is 25 per cent worse at putting people into work than the CES at its peak. Her reckoning ignores the fact that the CES counted very short-term jobs such as an hour unloading trucks at the markets as outcomes. It also ignores the inherent unreliability of CES data which was unaudited and sometimes doctored (for instance, one CES office with four staff claimed enough placements to justify nearly 40; another listed 3000 job seekers with the same address and so on...Fair comparisons show that the Job Network is 50 per cent better than the CES in its final year and already 20 per cent better than the CES at its peak.”

On the dual themes of unreliability and manipulating the system, the researcher found that the aforementioned Senate Committee found that there is “reasonable evidence of a certain amount of unethical practice” (Aspiring to Excellence, R.10, p. xxvii) in the current Job Network system and this observation is further reinforced through records of debates in the House of Representatives (Hansard, July 2001, Leonie Green and Associates, Job Network provider Queensland) which charge that the provider created phantom and worthless jobs counted in the Job Network statistics. Once these jobs had run for a period of fifteen weeks the employment was terminated, however the provider had claimed the fees, causing the Minister for Employment Services to order an enquiry and the department to demand a refund. Despite the Minister’s negative views of the
CES, it was a public service and did not receive fees and was unlikely that it would engage in these types of unethical commercial practices.

DEWR publications, and the political statements exhibited above, imply that Job Network is a homogenous system of quality. A perceived problem, with this claim, is actually the extensive disengagement by the bureaucracy in the process of delivery. The federal department is now a purchaser rather than a provider and governor of quality service and the goal has become one of contract maintenance and control. Robert Merton (1957) coined the phrase 'goal displacement', the fascination with the means by which goals are pursued to the point that the mechanism of pursuit displaces the original objectives and where preoccupation with the process, and defence against criticism, takes precedence. The danger here is that efficiency and good management are no longer the primary goals of the government agency where the competing forces of profit for the external provider and the erosion of public accountability collide. Consistent with Merton's proposition, a study of the DEWR publications demonstrates a public service agency focused on supporting political propaganda through prescribed comparisons between Job Network and the CES, utilising carefully presented statistics. Under Job Network there is duplication of structures and activity caused by competing providers (ACOSS, 32, p.17) with a "clear objective to achieve a work placement of a minimum (defined) duration", (APC, 2002, s. 3.6) and this duplication and incidences described in the Hansard corrupt such
Job Training
Looking for a job.
Approaching an employer.
Writing a resume.
Presenting in an interview.

Looking for a job.
Approaching an employer.
Writing a resume.
Presenting in an interview.

Motivation.
Communications.
Team work.
Turning up on time.
People skills.
Personal presentation

Numeracy.
Literacy.
Vocational short courses such as: fork lifts driving, secretarial, word processing and computing.

Job Training
Looking for a job.
Approaching an employer.
Writing a resume.
Presenting in an interview.

Motivation.
Communications.
Team work.
Turning up on time.
People skills.
Personal presentation

Numeracy.
Literacy.
Vocational short courses such as: fork lifts driving, secretarial, word processing and computing.

Table 1 - Job Network Training

By comparison the bulk of funds under Working Nation went to packages of assistance such as wage subsidies and training (APC, 2002, s.3.9) with an emphasis on the human condition, through individual case management and formal VET. The removal of VET and case management appears on first glance to be a simple factor of money (economic policy) where the Labor government programme cost one billion dollars more than the Coalition programme. However, the literature cited so far indicates a much more complex and deeper set of factors at work and driving Coalition action. If the APC is correct, that Job Network has no discernible impact on the jobless then the claims of success are at best misleading and the process is one of a very poor administration of public assets and services within a flawed public policy framework.

While one may argue with some validity, the proposition of a “training fallacy” as the Minister did, the researcher has found that the “rhetoric of choice” (Edsall, 1998, pp. 4-5) inherent within the Coalition’s own stated philosophy for the operation of Job Network is also a fallacy. The researcher again draws upon the independent review of Job Network by the APC, which states that many people are not aware of the offerings and services (s., 3.3, p.11) from providers and they are unable to exercise real choice as the system (Centrelink) allocates the clients to specific providers based on location and employment profiling. The Australian government, in its response to the APC review, specifically rejected the recommendation that would allow the client to exercise choice and the reasons
behind this declination are quite understandable when considering the design of Job Network. Centrelink, within their commercial obligations, must exercise due care in ensuring they do not advantage one provider over another and participants have a commercial value in these transactions, which transform them into economic chattels of significant value to the providers and the payment of fees for taking on a client come with certain binding elements and problems for the government if the client could choose to move about at whim or will. Clients cannot be nationally registered and serviced, as they were under the CES, and they cannot choose a programme with inclusive accredited VET in consultation with a DEETYA case manager. There are no public service (DEETYA) case managers under the Job Network system. The trend to shallow, and short duration, training within Job Network arises from perceiving education largely in terms of cost and demonstrates rationalism's lack of recognition of a role for education beyond the self-serving economic objective of "employability", whilst rejecting, or ignoring, learning for learning's sake. The government's continual focus on aspects of individual freedom and market forces, relying upon either the user or the employer having the good sense to invest whilst itself treating education and training as a cost to its budget, rather than an investment, places the future of the nation at risk and denotes a public policy apparently unconcerned with the overall public good.
Sterne (1988) in a Times Education Supplement in the UK, says:

“Education is both a public and a private good. It cannot be the subject of simple economic analysis. The time scale for returns on investment is too long and the returns for the individual too uncertain. We spend the money because this is what civilised societies do”.

Australia could be seen to be operating under an agenda of reductionism transforming its civilised society to one less tolerant and less egalitarian in relation to those who cannot, or do not, contribute through work. We can observe the rationalising of schooling as the starting point in the relationship between education and employer (corporatism) with the rise of corporate and economic interests embodied in politically actioned strategies including the corporatisation of employment services and education functions, marketisation and commodification of government services generally (Robertson and Woock, 1989, pp.3-24). This is an outworking of the belief, stated by the Minister, that the private sector does it more efficiently, and better, than an inflexible and stressed bureaucracy. The liberal philosophy appears to equate “self interest as social interest” (Seddon, 1990, pp. 21-42), encapsulating the state of individualism, where society is a market place where individuals are both equal, and rational parties, to exchange. Within this ideology the purveyors of this philosophy do acknowledged, perhaps grudgingly, that there are those who need assistance to become equal parties however, once they are accepting of assistance, they assume a mutual obligation in return (Burgess, 2000, pp. 173-
Mutual obligation is the progressive transformation of political hegemony through developing 'workfare' (Burgess, 2000, pp. 173 - 188) or as it is more commonly known in Australia today as "work for the dole". Reading the material in this chapter it could be argued that 'work' is being elevated to some form of religious belief and within this elevation, the reform of the unemployment services represents a movement to more radical free market and corporatist ideologies. In the place of public service comes a free-market ideology, and a set of structures, that have effectively framed the terms and conditions of a new corporate settlement by government (Robertson, 1994, pp. 83 - 108).

The theme of mutual obligation has a history, not of the Coalition making, but as a seed of Labor party hegemony. The Australian Labor government's focus on VET increased dramatically, in the Labor years as far back as the early eighties. Participation in VET, as a part of labour market restructuring and employment assistance, was Labor's 'mutual obligation' requirement of the unemployed (Tanner, 1999, p.62) enacted with the participation and support of trade unions and implemented through the bureaucracy and the Tafe sector. Working Nation brought the policy segments together as VET was used both as a mechanism for time-lapse policy fruition (enrolled students are completing courses and not in the unemployment statistics) and as an instrument of authority. VET and employment subsidies, within a suite of public policies, were mechanisms for stimulating job growth through employer access to skilled workers but how this
linkage (employer — worker — opportunity) actually worked, independent of other economic considerations and limiting factors, is not clear. Subsidised employment by the Labor government, as a goal along the lines of a Swedish model, was a stimulation to job creation in the marketplace since there is an implied correlation between a skilled workforce and economic growth in a global competitive economy. In the political context of today there is an implied, if not subliminal and automatic, correlation between work, human capital development and quality of life. Australia would, according to logic, attract investment and jobs as a result of the workforce skilling up and the quality of life would as a result, be sustained and probably rise. Given that the labour market in Australia is structured this is an over reliance on the simple and limited assumptions of neo-classical analysis (Webber, 1997, p. 187 - 204).

A commonality of public policy for both Labor and the Coalition is this link between school, education and work however it is the emphasis and the value that each sees for the role, place and timing of training that is different. ALP governments tend to focus on the group that they see as most likely to be at risk of losing ground, the working class. The lower level skilled population segment is, for them, at the front line of the forces of the impact, and disadvantage, of globalisation. In Labor hegemony it is logical to assume that, through competency-based training, these individuals may eventually adapt to the new technologies, in turn creating the foundation for national economic growth in a
global marketplace and US thought and research influenced Australian policy framers, for as US based sociologist, Carnevale states the goal is to promote "better skills among non-supervisory and craft employees" (1988, p.7).

The researcher sees education, reduced to skill competencies for work, as a rationalist remedy driven by a government lead by employers responding to market demands in a commercial framework. Neo-liberals assume the demands, and interests of industry and employers, to be synonymous with the nation's well being. Labor's Mark Latham (1998) and Lindsay Tanner (1999) adopt these influences, emphasising the role of education within a capitalist society, when arguing where Australia's government should direct its efforts in the future. The reading of this particular literature has reinforced the researcher's view that Labor engaged in a progressive transformation of its political hegemony, moving to a common position with the Coalition.

As the focus of public policy moves strongly to mutual obligation, and employability, the researcher opines that the adoption of generic skills (Khadria, 2001, pp. 45 – 71 & NCVER, 2003) as a common denominator for employment does not equip the individual, and by extension the nation, with higher capacities. Higher capabilities are the skills required to analyse, enquire, understand, interact and distil issues and problems in a complex and sometimes, irrational world. Things, which are learnt over extensive, time frames of deeper education, study, research and experience. The researcher remembers his own experience
when one employer sought traditional training for employees, in bread making. They had completed the generic training, however when the software programme running the automated system of ovens failed no one actually knew how to make the bread manually. The competencies they had acquired were relevant only when the technology was present and operating. Competency training, demanded by employers, has a close relationship with technology and may in fact be reliant upon its presence to a great extent. Whilst formal VET adds to the talent box that the applicant brings to the interview it may only occupy consideration in the employer’s mind to the extent that it is a mandated requirement for health and safety or licensing the use of equipment such as forklifts, or a trade certificate and is completed as the entry pass to the interview and not a significant factor in the decision to employ a particular individual.

In further examining the effect of VET on employment it is found that the success rate varies between categories of student and type of job, whether they had jobs during the training, or before, and whether they had prior educational qualifications, where they live and whether there are jobs available. The literature provides little source material on what factors dominate in job interviews and the proposition that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job appears to arise predominantly from ideological or logical assumptions and an implied association between graduation from training (NCVER, Ryan, 1999, pp. 1-5) and the number of graduates who get a job within a designated timeframe, distinct
from those who are unemployed without training. Wooden observed (1999, p.20) that quite a lot of surveys undertaken in the 1980s focused on what attributes employers sought when recruiting young people basing his views on the work of the work of Williams & Priest (1978), Sungaila (1981, pp.379-386), King & Reid (1983), Sloan, & Kriegler (1985, pp. 11-14), the Business Council of Australia (1986) and Thorn & Chapman (1988). These studies were small in sample size and scope, Williams limited his surveys to Western Australia, Reid to the western suburbs of Melbourne and they were not based on sampling to remove possible bias and gain a statistically sound basis for conclusion. It is however confirmed within the body of these works that the most sought after quality was “attitude” and not education. The researcher points out that this research was collected in a different economic and social climate and is considered to be of only minor interest to this study. Woolmer & Hill (1994), reported also in Wooden (1999, p.34), believed that it is not so much the skills acquired in training that may be viewed as valuable to prospective employers but more so the socialisation outcomes that the individual may gain in the areas of team co-operation and communication development. Much of the research revolves around youth employment and there is no research to be found on employer attitudes to Australians of older age.

The literature informs that there is a tension, and some detriment, between the competing interests of individual choice as to whether to participate in training,
the economic spheres (Lebaron, 2001, pp. 123 - 129), employer behaviour and
wants and the national interest. The Coalition’s attitude to the inclusion of VET in
employment services is influenced by ideology and employer attitudes, with the
latter highlighted in the literature as scepticism towards the idea that education
and training provides the key for competitive national advantage (Aronwitz,
DiFanzio, Ahier & Esland, 1999, pp. 76-96) and due to this scepticism investment
in human capital by employers is diminished. It may be simply that employers
are, like governments, focused on fiscal rectitude and surpluses and are not
prepared to pay, even though they may argue that the most important of all
capital is that which is invested in human beings (Schultz 1971, p. 2 in
Sutherland, 1999, p.1 & Knowledge Nation, Labor policy, 2001). Much of the
human capital investment – acquiring qualifications and skills – is made privately
for ultimate personal reward in the form of higher earnings and increased
employment prospects (Sutherland, 1999, p. 1) for specific demographic groups.
The researcher is not finished with this theme of employers and governments
“saying one thing and doing another” and statistics on attitudes, investment and
outcome realities are further explored in greater detail through data presentation
and interrogation in chapter five.

In trying to determine the proposition that VET enhances the likelihood of getting
a job there is not enough known about the factors that impede employment
(Wooden, 1999, p. 3), about the drivers of attitudes, or the reasons that people
undertake education at any given time, and there is a deficit of information on the employer decision-making and support side of the equation (Ryan, C. 1999, s. 6.3) with a pervading view in public policy and research that asserts that training, as the primary tool of employment success, is a fallacy. There is little attempt by the critics, and by government, to prove the fallacy one way or another and the lack of research and data gathering may stem from an ambivalence regarding the worth of such research or the worry that extensive research may conflict with political beliefs and policies exposing flaws or ambiguities. Whatever the motivation it is clear that education and training is not something that people participate in by choice.

The APC (2002, intro: finding 13) states that only fourteen (14) percent of respondents to its surveys received some form of VET. The ABS, in the 2001 census, reports that over fifty (50) percent, perhaps as high as sixty (64) percent, of Australians have no educational qualification of any type beyond secondary school. Given these two independent and credible sources it is questionable how VET is an influence on the employment decision when employers must be, by logic, employing a large number of people with no qualifications or post high school, formal education. Alternatively the data gathering methodologies and their extent, reporting this worrying situation are flawed in some way. These issues, including the claimed performance of the Coalition’s Job Network,
attitudes, investment in education and training by individuals and others and the extent of data capture will also be examined in chapter 5.

A number of professionals argue that creating a more informed and involved individual, within a social democracy, is a consequential spillover benefit of education (Sutherland, 2000, p. 2) and conspirational theorists might be inclined towards a view that the narrowing of education, to mere employability, might indicate that the spectre of a thinking, participating and conceptually astute population is not all that welcome. The denigration of intellectualism by labels such as the “chattering classes” or members of the “left”, and the disdain evident for academia in parts of the media and society is not challenged by the Coalition government and in many instances the researcher believes it is condoned and promoted. The researcher notes that many people are excluded from policy debate and participation in favour of involving those more acquiescent to the views of the government. The researcher concurs with Alinsky (1969, pp. 216-218), who says,

"it is highly undemocratic to plan, govern, arrange, and impose programmes without communication with the people for whom they are designed; it is also disastrously impractical.... I do not believe that democracy can survive except as a formality if the ordinary citizen's role is limited to voting, and if he is incapable of initiative or all possibility of influencing the political, social and economic structures that surround him".
The review will now further explore the framing of public policy regarding unemployment and examine the use and value of intervention strategies such as case management and VET.

"Job Network is about achieving sustainable employment outcomes", (Abbott, 1999) and the former Labor strategies were about "developing a more skilled and flexible work force", (Working Nation, 1994, p. 1). For the researcher, policy debate and process regarding the issue of unemployment is "a sociocultural and political self-legitimating rhetoric and set of objectives delegitimating alternative discourse", (Yagcioglu, 2001, pp. 815-872). Public policy is presented in a cynical fashion by government, as ostensibly facilitating the creation of a more flexible labour market whilst forcing a one sided obligation on the part of those receiving benefits. Flexibility of the new employment marketplace requires skills yet there is a broad ambivalence and disinclination on the part of government, employers and individuals to invest in training and education when immigration (Khadria, 2001, pp. 45 - 71) provides a cheaper and more effective alternative for employers. The researcher argues that strategies adopted by governments are not solely mechanisms to develop individuals for employability they are also designed to force people into work and off welfare. In Australia it appears that the success of public policy might be measured by the manner in which an individual adopts the accepted 'collective lifestyle' (Bourdieu, in Frolich, 2001, pp. 796 - 797) of work. In this regard, and through its design, Job Network is not a
sophisticated model based on a detailed understanding of human motivation creating enduring principles of welfare reform (Goodin, 2001, p. 189) it is seen, by the researcher, to be a somewhat crude and underperforming “act of faith”. Examining the literature, Working Nation does not get off lightly either, for it carried with it the unintended consequences of reinforcing, in some participants, negativity towards education and training. No political party, nor Australian government, at state, territory or federal level, has satisfactorily addressed the ambivalence of the nation towards education and life long learning.

Moving from these attitudes, and the relative values of training within the decision-making processes of government and employers, this study now surfaces crucial considerations in determining the contribution of VET and the performance of public policy, the existence, or absence, of opportunity to get a job and the barriers to accessing any form of opportunity including VET. Opportunity comes with social status and begins quite early for many, in the form of cultural programming, as children of the middle classes are advantaged in gaining education credentials due to the possession of cultural capital. Life, upon leaving school if they have been to school, is for every individual a series of events, full of uncertainty. One uncertainty is whether they will be able to get a job, or if the job actually exists, where they happen to be living and this uncertainty is the constant partner for everyone. In contradiction to the literature cited previously regarding the demand for higher level skills the researcher found
that some companies are reluctant to recruit these types of employees because
the corporate strategy is directed towards the supply of low-cost products or
services in which competition on price takes precedence over competition on
quality (Keep, 1999, pp. 113-140.) and if they do recruit such people there is now
a very high expectation that people can be made redundant in favour of the
economic imperatives of the employer. The government is willing to go so far in
supporting employer rights, as to introduce legislation attempting to repeal the
imposition of the existing unfair dismissal laws for classes of small business,
continually threatening the Senate with a double dissolution to dissolve the
parliament if they do not pass the amendments. Particular industries may
demand high-level skills (Keep, 1999, pp.1-15), which ultimately may not be
within the province of VET curricula and these skills may not be within the reach
of people who are disadvantaged by circumstance such as access to specialist
or higher education, ability to attend the courses, health, disability and the lack of
cultural capital. A concentration on the supply side of labour ignores the reasons
for the lack of employer demand and the circumstances that will block
employability or individual success and the possession of VET will not override
social disadvantage or stereotyping.

The government appears to have resiled from any obligation to deal with
disadvantage preferring seemingly believing that economic policy is the best tool
to removing barriers. It has removed responsibility for the determination of these
impeding factors to the unemployed getting a job from the province of the public sector, through the dismantling of DEETYA and the CES, and the failure to incorporate and specify case management of any depth within the Job Network or anywhere else in the public system places the onus on the individual and external providers. The CES and DEETYA used to act as a national integrated network of intellectual planners and action agents working to counter disadvantage. In comparison, Job Network is not actually a network as its name implies, it is a disparate group of competing providers bidding on price and deciding what if any services they will provide beyond the minimum specified for all contractors and their focus on disadvantage is at best, shallow by comparison to Working Nation. A transfer of obligation has occurred to both the individual and the Job Network contracted providers, distancing the government from any culpability or obligation to assist the disadvantaged. Job Network, as a physical and observable model of public policy in action, implies that it does allow creativity and flexibility for the individual whilst creating the limitations of a price/profit driven, resource poor system however the literature informs that choice, on the part of the individual, cannot be exercised, even if it was allowed and even if the poor service given by the provider warranted it. There is lack of knowledge of the system by the consumer and the employer (APC, 2002, p. 48) and inherent within the current strategy and system are impediments that will limit service delivery, reduce access and impact the job success equation. There are a significant number of limitations, which Job Network, unlike Working
Nation, is not designed or equipped to address. One of these limitations is distance limiting the existence of, and access to, services and jobs. Wishful thinking may lead some policy makers to presume that the Internet can provide access, otherwise unavailable, to overcome equity issues, but technology will not remove other forms of debilitating disadvantage such as learning, environment, human nature, societal biases, discrimination and not the least, the non-existence of jobs. Another factor impacting the job success equation is the employer as a human being within the scope of experience, attitudes and own education. The long-term unemployed may be perceived by a sector of the community, due to political labelling, as 'deviants' to the norm and, despite having undertaken VET, employers may decide that there is a risk of increased requirements, such as support, further training, other costs and possible failure if they employ such people. Adding to this conundrum, for the unemployed, is the destruction of many good jobs and their replacement by unstable and mediocre ones, the sub-contracting of work coupled with the reduction of spending by governments and a reticence to invest in human capital through expensive education and training. There is a limitation on job availability through the readiness to invest in technology in order to displace human labour in organisations which are now heterogeneous networks of human and non-human materials (Easton, 1996, pp. 210 - 310) where machine automation replaces human skill. Yet again current management theories actively encourage companies to embark on organisational change, including the shedding of a large
number of jobs, as part of a strategy to cut costs. In Australia management has embraced these methodologies downsizing the workforce dramatically with growing consequence. Applebaum and Batt (1993, pp. 22-23) concluded that lower profits and declining worker productivity resulted in less than half the firms achieving expense reduction goals while fewer, than one-third, increased profitability. Queensland based researcher and sociologist, Craig Littler (1996) in his research into corporate management concludes that structural reform does not increase productivity and two thirds of organisations he has observed have not been more productive. Despite this revelation the jobs are not reinstated highlighting the disparity, and chasm, existing between governments' efforts to deal with unemployment and the realities of the motivation of employers. The result is a growing polarisation between a minority of occupations that rely on innovative uses of knowledge and the mass of jobs that have seen the deskillling of their occupants. The literature review indicates that lack of opportunity, like attitudes and values, is but one of many impacting factors and there are even more barriers such as the lack of ability to cope with unemployment and motivate oneself (Patton, 1998, pp. 331-343) to try and try again.

If we see VET as a worthwhile intervention strategy in unemployment services we must also reflect upon the quality, content and mode of the training and the individual willingness to participate and achieve. There are two elements that
will act to affect outcome, either enhancing the person's opportunity or otherwise proving fruitless. The first, is the manner of structuring education as a "process and a task" whilst the second is the extent of contribution and willingness of "participation and trust", (Flude, 2000, p. 5). This duality works to achieve change for the individual, using a structured process of training interventions to develop knowledge and skills that may be directed at job search and ultimate employability. Job Network acknowledges this with some minimal attention through the provision of two weeks preparatory training in the Job Matching programme, described in some detail in chapter 3. In determining intervention and assessing service need, the different life experiences of the individuals involved, and their backgrounds, should be taken into account when examining the level of training and preparation for work or redeployment and it is not clear that Job Network has the capacity to undertake this complex task consistently or at all, across the nation. Federal, state and territory governments' policies concentrate on supply in a system that is private employer lead (Keep, 1999, pp. 113-140) and Job Network is designed to service this market's needs and not the individual needs of client circumstance where interventionist services such as counselling, psychological assessment and VET are abandoned as a part of the Job Network model. This action ignores that there are examples of effective and sophisticated process of intervention for confronting real and underlying human problems of unemployment and unemployability that would have justified
the retention of sophisticated intervention techniques and services and a number of examples have been chosen to demonstrate this point.

Key characteristics of the participants in the UK based Partington Project (Flude, 2000, p.9) were very high levels of social and economic deprivation, job search skills were extremely low and participants had been in the welfare system for one to five years and had very low expectations. The sequence of interventions was critical as the goals were improved self-awareness and re-established self-worth, with levels of trust needing to be established with the participants before individual counselling and the personal therapeutic journey could commence. Flude says that the project showed that there would have been little chance of positive outcomes from therapeutic counselling in isolation as there would not have been a positive purpose or sufficient levels of trust from the participants. It required the creation of atmosphere where participants felt safe enough for the participants to take risks and disclose many difficult issues from the past that were blocking therapeutic and employability movement (Flude, 2000:10).

Another example drawn from overseas literature is the Wildcat Services Corporation (ACOSS, 2002:45), an employment assistance provider in the United States which entered a venture with Salamon Smith and Barney NY, training the jobless and providing access to fill all the company’s administrative vacancies, supported by the state government.
There have been efforts in the past to involve business in the education sector (Hillage, 1995 & Miller, 1998) and Tafe once took a leading role in employment creation and placement programmes in the 1990s. In the city of Mildura, New South Wales, Australia, in 1999, local industry organisations demanded new, enthusiastic employees who had the basic skills and knowledge required to enter their industries (Sunraysia Tafe, 1999). From unemployed people came the plea for training to allow them to gain the knowledge and skills to enter the local industries and Sunraysia Institute of TAFE formed a partnership that provided a cooperative approach to the design and delivery of a pre-employment programme that addressed barriers to success. Practices and procedures developed by the partnership led to the delivery of a pre-employment programme aimed at satisfying everyone. In the years 1995 – 1997 William Angliss Institute of Tafe operated programmes, reported for their success (The Age, September 1997), which provided holistic services involving joint ventures between the Tafe and industry, providing mentoring, training, work experience and intervention support from health services agencies accessed through DEETYA, to some 2,000 participants.

What is clear from these examples is that participants have to have a sense of purpose or commitment in order to succeed and too often the individual, mired in the system, tries to appear willing so as not to lose unemployment and welfare benefits (Flude, 2000:10). This is the experience of the researcher, who in
interviewing and observing many participants in his organisation's programmes noted their resignation to the mutual obligation required even if it meant just going through the motions of compliance with attendance and continuous training. In looking at such attitudes it is interesting to note that in the parliamentary mid year sessions of 2003, it was reported that 600,000 recipients of social security had not complied with the requirements to attend Job Network offices.

Initiatives requiring highly complicated and professional intervention services, are risky, time consuming and costly exercises, especially for a small provider. They choose the services for which they wish to tender and these may be nothing more than job matching or they may opt for intensive assistance and descriptions of these are provided in chapter three. A provider may bid low prices to secure a contract and receive no subsidies from employers or government for any extra services that may arise once the clients have been secured and compared to Working Nation this is a process of bidding blind without knowing the actual constituency of the likely client base before a tender is lodged.

According to a substantial body of literature (DfEE, 1999; Lawless, 1998; QPID, 1998) individuals who under-perform as a direct consequence of under-investment in their personal human capital either on their own effort or an assistance provider may ultimately be excluded, not only from gainful participation in the labour market but more generally, from effective participation
in society. The removal of case management, VET and other intervention services creates a high risk that the long term unemployed and seriously disadvantaged will be reduced in stature, status and influence (Seddon, 1990, pp.21-42, Alinsky, 1969, pp. 216-218, Pilcher, 1996, pp. 161-173 and Creed, 1999, pp. 81-93) through a humiliating labeling (Becker 2001, pp. 185-210) by the government and community, harassed by a media that panders to bias and perception, seeking stories of 'bludgers' and preferring sensational and provocative reporting to substantial debate on the performance of Job Network and related public policies. The government using media, is reproducing an ideological package framed for a specific audience's consumption (Yagcioglu, 2001, pp. 817-852) whilst being unwilling to accept that unemployment is a responsibility of community, business, government and individual as a whole and not necessarily a matter of free choice for the afflicted. The government seems quite willing to take a risk and extend the likelihood of people being on welfare, by reducing the parameters and services of Job Network, for it is clearly demonstrated that those without prerequisite qualifications and skills underperform in labour market terms for an equally long time and may enter into employment that offers little scope for the subsequent acquisition of either skills or qualifications (Sutherland, 1999, p.2).
3 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The previous chapter dealt with a review of the literature informing the research on the themes of society and politics and their complex interactions with the formation and enactment of public policy as it relates to unemployment, education and training. Source material on services to the unemployed particularly relating to the role of VET and the proposition that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job was examined along with the ideology and philosophies of successive Australian governments. The examination of public policy within the contexts stated so far is a very difficult task especially when one considers the vastness of source material and the limitations described in chapter 1. The conceptual framework presented below is also complex but the researcher would argue that this is the nature of the mosaic being investigated and unpacked. Section 3.1 describes the theoretical basis of the study presenting first, an outer framework provided by the political and social dimensions of research and theoretical works studied in the literature review. Sections 3.2 and 3.3 describe suitable constructs used by the research which are the inner frameworks, models of public policy action adopted by successive federal governments, which themselves are resident within the broader conceptual framework.
Theoretical Basis For This Study

3.1.1 The Outer Framework

The theories of Antonio Gramsci (1831 – 1937) an Italian sociologist, political theorist and activist have influenced the choice and structure of a conceptual framework. Gramsci's dissertations on hegemony dealt with the objective of dominance of one interest over others, through a process of taking into account the interest of other groups and the social forces, whilst seeking ways of combining them with the interests of the dominance seeker. According to Gramsci this is the effective persuasion by one group of another to accept its own moral, political and cultural views. He postulated that there were two elements in hegemony, these being coercive and consensual control. Among his theories is the "war of a political nature" which is carried out across institutions of civil society. A type of political warfare could be said to exist between the Australian government and institutions, government and the courts, government and the unions, government and its critics such as the community activist group, Chilout – Children Out Of Detention (refer: http://www.chilout.org.au) and between political parties exemplified in the adversarial nature of our politics and systems. Gramsci's view of hegemony went beyond the exploration and notion of culture to the specific distribution of power and influence, bound up with Marx's
theory on class systems. The existence of class lurks in the background of this study in relation to how there might be groups within political rationality, such as the unemployed, which in turn incorporates other sub-groups such as the disabled, afflicted, disadvantaged, refugees, aged, unskilled, indolent and so on. The existence, or non-existence, of a "class" system in modern Australian society, and how the components might be theorised continually taxes the mind of the researcher. Patricia Harris (2001, pp. 5-26) theorised that unemployment belongs to a subgroup of political rationality and if this is the case then it is an objectively defined involuntary sub-class underneath some other class, perhaps economic, perhaps middle class or ruling class. The researcher believes that the unemployed are perceived, and treated, according to a rationale of political purpose and ideology, which is trending towards the ultimate outcome that such people are really not the state's responsibility. In support of this the researcher argues that ongoing unemployment, or unemployability, is deemed by neo-classical liberal theory to be of the individual's own making or disposition and the lack of opportunity, the barriers and other impinging factors described in the literature review are ignored. One reason offered for this ignorance is, if governments were to acknowledge the lack of jobs it might inadvertently imply that their respective political parties, and policies, actually do not deliver a solution to unemployment and the economic and the related policies of government are not as effective as advertised and continually promoted. Another proposition is that policy makers might actually believe that they are right and
that over time their policies will work, and in and endeavour to maintain that position they may manufacture such proof as are required, masking their failures. The proposition that governments, through agencies, may be manufacturing proof of success of their beliefs and policies is not a conspiracy theory raised by this researcher but is the view of credible independent sources.

"DEWR overstates benefits (of Job Network)", (APC, 2001, 5.1).

On the themes of motivational impacts on the unemployed, pursuit of status and materialism through work and the operation of governance surfaced in the literature review, Gramsci theorises the reasons for political confusion, the dilettantism of political leaders and parties and the absence of unity and lack of aspiration in parts of society. He contended that generalities of policy, and proposition by politicians, are masks for other deeper motives and the researcher applies this view arguing that the ALP used VET as a tool to mask a political transformation to mutual obligation and the Coalition is using questionable claims for the success of Job Network to mask its failure in dealing with the vexing issue of unemployment in a burgeoning economy. The research has proposed that, for many, there is a lack of opportunity of jobs and this is also deliberately masked from public attention as Coalition government on the face of it appears to be disavowing the traditional role of government in assisting people with disadvantage. Gramsci ridiculed the fine sounding programmes of politicians
whilst exposing what he termed their "wretched deeds" defining a "gulf between the represented and the representative and the relationship between the party and the parliamentary group." He blended the elements of science and politics, society and the human condition positioning them, as enmeshing forces within his theories and this is how the researcher sees the framework of this study but the researcher does not blindly adopt his views and theories without critique. Some claim that Gramsci did not allow history to contradict his theory and that his is a reductionist perspective simplifying the relationship between people and society (Stinati, 1995, p.174) while others take issue with his description of culture pointing out that culture is a co-operative shaping of society and not only a vehicle of domination of one interest group over another. Hegemony is a lived process and not, as Gramsci theorised, a system or structure and his theory that people will not question the prevailing order because they spend the bulk of their time and energies on making a living overlooks the alternatives that a majority might not be able to conceive of another order, due to limitations which may include lack of education and experience, or they may actually agree with the prevailing order (Williams, 1977, p.112). This latter consideration is demonstrable, in Australia, when we look at the majority of people who endorse the Coalition government's refugee policy, the detention of people in camps and the invasion of Iraq.
In addition to Gramsci's theories Working Nation, the CES and Job Network provide useful and important inner constructs for thinking about, and determining, how unemployment, education and training might fit in the wider economic, socio-political framework and they are described in detail below for their contribution to dealing with unemployment and because chapter five presents and interrogates data and claims of success for each category of Job Network, compared to the former CES.

3.1.2 Inner Theoretical Frameworks

3.1.2.1 Working Nation Model – A Labor Government Initiative

There were two distinct periods and developments of Labor party policy programmes for unemployment services. They were, "Jobstart" initiated in 1986 and continuing to 1997 and the addition of "Jobskills" between the years 1992 – 97. These came together under a single policy banner, entitled "Working Nation" developed by Labor Minister, Brian Howe and launched by the Prime Minister, the Honourable Paul Keating on May 4, 1994. Working Nation was represented as a "compact" between government and the unemployed.

"It had the dual goals of restoring full employment and fostering sustainable economic growth", (Australian Senate Enquiry Report, The Good, the Bad and Everything in Between, 1996, p.19).
One of the major distinguishing features of Working Nation, from the Coalition model, is the intensity of the ideological desire by the ALP to assist those who are considered to be at most risk of being left behind using intervention case management and the mandatory participation in VET. The study will demonstrate in chapter six that this selected group are the unskilled and the semi-skilled workers losing ground in a technologically driven, changing world, which is subject to economic vagaries and industry restructuring, market forces and the implementation of competition policy into the Australian economy at every level and they are also the behaviourally disadvantaged and in the view of the researcher this is a flaw in ALP policy because it is a policy and action that is discriminatory against other segments of the unemployed.

The study will now present the general description of the working relationship between client, provider and government agencies within the Working Nation policy model.

A person, seeking social security benefits during unemployment, and upon registration with the CES, would effectively enter into a Job Compact, which was an agreement that if the participant undertook VET and completed work experience to the satisfaction of the prescribed guidelines and standards they would, in return, receive a training wage and at the end of 24 weeks be placed in a job. The participant, if designated for intensive assistance (IA), was allocated to a specific DEETYA case manager. They would receive support through
various levels of assistance in obtaining a job. This would include assistance similar to the current basic Job Network such as resume preparation, grooming and interview presentation skills. The major difference between Working Nation and Job Network occurs in relation to the level of case management, which, in the case of Working Nation, included access to counselling and health services. There was cooperation between DEETYA case managers and the contracted training and job placement providers. An initiative titled, "New Work Opportunities", was an individually customised support and case managed programme of twenty-six weeks duration, which included nationally accredited VET courses, with on-the-job work experience. This VET might be delivered on site or through a registered training provider. This combination of training, work experience and support targeted 'skills and competency' acquisition within specific industry sectors. The individual received a training wage of $280 to $320 per week funded through the social security system, as distinct from a dole payment, and this allowance paid via the service provider, with the amount depending on the particular industry sector in which they were being prepared for employment. Participants received their benefit through the host payroll of a work site, similar to normal employees. The contracted service provider could suspend payment if the participant failed to attend training or work placement and the provider would notify the DEETYA case officer of such breaches. This effectively extended the monitoring of welfare compliance into the broader public and private sector beyond the traditional government (CES, DEETYA and
Department of Social Security) agencies. The researcher contends that this was the first step towards Labor's progressive transformation from passive dole payment and monitoring to broader 'mutual obligation' hegemony. Working Nation was in effect a very sophisticated 'work for the dole' scheme.

All training providers received set standard fees for each client, paid in instalments in advance, consisting of the wage component, supervision, administration and training. This fee structure ranged from a few hundred dollars for straightforward job search and placement support, to the more intensive case management and subsidies for employment around $12,000 per client which at the time totalled a national contribution of about $2,000,000,000 per year by government to assisting the unemployed. The New Work Opportunities intensive case management and training component of the policy is estimated to have cost about $1,000,000, 000 of this total and generally represents the difference in expenditure between the ALP and Coalition. The essence of competition in the ALP model lay, not in the competitive pricing of providers' bids for contracts, for that was set, but in the quality and innovation differentiation of the applications to be a provider to DEETYA. Providers in the system, had to be registered with, and were monitored by ESRA, a regulatory authority established by Labor to monitor competition, and they had to be able to actually provide a job rather than simply try and place people into employment elsewhere. Thus relationships were developed between training providers and industry or industry associations and
some employers themselves actually took up contracts. The industry sectors were extremely diverse and the mandated VET could theoretically cover any available VET programme and this training, drawn from the national register of accredited courses, could articulate with further study, to higher level, diplomas and degrees. Due to monthly, written case management reporting requirements it was very difficult for a participant to be ‘parked’\textsuperscript{1} in the system and ignored. One weakness, observed by the researcher was that participants, who had not gained employment previously, could be, and were, re-entered to another provider often being required to undertake similar training courses again.

The researcher, during management of intensive service and job matching provider contracts, has sighted hundreds of VET certificates, issued by multiple training providers to clients. The reasons for this were manyfold and apart from the obvious criticism that this is an easy option for the DEETYA – CES case manager, many providers had varying histories of success in assisting clients and this influenced the CES to reallocate them to more successful providers who also happened to have access to, or actually were, part of a Tafe.

\textsuperscript{1} ‘Parking’ is a term used to describe how a long term unemployed person is registered with a provider, receives little or no service, and when that person happens to obtain employment through their own volition, the provider claims a fee for placement.
One argument presented to this researcher, in support of such reallocation, was that prospective employers rated some Tafe courses above others and this is consistent with the varying quality and standards explored in the literature review. From the government perspective successful providers effectively created the linkages between government policy, the individual and an employment outcome with an obvious pathway to future learning through articulation. Employers and the Associations that participated in the New Work Opportunities exhibited a public service attitude towards the unemployed, perhaps tempered by the payment of a training wage for up to 26 weeks by the government without monetary contribution from them. The organisation with which the researcher was associated did not collect data as to the weighting factors that contributed to the decision to employ any individual at completion of the twenty-six weeks.

The researcher knows that in a large number of instances the contributing factors to gaining employment were the attitude and diligence on the part of the unemployed person and significant also was the provider's reputation, the persuasive abilities of the provider team, their broader industry associates and colleagues who all worked to influence an individual employer's decision. These points are demonstrated and reinforced within the deconstruction of the interviews in chapter six. The researcher now realises the potential opportunity missed to document the actual factors that affected the employment decisions for 2,000 individuals but knows that VET, together with on site work experience and
supervision at no cost to the host, was one of the influencing conditions for getting through the prospective employer’s door. It is important to state that the researcher paid the work site host a supervisory fee over and above the training wage paid to the participant. The justification in the mind of the researcher was the need to overcome the barriers arising from employer’s perceptions and resistance towards the long term unemployed, and disadvantaged, described in the literature review.

3.1.2.2 Job Network Model – A Coalition Government Initiative

Job Network is a separate initiative and structure from the Apprenticeship and the Traineeship Schemes operated by the Commonwealth government, both of which do include mandated industry participation, special award conditions, incentives and prescribed training and education. Entry Level Training Support Services provide integrated and streamlined Apprenticeship and Traineeship Services to employers and job seekers, and were included in Job Network contracts administered by DEWR, until 30 November 1999. From 1 December 1999, New Apprenticeships Support Services were provided under contracts administered by DETYA.

The following Job Network services are considered to be similar to the ALP Working Nation model.
(a). Job Matching (JM), the most basic of services, delivers labour exchange services to people seeking employment.

The functions of JM include canvassing employers for jobs, matching and placing suitable unemployed people into these jobs, as well as preparing résumés for job seekers. JM assistance is available to most unemployed job seekers that are not in full-time study and are working less than 15 hours a week. A non-intensive "Job Match" service attracts the lowest fee. Job Search Training (JST) provides training in job search techniques such as résumé preparation, interview techniques and presentation skills. This assists job seekers to apply for jobs and provides them, according to DEWR published claims, with the skills and confidence to seek and obtain employment. JST is generally provided to jobseekers that have been unemployed for three to 12 months and who have current work skills.

(b). New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) assists eligible unemployed people to establish commercially viable new businesses. This is achieved through the provision of small business skills training (including assistance with the development of a business plan), income support for up to twelve months and ongoing advice and support during the first year of business operation.
(c). Project Contracting (Harvest Labour Services) seeks to ensure agricultural growers have access to sufficient labour to harvest crops where considerable numbers of out of area workers are required.

(d). Special groups are monitored to ensure they receive their share of labour market assistance. Special groups include youth, people with disabilities, sole parents, Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islanders and people of non-English speaking backgrounds.

(e). Two other programmes which are indicated, by DEWR publications, as generally comparable to Working Nation are "Work for the Dole" and "Intensive Assistance".

"Work for the dole" is promoted as a partnership between community and government, where people on social security are required to undertake unpaid work in the community. There is a programme for low-income parents and carers called JET, which has provision for funded VET, but access is very limited.

Intensive Assistance (IA) provides individually tailored assistance provided by contracted agents, and not public servants, to eligible job seekers that are more disadvantaged in the labour market to prepare for and obtain sustainable employment. IA targets job seekers that have significant barriers to obtaining employment and require tailored assistance for a period to help them gain and stay in employment. Providers can decide under their allocated payments what
services they provide including case management and training. There is no
blatant link between providers to other ancillary public services and support, such
as health and the CES, that was evident in Working Nation and from this
researcher's perspective, the profit motive and individual capacities of providers
has a major impact on the decision as to what services client's will receive and
nor does the government pay participants a training wage to participants through
providers as Labor did under Working Nation for there is no work experience
component with a host. Creativity in training and the creation of alliances with
industry to the same extent as Working Nation is theoretically possible but again
is not blatantly observable.

3.3 Summary of the Conceptual Framework

The two models, Working Nation and Job Network, are the formal structures of
differing government policy inhabiting the larger framework and these models, as
political instruments possess the following Gramscian characteristics.

> The dominance of one interest (government and provider) over another
(participant).

> Persuasion by one group for another to accept economic, intellectual and
moral leadership and this goes beyond the relationships above to the broader
Australian community.
> Hegemony that accounts for the interest of others whilst being a coercive and consensual control.
> Social change depending on the formation of new alliances.
> The war of position across institutions and political spectrums.
> Ideology as a system of faith, meanings and values.
> Culture as a whole social process where hegemony goes beyond culture to the specific distribution of power and influence.
> Lack of aspiration on the part of individuals.
> Political confusion.
> Masking deeper motives.
> Fine sounding programmes and wretched deeds.
> A gulf between the represented and the representatives.
> Relations between parties and parliamentary groups.

3.4 The Research Questions

This research is about unemployment and the contribution that VET, along with broader education, may make towards overcoming this particular social enigma afflicting Australian society and economy. The starting point for exploration is the hypothesis that VET does enhance the likelihood of getting a job and the researcher draws the reader's attention to the word 'enhance', because this study accepts that VET is required for some occupations and people cannot get to interview if they do
not have the required certificate. The proposition will now be presented in the form of a question, which is the essence of this study, and the research will unpack the complexity through a framework of supplementary questions used to create an active interplay between the conceptual framework and the methodologies, within Gowin's "Vee heuristic Knowledge Construct" (Novak, J., & Gowin, R., (1984, p. 56).

3.4.1 Primary question

- Does VET enhance the likelihood of getting a job?

The supplementary questions

3.4.1.1 Has formal vocational education been downgraded, or ignored, as a necessary and valuable component within government contracted services provided to the unemployed in Australia?

3.4.1.2 Which political services model, Job Network or Working Nation, has had the greater impact, if any, on reducing unemployment?

3.4.1.3 What are the roles, contributions and values placed on VET by individuals, employers, decision-makers and policy framers and is VET part of a broader public policy for life long learning?
3.4.1.4 What are the primary beliefs and drivers of public policy regarding the role of education and training and do the research, data capture and analysis systems in use in Australia provide comprehensive, responsive and supportive evaluation methodologies and information, leading to public policy of high quality and depth?

3.4.1.5 To what extent is there masking or misrepresentation of motives, actions and claims for success of public policy relative to solving unemployment and how is this reflected in published statements, data and statistics?

Chapter four will now detail the methods and strategies that have been applied in the literature review and selection of the interview cohort together with the methodologies and techniques used within the research design to assess, deconstruct and interpret the data and the content of the interviews. This chapter will create a theoretical bridge between the literature review, conceptual framework, the data, surveys and the interviews.

In summary, this researcher views this extremely complex mosaic as diverse elements operating within an "interdependent, undifferentiated whole" and admits that this study has proved quite demanding and challenging particularly in trying to filter and apply a huge amount of diverse source material and theories drawn from a number of academic disciplines. Chapter four will now set out the
research design and methodologies adopted to meet these challenges and provide the filtering and deconstruction mechanisms.
4 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGIES

4.1 The design and type of study

The researcher was influenced in the choice of the research design by Connolly's (1988) work on hermeneutics versus science, inclined away from narrow scientific measurement towards an anti-positivist view, favouring an ethnographic – inductive format and qualitative approach to research and enquiry with empirical measurement of the performance of public policy within chapter five. This thesis is predominantly a study of people, and their interaction within a social and political system reflecting a Gramscian blending of social and political theory within the representation of two models of political strategy and action, Working Nation and Job Network, constructed by the researcher as the conceptual frameworks set out in chapter three. The researcher, through the use of interviews as a significant component of the study design, demonstrates an inclination towards phenomenology and symbolic interaction based on the ethnographic - inductive design principles. Phenomenology brings an insider's viewpoint extending the research from the seen, which is the literature, reportage and data, to the unseen, being the respective ideologies, faith, beliefs, hegemony, hidden agendas, rules, agency and practices.
4.2 Rationale for the selected methodologies

Influenced by Krathwohl's work (1998) the researcher adopted three approaches.

Table 2 - Methodology Approaches

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approaches</th>
<th>Sources</th>
<th>Conceptual Framework &amp; Domains</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structured study</td>
<td>Literature Review</td>
<td>Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Arts and Economics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Political Science</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Political (observed)</td>
<td>Sociology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Data and surveys</td>
<td>Political ontology</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Operations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Policies &amp; Hansard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>Phenomenology</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Symbolic interaction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Semi-Structured</td>
<td>Structured interview</td>
<td>Interview analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualitative Research</td>
<td>Themes</td>
<td>Techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Qualitative cross case</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Extending the literature</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The first approach is a structured study according to Kellehear (1993, pp. 16-31) of relevant literature. Step one, examines literature dealing with political science and sociology theories that pertain to the outer domain of the conceptual framework. Step two, determines the extent of research pertaining to the assertion that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job, part of which exists in the inner domains of the conceptual framework (the two models), step three studies the politico-socio-economic context of these two competing political models, Job Newtork and Working Nation, which might be loosely termed, by the ordinary person, as representing elements within 'globalism and competition' policy environments and step four selects and analyses published data.

The strategy has been to conceptually map the political ontology of the two major parties and the transformation of their pedagogy and hegemony acknowledging the external conditions under which stimuli occurs to bring these changes about. This is not a study of the merits of competition policy or the quality of VET and education in Australia. It is a process of reviewing literature, research and published materials, that might enlighten the researcher's knowledge of the basis of belief in the role, and merit of VET, and its likely impact on getting a job and the value that stakeholders may place on VET in their decision making, whilst observing governments using it, and other mechanisms and social problems, as
tools of political authority, along with other strategies and structures, to achieve a political objective.

The initial focus of the literature review is on primary source material and refereed journals. Secondary literature sources (Stanfield, 1987, pp. 366-380) were sought noting footnotes within material and bibliographies for clues to other archival sources. These additional sources are located predominantly in the political science, arts, economics and sociology fields. Economics and politics underpins the public policy framework, and that of most of the stakeholders, and the debate on how to deal with unemployment. Economics and politics direct the review from the macro perspective, which is a cognisance of the socio-political culture and hegemony, the demography and time specification in which these policy actions occurred regarding VET and employability, working to the micro [perspective of specific outcomes, attitudes, values, careers, job availability, barriers and disadvantage. The literature review had to be supplemented by an archival analysis (Burnstein, S., Goodhew, V., Reed, B., & Tranter, G., 1992) of parliamentary Hansards, and the published policies of the two political parties, because it is within that source material that the conceptual framework would take on a modernity of political ideology and the transformation of political hegemony and action within Australian society in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first few years of the twenty-first.
The researcher spent a considerable time considering what the second approach should be. The options were a quantitative method described by Krathwohl (1998) for educational and social science research, where the theory would be built testing the progressive way forward to understanding the rationale of the supporters of the proposition and the detractors. The study could have adopted an 'empirical view' where the researcher could visit and study the world of politics and government, objectively developing theories to explain it and gathering data and templates, models and pictures to replicate it. In reading Denzin (1998) and Dey (1993), Marshall, & Rossman (1995) and Miles and Huberman (1994) the researcher learned that qualitative research method offered the chance to examine philosophic tradition, which seemed appropriate to a study of political party hegemony drawn from the literature but this would carry with it the pitfalls of bias and baggage, and the political could be deemed irrational in the eyes of the ordinary and much that arises out of the political could be to many both illogical and opportunistic. The researcher would necessarily, under the qualitative methodology, attempt to cast off preconceived attitudes arising from his own background and experience, to see the world through the eyes of others. The researcher acknowledges that there is a large element of conscious decision making and examined thought in policy formulation and implementation provided by government departments, advisers and Committees of the Parliaments, where the world of politics is both ordered and unstable, aloof and embracing, seemingly interchangeable.
Parliamentary process, legislation, rules, party solidarity and other historical structures and systems create the order and stability whilst voter behaviour, crisis, human behaviour, error and political expediency can create instability. Quantitative methodology is structured and constrained by the narrow focus of a form of scientific measurement it was rejected in favour of the qualitative methodology. Given the researcher's anti-positivistic stance, experience and attitudes, qualitative research also offered the practice of phenomenology coupled with symbolic interaction. This was considered most appropriate for the construction of the conceptual framework, and the theoretical basis of the study. The enigma that is unemployment is, according to this research, is encompassed within two competing political worlds, coalescing and rejecting. By this the researcher means that on the one hand political parties would claim to be distinctive and on the other they embrace similar ideologies such as competition, global finance and investment, defence and mutual obligation for social contracts, described in detail by Latham (1998) and Tanner (1990). Under qualitative methodology the objective view would be abandoned in favour of a subjective view. The debate around objective versus social construct made this methodology more complex for the research effort, yet the telling of stories and narratives, inherent in this type of sociological method and the narrative of character and relationships (Kirschner, 2001, pp. 441-456) emodying habitus, hysteresis, sense of threat and moral outrage are representations of the political world. Hermeneutics would be applied to the transcripts of parliament and the
political speeches, semiotics to the rules and symmetry of political and business conventions where the silencing of critics, control and disciplining of members and alternative ideas is a part of the value system and the culture. Brooks (1969) described the requirement to test the authenticity of archived documents and the onomasiology of particular words and statements when using qualitative techniques and it was also attractive as a methodology since it enabled the deconstruction of the themes that make up the sociopolitical world.

The third approach employed in this study is the semi-structured qualitative approach using an open-ended interview process adapted from Drever (1995) of targeted participants, which could be updated and modified by participants if desired during the period of the research. The possible conceptions of the interviews being that they are (1) a pure information transfer, (2) a transaction which has some inherent bias and (3) an encounter that shares with the researcher, and the reader, part of the drama and features of parliamentary debate, personal participation and viewpoints, work, career, aspects of life, values and beliefs and the transformation of hegemony. The interviews were designed to develop a big picture profile using qualitative cross case methodology. They were not specifically intended to seek examples and proof from the individual’s experiences that VET enabled someone they knew to get a job rather they were invited to identify any sources that might demonstrate the efficacy of their opinions, beliefs and statements in interview.
The interviews extend the literature review taking the researcher and the interested reader into the mind of those who impact the creation of policies, and the transformation of ideology, hegemony and agency directly or indirectly through channels of power and influence. They provide a rich source of understanding and operative views, extending the conceptual framework from the political macro picture to the individual micro scene, demonstrating that ideologies are merged as tools of authority, in politics, business and in fact society as a whole to effect the transformation of pedagogy and hegemony. Through methodology the thesis unpacks the semiotics of hidden agendas and the conventions of political hegemony that by agreement or unilateral sanction, limit and suppress other discourse, knowledge or experience (Kellehear, 1993, p.28) in favour of the dominant political elite and their self interests portrayed as social interest (Seddon, 1990, pp. 21-42). The methodologies provide a mechanism for a value analysis of the policy platforms and arguments in relation to VET and unemployment and the attitudes and ambivalence of Australian society where the knowledge practices of the political field are in reality world's apart from the ordinary citizen (Balboa, 2001, pp. 125-132).
4.3 Data, Surveys and Interview Cohorts

An electronic and physical search of data relevant to unemployment, training and education outcomes, and the relationship to employment, along with samples of surveys of Australian employers' attitudes and values was undertaken and a cross section has been chosen for study in chapter five.

This thesis incorporates a structured interview programme designed to test some of the propositions, theories and claims uncovered in the literature and the research effort generally. Target interviewees were chosen for their likely ability to have an influence on the framework of government policy, either directly or indirectly, or as providers of service or because they made, or were involved in decisions regarding VET or in the employment of people on a scale beyond the small individual businesses that make up much of Australia's employer landscape to larger Figure conglomerates. The following table sets out the summary of invitations, roles and responses to the invitation to participate. This process took nine months. The following tables sets out the extent to which the researcher went to try and gain a broad representation of participation from people who are constantly asked to be involved in many activities and whose time and resources constraints often preclude a positive response to the invitation.
Four people agreed to be interviewed and despite this small sample they represent quite significant employer/employee numbers. For example, one interviewee works in a federally registered association that represents the interests of 2,000 statewide businesses that employ some 60,000 personnel and this state entity operates within a much larger national association of many more thousands of employers and employees. The interviewees have a very high degree of influence in their respective work environments and a competence and performance task role relating to employment, training and education with one having public policy design experience, three with public policy implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Invited Categories</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Politicians</td>
<td>Female (4)</td>
<td>Ministers of governments (3) Spokesperson (1)</td>
<td>Referred to bureaucrats then no response (3) no reply at all (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male (6)</td>
<td>Ministers as above (2) Spokespersons (4)</td>
<td>Declined (1) referred to bureaucrat then no reply (3) accepted (1) No reply (130), too busy (4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parliamentarians Male &amp; female 134</td>
<td>State and federal members</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education Bureaucrats</td>
<td>Involved in VET</td>
<td>Boards of Studies (2) Tafe (5)</td>
<td>Declined (2) No replies (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executives in private and community sector</td>
<td>Employers</td>
<td>Human Resources (15), ITABs (4), Mgt. &amp; Training (3)</td>
<td>No replies (19), Acceptances (3)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
experience on a large scale. Two of the people are politically aware and active stakeholders and the other two have no stated, or implied, political affiliations or demonstrable participation or interest in this area, creating a balancing effect. The interviews are a lens model analysis of individual perception and action, within the pedagogy of the ALP, the politics of government and the pedagogy and role of industry and its interaction and relationship with government. The nature of this pedagogy, and constructivism, is reflected in the language and concepts, opinions, beliefs and assertions, imparted by the interviewees. The responses to the questions posed within the interviews are tinged with the interviewee's ideology, political and/or work related experiences and the extent of their knowledge of, and interest in, government policy and the operation of Working Nation and Job Network.

A reminder notice was sent and then direct contact was made to remind them of the research interview time. All were advised in writing of the right to withdraw up to a point in time. The pre-set questions, in the invitation letter, which can be found at Appendix 1, were chosen as a basis for a consistent approach to exploring the assertion and as a starting point from which to explore their views of the two models of government and the role of education more generally. The questions on participation in process and policy determination provided avenues to the ideology, epistemology and hegemony. Two of the interviews were conducted in a closed office environment on the premises of the interviewee, another by interactive electronic means, email and telephone and one in a side
walk cafe. The latter required the use of filtering techniques to eliminate background noise on the digital tape and the face to face interviews were taped with permission and a copy of interview was sent to the interviewee for editing and amendment and no major amendments were received. An attempt to flush out additional views, data and sources was made by sending 134 emails to politicians, bureaucrats, members of education boards and committees, Tafe and ITAB members, considered to have an interest or stake in this topical issue asking them to respond to a simple question – “Does Vocational Education and Training, in their opinion, enhance employment opportunity”? They were also asked if they have any qualifications such as personal circumstance or disadvantage that they want to make to reinforce their views and what was the basis of their opinions on any particular source or experience. There were four cursory responses with no information tendered.

4.5 Validation and Control Techniques

The researcher has sought to ensure the a balance of chosen sources, clarity and clear definition of the categories used to inform the analysis. In relation to reliability the possibility of observational and interpretation errors, on the part of the researcher, arises when analysing the speeches of politicians and the content of individual interviews since communication varies according to the sensory perception and comprehension of the listener. The researcher has
applied a number of methodologies to counter the effects of possible distortion arising from the circumstances of interview and the background of the interviewee. There is a likely adherence, by politicians, to political, party policy and published statements and by the corporate representatives to their organisational philosophies even though they may have their own personal views. It is known that people have information relating to policy deliberations and action, within their own sphere of interests, but will decline to reveal it for any number of reasons. The researcher is not able to access fugitive data, such as government Cabinet discussions, and deliberations, to further elicit a more informative factual foundation of the manner in which policy of government is debated and framed. Neither can the researcher examine the records of clients of employment services providers to determine if they took vocational and education courses and the perception of worth and link to outcomes. The latter would no doubt give substantial clues and accurate information as to the nexus between training and employment success, timeframe and circumstance and the use of this data in policy framing and implementation for Job Network.

Validity of assumptions and the statements made in interviews, along with public policy pronouncements by government, politicians and agencies and the claims of stakeholders published or obtained otherwise, is ensured through the use of multiple methods of research to attempt to remove bias and enable cross referencing and checking of claims and any data or material tendered in interview
or located in the public domain. Validation and counter balancing (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998) of arguments and propositions has been sought within the publications of regulatory bodies and agencies such as the ABS, APC and ACOSS.

Triangulation methods (Denzin, 1994) were considered suitable for checking validity and accuracy using tables and data, literature sources, the interviewees and the researcher's experience and knowledge and this allowed the inclusion of aspects of social change, political posturing, ideology, ruling economic thoughts and arguments and locational markers relative to the external pressures upon those being interviewed, the interviewer and the available data and literature. Literature sources are set in their climate and context and are therefore static, they either enforce, refute or are neutral on the assertion and the conceptual framework. Data and interview response validation based on the guidelines for general research methodologies of Cohen and Manion (1994) and Drever (1995) was undertaken through cross checking the information from interviews, with an analysis of literature, statistics, parliamentary debates and published reports including any statistics that purport a possible correlation of success for those who did receive VET and those who did not and which are implied or stated in the data and found research, such as that of Christopher Ryan (2000).
There has been an extensive, and continual, redirecting of the research in order to provide a counter balance, examining an equal number of views that are positive and negative as recommended by Denzin (1998). The research will now outline the deconstruction and analysis techniques applied to the interview content in the form of table.
### 4.6 Deconstruction and Analysis Techniques of Interview Content

#### Table 4 - Techniques in analysis and deconstruction

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CONTENT ANALYSIS</th>
<th>THEMATIC ANALYSIS</th>
<th>SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Language — binary meanings</td>
<td>Experience</td>
<td>Materialist Semiotics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Themes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>unstated/avoided</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Words</td>
<td>Knowledge</td>
<td>Binary meanings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequency</td>
<td>Patterns</td>
<td>External Influences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Values, Beliefs/Philosophy</td>
<td>Conformance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Distortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Repression</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The interviews are a process of systematic storytelling on the part of the person being interviewed and therefore go beyond critical incident recording which tends to deal only with precise responses that lead to the sought outcome for research. Communication, through interview and written response, is concatenated as the teller of the story summarises thoughts and experiences without fuller detailed explanation often assuming an awareness on the part of the researcher since he has prior knowledge and experience of the organisations in which the
interviewees work and their experiences relative to involvement in unemployment services through Working Nation or Job Network programmes and what they say in the interview, the language usage, what they infer, omit to say or repeat are of interest and substance. These people give an insight, which in part can be validated by the researcher through the triangulation technique even though everyone except Respondent 1, offers no supporting data or sources. Given the complexity of the topics and the existence of hidden agendas, all of the interviewees lack a comprehensive understanding and knowledge of all of the factors and elements in play at any time and some have not had the benefit of research, analysis and participation to the level of others, to reinforce their perceptions. The interviews show us, in their own words, how material and facts in the data and tables of chapter 5 are relevant and in some respects, a reality.

While content analysis has been used in relation to the interviews the researcher was loathe to concentrate on it as an analysis technique because Scott (1990) warned that there was a possibility of developing too many, erudite categories that might be only remotely quantifiable, such as body language, nuances, words, phrases and backgrounds. Holsti (1969) contends that content analysis is useful in determining political intelligence and Wiseman and Aron (1970) and Singleton, Straights, Straights & McAllister (1988, pp. 349-50) informed that the use of language and certain words, including the frequency and intensity, are important. The researcher did not want to use judgemental descriptions
(guesses) to define the various language styles. For example in theorising style, one might use terms like oratorical, authoritative, minimalist, interlocutory, informative and so on, because in his opinion this would add little to the research findings. In place of this, the researcher has chosen to use binary meanings, which is the examination of words used, or not used, in the responses, that have informative meaning or may be implied or received as meaning something else. They are words, and their opposites, conveying intent and intensity whilst not necessarily being the most frequently used words or phrases, words laden with ideological, social and political undertones or overtones. The binary meanings listed for all the interviews provide interesting similarities and absences in the case of each interviewee. The use of binary meanings is a significant feature of this ethnographic – inductive research design and interpretation of the transcripts of interview consistent with Roughley's (1991, p. 22) methodology for analysis. According to Turner (1989, pp. 13-30) it is the binary meanings that assist in demystifying the process of deconstruction exposing the possible social and political meaning of the terms used in the source material and the interviews as key to language analysis for the researcher. By tracking selected words and symbols in the literature and seeking similarities in the interviews the researcher hopes to reach a justifiable conclusion as to the nature of the operation, and transformation of, the political – social system and its interaction with unemployment and training.
The researcher has noted the tensions between content analysis and thematic analysis viewing the latter to have greater relevance to this work. The researcher recognises that in using thematic analysis it would be necessary to overcome any bias of the researcher’s personal politics and force a personal perspective of understanding the relevant political culture of the time and the circumstance of the interviewee and the meaning they attach to objects and relations. The thematic analysis could be revised as the researcher checked the literature, interview responses and notes (Patton, 1980, p. 299) with other sources, data and material and through discussion with the thesis supervisor and others. Miles and Huberman (1984, pp. 215-249) provided a guide to the principles of thematic analysis in relation to events and experiences, patterns and similarities. In order to understand and analyse the myriad of sources the researcher referred to the work of Saussure (1966) and Derrida (1981) and Semiotic Analysis (Game 1991) allowed the researcher to go beyond the content and the thematic to the unstated, neglected and avoided themes inspiring the search to prove the theory that VET was actually a tool of authority used by Labour in the transformation of its pedagogy and hegemony and a factor in the decision to employ or an enhancement as claimed by Labor. The use of semiotic analysis, to interpret the world and experience, must be distinguished from the thematic in that it is not inductive (Deeley, 1990, p. 12) and the researcher had to move outwards in following the paths these people, and the research, have provided until the conclusions were reached and justifiable.
Discourse analysis of the language (Lupton, 1992, p. 145-150) is a vital consideration when looking at the content of political speeches, media releases by politicians and the tenor of published material for it is noted that words are carefully chosen by politicians. The data is carefully chosen since within the data, surveys, literature and interviews lay the values and the attitudes (Kellehear, 1993, p. 35) of decision makers and individuals in the system. Set time periods (Holsti, 1969, pp. 35-37) place the frequency of data collection in clear relief demonstrating the time lapse between collection, collation and analysis. The ideology and impinging factors of the politics, the changing demographics of the labour market, state of the Australian economy, the social climate and other key factors are described. Recurring events, experiences and themes (Miles and Huberman, 1984, pp. 215-30) are noted and documented as they appeared relative to the problem solving of governments and the underlying fundamentals of their policy and its justification. The researcher has used the analysis of data, the literature review and interview combined with a study of social, economic and political theory through the conceptual framework to determine what might influence the decision makers in terms of leading thoughts, ideas and their opposites (Kern, 1970, pp. 553-561) and ruling ideologies. The researcher continually sought out recurring themes within the literary context, the time and culture (Connolly and Keutner, 1988, p. 26) by returning to the literature review updating sources and through ongoing conversations during the research, to extend the insight and the learning content of this study.
The critical application of traditional processes within politics that distort, repress and oversimplify (Derrida, 1981, Foucault 1972, Lyotard, 1984 and Kristeva, 1987) brought into play the researcher's previous study and experiences in the fields of education, human behaviour, motivation, organisational change, competition reform, politics and sociology. A synchronic analysis of the policies and practices as they existed at the points in time and diachronic analysis of the stages of creation and abandonment of policy and practice (Harre, 1974) described in the introductory chapter validate the hypothetical proposition of a transformation within the mosaic of the conceptual framework.

The researcher pondered how the relationships between the interviewee and externality might influence and shape their responses (Game, 1991, p. 128) and what methods would be used to deconstruct their narrative. The researcher sought, and analysed clues in the interviews, that pointed to a transformation to a common ground of the acceptance of mutual obligation and other pedagogy. The researcher has gone beyond bland analysis of data, literature and the interviews into the implications of the identified values engaging materialist semiotics (Game, 1991, pp. 45-47) to contextualise the transformation, exposing the epistemology of the decision makers and the subjugation by ideology, theoretical points of view (Positivism, Deeley, 1990, p. 12), business and political objectives, of their critical thinking and response (Manning, 1987, p. 31).
Methodology is an assembled set of rules, scientific and other approaches to constructing research and the reliance on methodology herein, is tempered by the researcher’s own knowledge that things are not necessarily what they seem (Lynn and Jay, 1984, p. 93) and the chosen research design and analysis leading to conclusions may have flaws. This probability however does not negate the simple objective of this research, to tell the reader something new and to argue that it is, on balance, likely to be so.
The previous chapter has outlined the research design, scope and the sources that have informed the choice of three methodologies to be used, along with the analysis techniques for data and interviews. Instrumentation, constructs, content validity, reliability and limitations have been stated. In chapter five selected extracts of data, surveys and tables drawn from a number of diverse sources will be examined. The researcher will firstly define the dimensions of unemployment, pointing out anomalies and constraints in establishing an accurate number of unemployed. The dimensions of Job Network will be précised together with a sample of data on the published performance of Job Network, that will demonstrate the manner of the government's reporting of the performance, through DEWR, and the claims made for its success. This data will be unpacked and compared with material from the Australian Productivity Commission to test the validity. The other survey data provides a window into the attitudes of individuals, industry and employers, their perceptions of the impact and value of VET as well as graduate outcomes and the theorised link to employment outcomes. Investment in knowledge and learning by individuals and the nation, as a percentage of gross domestic product are presented to develop a picture of the value placed on learning and its contribution to employment success and work. This material will also give an indication of the politicisation of this social
enigma, which is unemployment and the extent and type of research, data, and sources that inform policy makers.

5.1 Dimensions of Unemployment

This section deals with the outer parameters of the conceptual framework. According to the Australian Productivity Commission, in July 2000, there were 694,000 unemployed persons representing seven percent of the Australian, officially measured, workforce. However according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics in July 2001, there were 613,000 unemployed persons, a thirteen (13) percent increase since July 2000. Since the ABS has more detail in its published data it will be used to indicate one determination of the dimension, and the discrepancy in calculations by various agencies will be dealt with at the end of this section.

According to the ABS three in four (76%) unemployed persons were looking for full-time work. This is the same proportion as recorded 12 months earlier. Most males (85%) were seeking full-time work, as were the majority of females (64%). On average males were unemployed for longer periods than females averaging fifty-four (54) weeks compared to forty-three (43) weeks. The mean duration of unemployment has dropped consistently from sixty (60) weeks, in July 1998, to fifty (50) weeks in July 2001. In July 2001, sixty two (62) percent of unemployed
persons were registered as a job seeker with Centrelink. This is similar to the level recorded in July 2000 (61%). Almost all (94%) unemployed persons had contacted prospective employers in their attempts to find work. Of this group, sixty three (63) percent were registered with Centrelink. Unemployed persons looking for full-time work were more likely to be registered with Centrelink than those looking for part-time work. Of those looking for full-time work, three in four (75%) were registered with Centrelink. Of those looking for part-time work, the most common active step taken was contacting prospective employers without having registered with Centrelink.

The most commonly reported difficulties for unemployed persons in finding work were:

- Prospective employers considered them as too young or too old (12%);
- They were deemed to possess insufficient work experience (12%);
- Too many applicants for available jobs (12%);
- No vacancies at all (11%);
- Lacked necessary skills/education (10%).

In July 2001, three in four (75%) unemployed persons had highest educational qualifications at year 12 secondary schooling or below, while those holding year 10 or below qualifications made up forty one (41) and generally they had been
unemployed for longer periods of time than people with higher qualifications. Their mean duration of unemployment was the highest at sixty four (64) weeks, and twenty (20) percent had been unemployed for longer than two (2) years compared with eleven (11) percent of those with a certificate, diploma, bachelor degrees or above. Over a third (39%) of unemployed persons were aged between fifteen to twenty-four (15-24) years. This has increased slightly from thirty six (36) percent in July 2000. Half (50%) of unemployed persons aged fifteen to nineteen (15-19) years and seventy nine (79) percent of those aged twenty to twenty four (20-24) years were seeking full-time work. More young males aged fifteen to twenty four (15-24) years (70%) were looking for full-time work than young females (57%). The main difficulty in gaining employment that young unemployed persons reported was insufficient work experience (18%), other difficulties experienced were nil vacancies (15% of those aged fifteen to nineteen (15-19) years and ten percent (10%) of those aged twenty to twenty four (20-24) years; and lacking the necessary skills or education (11% and 13%).

In July 2001, 144,300 persons were considered long-term unemployed, that is, they had been unemployed for twelve (12) months or longer. This represented twenty four (24) percent of all unemployed persons, a decrease of five (5) percentage points since July 2000. Of those long-term unemployed persons, the majority (89%) were seeking full-time work and most (90%) reported they had not received any offers of employment during their current period of unemployment.
Being too young or too old was an obstacle to finding work for almost one-fifth (20%) of long-term unemployed persons. A lack of the necessary skills or education sought by employers (14%) and their 'insufficient work experience' (10%) was another commonly reported difficulty.

The figure for long term unemployed (LTU) reported above seems, to the researcher, to be remarkably low because the ACOSS submission (2002, paper 120) referred in the Australian Productivity Commission report, in the Key Findings synopsis, states that in December 2001 there were 385,000 LTU, the same figure as six years ago.

Research indicates that figures on unemployment are generally understated, by quite significant numbers, as demonstrated in the conflicting estimates of the APC and the ABS, between the ABS and the ACOSS sources. This occurs due to the differing methods used by the APC and the ABS in their respective definitions of unemployment, which is defined by the type of benefit received and not all unemployed are registered with Centrelink and receiving benefits (Quiggan, J, Australian Financial Review, 12 September 2002) and the elimination of people from statistics if they report one hour or more of work in any given week. The ABS has noted on its web site (http://www.abs.gov.au) that data is 'compiled on an irregular basis'.

113
In relation to one of the supplementary question posed at chapter three, regarding the adequacy of data and analysis, the above material presented would appear to indicate that one of the fundamental data sets, informing government policy – the actual number of unemployed – is not reliable and is open to manipulation through the interpretation and methodology of collection. This anomaly would allow policy makers to choose whatever statistical method suited the occasion and the message creating a credibility issue for statements about public and political policy and action effects on unemployment.

5.2 Dimensions of Job Network

This section deals with the inner models of the conceptual framework. According to the DEWR web site, accessed in June 2000, there were 200 private sector and charitable service providers of employment services along with the
government owned entity, Employment National, delivering contracted services. Employment National was a corporate organisation, formed by the government during the abolition of the Commonwealth Employment Service in 1996 – 1997 to provide services to difficult regions that were unattractive to the private market bidders and into which they might place the unsaleable CES services, and staff, that had to be retained. The Minister appointed a Board of Directors and the entity was required to compete for work among the other 200 employment services providers. Employment National had to be financially rescued by the government in 2001 and again in 2002, to avoid insolvency. The researcher believes that it was placed in a somewhat untenable and invidious position both in the allocation of regions and also in the extent of tenders it was awarded and that it was not unexpected that the government would offer the company up for sale.

According to the APC (2002, intro.), the Coalition spends, $750,000,000 on Job Network compared to $2,000,000,000 spent by the ALP on Working Nation. However the researcher noted the 2002-2003 federal government’s Appropriation Bill, May 14, 2002, contained an increase of $240M for basic job matching in Job Network. DEWR stated on its web site, accessed in June 2000, that, “Job Network is performing extremely well...it continues to outperform the CES and is achieving sustainable job outcomes particularly for those most disadvantaged in the labour market.”
According to DEWR, for the twelve months from May 1998 to April 1999 on a like for like basis, Job Network members recorded around 177,000 (54%) more vacancies notified and over 72,000 (43%) more eligible placements in jobs than the CES did in its last twelve months of operation between May 1997 and April 1998. From 1 May 1998 to 4 June 1999, there were over 277,000 eligible placements under Job Network. From 1 May 1998 to 4 June 1999, there were over 55,000 job search-training commencements. Job search training provides fifteen (15) days of individually tailored training to help job ready, job seekers better market themselves to employers and into a job. There were 14,000 job matching eligible placements relating to jobseekers that have received job search training assistance. In addition post programme monitoring survey data for job search training indicate of those who completed job search training in May 1998 to January 1999, three months after leaving assistance, forty eight percent (48%) were in unsubsidised employment or further education and training. This compares favourably with job clubs, which achieved comparable outcomes of forty five point six percent (45.6%) for those job seekers who ceased assistance between July 1995 and April 1998. From 1 May 1998 to 4 June 1999, DEWR claims there were over 342,000 Intensive Assistance commencements.

By DEWR’s own admission, “It is too early in the market to assess the full impact Intensive Assistance has had in gaining employment for job seekers. While Job Network has been running for just over 12 months, job seekers referred for
Intensive Assistance to Job Network members are eligible for up to two years of assistance. However, even at this early stage Job Network members are achieving an impressive number of placements into jobs as well as achieving an increasing number of sustained employment outcomes.

In addition DEWR says, there were nearly 99,000 Job Matching placements of job seekers who have commenced under Intensive Assistance. Furthermore, the Department's analysis claims that, in terms of placements into sustainable jobs, that is, jobs not subsidised by the government, and where clients satisfied the conditions for an outcome payment, “Intensive Assistance Job Network Members are achieving around 60% more outcomes than were achieved under case management based on outcomes after seven months using the same methodology as used for Job Network first anniversary figure”.

It goes on to say that from 1 May 1998 to 4 June 1999, there were 6,100 New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS) commencements. NEIS provides twelve (12) months of assistance for eligible job seekers wishing to establish a viable new small business. The results on Job Network performance in the various labour market regions claim that Job Network is achieving outcomes for job seekers and employers in regional Australia as well as metropolitan areas. The published data states that since its commencement on 1 May 1998, in metropolitan areas Job Network has, placed nearly 164,000 eligible job seekers
under Job Matching, assisted more than 36,000 job seekers under Job Search Training and assisted more than 210,000 job seekers under Intensive Assistance. In other areas for the same period there were nearly 114,000 eligible job seekers placed under Job Matching, about 19,000 job seekers assisted under Job Search Training and about 132,000 job seekers assisted under Intensive Assistance. (End of DEWR published extract).

The researcher now presents a DEWR published data table for the first period of operation of Job Network for the twenty-nine labour market regions across Australia and has calculated, and inserted the percentage success rate for job search training and intensive assistance placements for every location since the success rate was not calculated in the original data published by DEWR.
Table 5 - DEWR published performance data
1 MAY 1998 TO 4 JUNE 1999 – 29 labour market regions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Job Matching Placements</th>
<th>Job Search Training Commencements</th>
<th>Job Search Training - Job Matching Placements</th>
<th>Intensive Assistance Commencements</th>
<th>Intensive Assistance Job Matching Placements</th>
<th>NEIS Commencements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>New South Wales</strong></td>
<td>74,976</td>
<td>18,131</td>
<td>4,073 22% success</td>
<td>107,724</td>
<td>27,328 25% success</td>
<td>1,923</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Inner Sydney</strong></td>
<td>8,967</td>
<td>2,529</td>
<td>427 17%</td>
<td>11,915</td>
<td>2,685 23%</td>
<td>227</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>North Sydney and Central Coast</strong></td>
<td>7,845</td>
<td>1,419</td>
<td>360 25%</td>
<td>8,402</td>
<td>1,997 24%</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>South West Sydney</strong></td>
<td>12,417</td>
<td>4,130</td>
<td>993 24%</td>
<td>21,654</td>
<td>6,498 30%</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western Sydney</strong></td>
<td>8,746</td>
<td>2,583</td>
<td>552 21%</td>
<td>12,687</td>
<td>3,115 25%</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hunter and North Coast</strong></td>
<td>13,234</td>
<td>3,324</td>
<td>625 19%</td>
<td>27,237</td>
<td>5,957 22%</td>
<td>417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Illawarra and South East NSW</strong></td>
<td>7,896</td>
<td>2,015</td>
<td>495 25%</td>
<td>11,299</td>
<td>3,136 28%</td>
<td>203</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Riverina</strong></td>
<td>5,219</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>245 28%</td>
<td>4,593</td>
<td>1,308 28%</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western NSW</strong></td>
<td>10,653</td>
<td>1,259</td>
<td>376 30%</td>
<td>9,937</td>
<td>2,632 26%</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Victoria</strong></td>
<td>68,774</td>
<td>12,347</td>
<td>3,114 25.2%</td>
<td>85,989</td>
<td>24,717 28% success</td>
<td>1,786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>East Melbourne</strong></td>
<td>25,395</td>
<td>5,456</td>
<td>1,389 25%</td>
<td>32,056</td>
<td>9,113 28%</td>
<td>567</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Geelong</strong></td>
<td>5,540</td>
<td>1,335</td>
<td>409 31%</td>
<td>8,698</td>
<td>2,578 30%</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Western and Inner Melbourne</strong></td>
<td>18,871</td>
<td>2,915</td>
<td>622 21%</td>
<td>25,546</td>
<td>6,864 27%</td>
<td>598</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>New</td>
<td>Successful</td>
<td>Remaining</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>New</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gippsland</td>
<td>3,864</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>93 (18%)</td>
<td>5,325</td>
<td>1,711</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Riverina</td>
<td>5,219</td>
<td>872</td>
<td>245 (28%)</td>
<td>4,593</td>
<td>1,308</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victoria C/Highlands</td>
<td>9,886</td>
<td>1,251</td>
<td>356 (28%)</td>
<td>9,771</td>
<td>3,143</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Queensland</td>
<td>70,230</td>
<td>12,766</td>
<td>3,724 (29%)</td>
<td>70,208</td>
<td>23,611</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brisbane City</td>
<td>23,483</td>
<td>3,945</td>
<td>1,153 (29%)</td>
<td>19,875</td>
<td>6,878</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central Queensland</td>
<td>8,189</td>
<td>927</td>
<td>428 (46%)</td>
<td>6,543</td>
<td>2,814</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Darling Downs</td>
<td>4,806</td>
<td>493</td>
<td>155 (31%)</td>
<td>3,530</td>
<td>1,266</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moreton</td>
<td>18,050</td>
<td>4,917</td>
<td>1,365 (28%)</td>
<td>24,546</td>
<td>7,706</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Queensland</td>
<td>9,695</td>
<td>1,529</td>
<td>351 (23%)</td>
<td>8,316</td>
<td>2,693</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wide Bay Burnett</td>
<td>6,007</td>
<td>955</td>
<td>272 (28%)</td>
<td>7,398</td>
<td>2,254</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sth. Australia</td>
<td>25,200</td>
<td>4,724</td>
<td>1,128 (24%)</td>
<td>31,852</td>
<td>9,611</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adelaide</td>
<td>17,221</td>
<td>3,542</td>
<td>792 (22%)</td>
<td>23,815</td>
<td>7,367</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern and Western SA</td>
<td>2,879</td>
<td>540</td>
<td>169 (31%)</td>
<td>4,347</td>
<td>1,068</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern and Eastern SA</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>642</td>
<td>167 (26%)</td>
<td>3,690</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Australia</td>
<td>23,499</td>
<td>4,521</td>
<td>1,070 (24%)</td>
<td>27,618</td>
<td>8,882</td>
<td>31.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>15,554</td>
<td>3,404</td>
<td>651 (19%)</td>
<td>20,216</td>
<td>6,338</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance of WA</td>
<td>3,617</td>
<td>447</td>
<td>186 (42%)</td>
<td>3,536</td>
<td>871</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern WA</td>
<td>4,328</td>
<td>670</td>
<td>233 (35%)</td>
<td>3,866</td>
<td>1,473</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tasmania</td>
<td>7,123</td>
<td>1,542</td>
<td>335 (22%)</td>
<td>11,685</td>
<td>3,065</td>
<td>26.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A successful placement is thirteen (13) weeks employment. The researcher noted a consistency of success rate for all twenty-nine regions, at location, regional and state level, even for those regions, states and territories where one might expect lesser opportunity. This implies that all contract providers are performing to similar levels of success and a mid twenty to low thirty percent success rate is considered acceptable. It is difficult to believe that all areas of the nation are as homogenous as implied since there is variation between the types of participants in metropolitan and country regions, the services available and access to them, the types of jobs as well as personal traits such as ethnicity, education and disadvantage. There are exceptions such as Gippsland, which was subjected to extensive downsizing of employment and business, caused by privatisation of the State Electricity Commission, experiences a low rate of 18% success whereas Central Queensland has recorded a very high rate, in the forties, and the likely reason is attributed to the construction of major infrastructure – a power station and refinery –, which provided above average

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Success</th>
<th>Failure</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Success Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hobart and Southern Tas.</td>
<td>3,121</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>782</td>
<td>5,704</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Tasmania</td>
<td>4,002</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>760</td>
<td>5,981</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australian Capital Territory</td>
<td>4,024</td>
<td>222</td>
<td>1,020</td>
<td>3,963</td>
<td>25.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nth Territory</td>
<td>3,654</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>3,419</td>
<td>23.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Australia</td>
<td>277,480</td>
<td>13,831</td>
<td>55,605</td>
<td>342,457</td>
<td>28.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
employment opportunities for this region. The refinery project has failed and those figures are felt unlikely to be replicated. Going down into segmental data, rural area success rates are much lower than the metropolitan zones and the metropolitan/suburban zones are extremely variable in opportunity (Stimson, 2001, pp. 45-66) and yet the regional data success percentage calculated for each type of service remains quite consistent implying that the labour market regions are quite well constructed towards this purpose. The number of actual job opportunities (Ellyard, 1994, p.4) for each region, at a given point in time, is not stated by DEWR within the table to allow a comparison of performance above the raw, and unverifiable, percentages and the number of vacancies are published separately (see Table 2 below) as gross figures making correlation and determinations between success, opportunity and regional demographics impossible for independent researchers.
### Table 6 - DEWR published vacancy data

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>CES</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Job Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May-97</td>
<td>29,504</td>
<td>May-98</td>
<td>15,632</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-97</td>
<td>24,313</td>
<td>Jun-98</td>
<td>21,306</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-97</td>
<td>29,348</td>
<td>Jul-98</td>
<td>33,971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-97</td>
<td>34,283</td>
<td>Aug-98</td>
<td>37,580</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-97</td>
<td>48,672</td>
<td>Sep-98</td>
<td>48,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-97</td>
<td>36,141</td>
<td>Oct-98</td>
<td>54,342</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-97</td>
<td>31,456</td>
<td>Nov-98</td>
<td>49,048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-97</td>
<td>13,078</td>
<td>Dec-98</td>
<td>34,225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-98</td>
<td>21,652</td>
<td>Jan-99</td>
<td>43,068</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-98</td>
<td>22,582</td>
<td>Feb-99</td>
<td>57,659</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-98</td>
<td>20,359</td>
<td>Mar-99</td>
<td>61,045</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-98</td>
<td>13,973</td>
<td>Apr-99</td>
<td>45,546</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>325,361</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>502,308</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Network exceeds CES by</strong></td>
<td><strong>176,947</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>CES</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Job Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May-97</td>
<td>11,330</td>
<td>May-98</td>
<td>4,150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun-97</td>
<td>8,496</td>
<td>Jun-98</td>
<td>9,064</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jul-97</td>
<td>12,445</td>
<td>Jul-98</td>
<td>13,446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug-97</td>
<td>13,499</td>
<td>Aug-98</td>
<td>15,078</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sep-97</td>
<td>20,878</td>
<td>Sep-98</td>
<td>21,664</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oct-97</td>
<td>23,707</td>
<td>Oct-98</td>
<td>25,239</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov-97</td>
<td>21,326</td>
<td>Nov-98</td>
<td>27,330</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dec-97</td>
<td>11,013</td>
<td>Dec-98</td>
<td>20,651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jan-98</td>
<td>12,410</td>
<td>Jan-99</td>
<td>18,920</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb-98</td>
<td>14,412</td>
<td>Feb-99</td>
<td>28,798</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar-98</td>
<td>12,806</td>
<td>Mar-99</td>
<td>33,623</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apr-98</td>
<td>7,820</td>
<td>Apr-99</td>
<td>24,491</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>170,142</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td><strong>242,454</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Network exceeds CES by</strong></td>
<td><strong>72,312</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Placements $^2$

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>CES</th>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Job Network</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May-99</td>
<td>52,746</td>
<td>May-99</td>
<td>26,567</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The above data is considered of very little use in assessing the effectiveness of one agency (CES versus Job Network) against the other since it is set out differently to the Job Network performance table and gives no comparison data for the success or placement data. It tells us only those raw numbers of people who were registered with either agency and unlike the previous table there is no indication of the type of unemployed registrant and there is no indication of the economic climate through indicating the number of total vacancies for jobs, and the data is not ordered by region or location. It is viewed as serving a political purpose of reinforcing an impression of superiority of Job Network over the CES, and if this is the purpose it is not convincing. As a response the ALP\textsuperscript{2} issued the following data.

Table 7 - Labor's assessment of the success of Job Network

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of programme</th>
<th>Participants who did not get a job or commence training under Job Network and Coalition policies, 2001-2002 according to Labor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work for the Dole</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intensive Assistance</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Search Training</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indigenous Employment program structured training and employment projects (STEP)</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Matching</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{2} David Cox, ALP shadow assistant treasury spokesperson, Media Release 22 August 2002
5.2.1 DEWR published Job Network Report, 2002

Below is an extract taken from the DEWR web site, accessed in September 2002 and it is presented in detail because it is considered important for its contribution to answering the supplementary question of the comprehensiveness and reliability of data being presented and used in the formation, and enactment, of public policy. The researcher has undertaken some minor editing of grammar and punctuation inserting parentheses for figures and percentages but no substantial changes and selective editing has taken place and no commentary has been inserted.

(Start of extract)

"Outcomes and their sustainability

Outcomes achieved from Job Network services three months following assistance (post-assistance outcomes) have generally reflected the level of disadvantage of participants and local labour market conditions. In 2000-01, positive outcomes (those either employed or studying) were seventy one (71) percent with sixty six (66) percent employed for Job Matching, fifty two (52) percent of which forty three (43) percent were employed for Job Search Training; and forty five (45) percent of which thirty nine (39) percent were employed for Intensive Assistance. NEIS achieved positive outcomes of eighty
five (85) percent of which eighty three (83) percent were employed. Outcomes for Intensive Assistance were more likely to be in part-time jobs, while outcomes for Job Search Training were evenly shared between full-time and part-time jobs. Achieving sustainable outcomes is one of Job Network’s main objectives. The DEWR self-evaluation found that employment outcomes in the short-term are a good indication of employment outcomes in the longer-term. Across the three main services, about four out of five of those in jobs three months after assistance were employed in the longer-term for Job Matching, eighty three (83) percent of job seekers who were employed three months after placement were employed twelve (12) months later; and for Job Search Training and Intensive Assistance, eighty two (82) percent and seventy six (76) percent of those employed in the short-term were also employed after eight months. For many job seekers the quality of outcome (in terms of both income and skill levels) improves over time, supporting the view that for some job seekers a low quality initial job can provide a ‘stepping stone’ to a better quality job. It is significant, moreover, that the sustainability of outcomes appears to hold generally for most job seekers, including those who are more disadvantaged. There is, however, a group who return to income support over time. Among job seekers referred to Intensive Assistance who leave income support, for example, about thirty (30) percent had subsequently returned to the income support register within fifteen (15) months after referral. Of course such people may regain some employment after this point, but this figure highlights the intractability of the problems
confronting certain job seekers in securing a sustained transition from income support to financial independence. This problem of returning to income support is also evident among the long-term unemployed in other countries and was very apparent under labour market programmes that preceded Job Network. Notwithstanding the progress made in recent years, there is considerable scope to improve targeting and design of optimal interventions for job seekers with different characteristics in different labour markets, so they achieve lasting results. This is an important area for ongoing research within Australia, as in other OECD countries. The net impact of Job Search Training and Intensive Assistance, based on the new methodology, was found to be modest, particularly for Intensive Assistance. For many job seekers, the benefits of participation in Intensive Assistance were substantially reduced by the attachment effect, which is likely to reflect the extended programme duration and activity levels. This suggests that the current twelve to fifteen (12 - 15) month period for Intensive Assistance is too long, and that reducing the duration of assistance and intensifying the level of activity during participation, including job search, could improve overall impacts. For both programmes, a considerable part of the net impact from referral came from the effects of compliance. For Job Search Training, however, the evaluation also found that participation in assistance seemed to increase the motivation to look for work and to improve job search techniques.
The introduction of Job Network has resulted in a substantial reduction in the cost of achieving employment outcomes. Job Network costs per employment outcome have been the lowest achieved in the past decade: at about $5,000-$6,000 since mid-1998, compared to between $10,000 and $16,000 in the mid-1990s and $8,000-$9,000 in the early 1990s. In 2000-01, costs per employment outcome were $560 for Job Matching, $1,390 for Job Search Training and $5,440 for Intensive Assistance. These costs for Job Search Training and Intensive Assistance were dramatically below those of the comparable programmes that they replaced—respectively, $2,600 for Job Clubs and $12,100 for the group of programmes replaced by Intensive Assistance. These substantial efficiency gains have translated into improved cost-effectiveness". (Quote ends).

The researcher has noted that the claims are somewhat arbitrary by not indicating performance measurements against a backdrop of economic climate, individual circumstance or recognition of the possibility of dual registration with one or more Job Network providers, which may lead to double counting. It does not exclude those who obtained a job through a normal recruitment agency or by answering a job advertisement unassociated with any activity to do with, but still
claimed by, a Job Network provider, who may have had the person registered on their books. When taken in concert with tables five and six, the assessment of the performance of Job Network has become even more confusing, as the DEWR web site (http://www.workplace.gov.au/wp) accessed on 22 September 2003, began consolidating all of its diverse services (describing them as ESC3 sites), claiming a national outlet number of 2,500, whilst on another linked web site, http://www.jobnetwork.gov.au (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, accessed on 27 March 2003) the following information was published.

“Overall 109 organisations have been offered Job Network Services business. Under the Employment Services Contract 2003 – 2006 (ESC3) they will be contracted to operate from 986 Job Network sites (plus 140 outreach services).”

DEWR described the types of organisation in ESC3, as fifty four (54) percent Job Network members, being community/not-for-profit organisations, of which just over five (5) percent are church organisations who have been offered fifty (50) percent of the market share, forty three (43) percent of Job Network members are commercial organisations who have been offered forty seven (47) percent of the market share and three (3) percent of Job Network members are local or State Government organisations who have been offered three (3) percent of the market share.

“109 high performing organisations will be offered almost $2.5 billion worth of Job Network business as part of an improved suite of services to Australia’s unemployed, the Minister for Employment Services, Mal
Brough, announced today. Mr. Brough said the tender announcement is a major milestone in meeting the Government's commitment to employment services reform. The Active Participation Model will provide even better services for genuine job seekers, but will also drive more effort from inactive job seekers. Job Network has been an outstanding success with over 1 million Australians finding work through Job Network in the last three years. And, from July, Job Network members will deliver even better services to Australia's unemployed". (Issued by Minister, 27 March 2003).

Independent researchers may never know the real performance of Job Network because DEWR ceased publication of Job Network data, in September 2003, and seems to have removed all previous files including those extracted before that date, for use in this research.

5.2.2 Independent Review of Job Network by the APC

The researcher went looking for an independent source to confirm the validity of the data and claims and found only one independent study of Job Network. The Australian Productivity Commission (APC) published a final report on Job Network, in September 2002, although a draft was available as early as March 2002 and the researcher has chosen an extensive number of extracts of the March paper, which address a number of the supplementary questions and the issues raised in section 2.1.2 above, regarding the reliability and calculation of DEWR's published data and performance claims. The March paper was chosen due to its independent commentary and analysis and the researcher
acknowledges the possible incorrect assumptions that the APC may have made in the absence of detailed information and response.

In the Introduction (5.1: Key Messages) the APC states:

"The Job Network programs have had small or uncertain effects on the job prospects of participants. The most important program element — Intensive Assistance — generates a small, net positive effect for participants. The net effect on job prospects for Job Search Training is also small. The net effect of Job Matching on job seekers is difficult to ascertain. There are significant positive compliance effects for JST, but much less so for IA. Compliance effects can reflect positive outcomes for job seekers who respond to the requirement to participate in a labour market program and successfully find employment before commencement. Gross outcome measures mean very little, and should not be relied upon in program evaluations, which should focus on net impacts, provided they are measured properly. Measurement of net impacts is inherently difficult. DEWR's 2001 net impact study overstated the benefits of the programs by ignoring attachment effects (which are likely to be significant for IA) and because of biases in the control group methodology. DEWR said that it has revised this methodology, and that forthcoming reports will include more accurate estimates of compliance, attachment and program effects. While the impact of the various methodological shortcomings is not wholly clear, it is likely that Job Network programs have only a very modest net impact on aggregate employment,
particularly after taking into account the displacement of other job seekers by program participants. This finding is consistent with those for previous Australian programs and overseas programs, and is in line with realistic expectations about the efficacy of labour market programs in reducing aggregate unemployment. The funding of active labour market programs has fallen dramatically, relative to previous programs such as those forming part of Working Nation. Improved data and improved methods are required to facilitate better understanding of the programs' effects and to allow for the discipline of external scrutiny by independent researchers”.

At page 5.2 is the following extract:

“The Job Network was introduced to tailor assistance to the needs of individual job seekers and to ensure that this assistance is focused on getting people jobs as efficiently and effectively as possible and to achieve... better and more sustainable employment outcomes than previous employment programmes. But outcomes, both in terms of quantity and quality, are hard to measure. There is limited evidence on the quality of the job and other outcomes achieved by the Job Network programs”.

At page 5.8

“The reported performance of Indigenous job seekers following participation in...
IA may be inflated due, in part, to some moving into subsidised employment through the Indigenous Employment Program and those participating in CDEP are counted as an off-benefit outcome".

Page 5.9:

"DEWR noted that the Job Network's performance exhibits some degree of regional variation in outcomes and effectiveness of assistance. Factors that contribute to this variation include differences in local labour market conditions, differences in the characteristics of job seekers living in these areas and the availability and quality of local services. In particular, it noted that there was considerable geographical variation in the take up of JST. And with respect to IA, it said that its effectiveness might not be as great under more depressed economic conditions, in which circumstances there may be merit in greater use of the Work for the Dole program. It added that the somewhat better performance of Intensive Assistance in stronger labour markets combined with the more general finding that local labour market conditions have a significant influence on a number of Job Network performance measures, including take-up rates ... has implications for the operation of Job Network in locations where job seekers do not have access to strong labour markets.

Between the first and second tenders, the number of Job Network sites outside capital cities almost doubled, from 600 to around 1100, partly as a consequence of the smaller geographical tendering blocks used in the second round. Nearly
150 locations gained a Job Network site for the first time, improving access for job seekers in regional Australia. Nevertheless, the Capital Region Employment Council noted that the effectiveness of the Job Network in rural and regional areas is influenced by the location of Job Network offices, their opening hours and opening days, and the availability of public transport to and from the local area. NESA also discussed some of the 'unique issues and challenges' facing providers operating in rural and remote areas, including the difficulty of handling referrals for job seekers who may live up to 200 kilometres away and high government expectations about job outcomes in remote communities that have very restricted labour markets."

Page 5.11:

"More generally, the Queensland Government said that a 'lack of access to private or public transport because of unaffordability or remote proximity to public transport routes is a significant impediment to job seekers during job search activities and one that traverses both metropolitan and regional and rural communities. It recommended universal fares assistance for job seekers as part of the Job Network contractual arrangements. The Government’s proposed Job Seeker Accounts, announced in the 2002-03 Budget, may help to address this issue"."
Simple outcome measures tell only part of the story. They do not shed light on a key question: did participation in the program make a difference to the job prospects of participants? For example, some participants would have found jobs anyway (or in the case of NEIS, have started a business anyway) — spending on them is unnecessary and represents a ‘deadweight loss’ for the program. This suggests that the net impact of the program will be less than the outcomes reported... The net impact study reported that participating in JST or IA led to a higher rate of ‘off-benefit outcomes’ for job seekers. However, the study did not measure the net impact on success in obtaining jobs. Davidson observed that the best way to compare the employment outcomes of different labour market programs is to conduct a net employment impact study ... [DEWR] has released net benefit impact studies ... but these studies ask a different question. They ask what effect these programs have on unemployment benefit receipt. For example, an ‘off benefit outcome’ in these studies might include the transfer of a job-seeker from unemployment benefits to a Disability Support Pension ... In reviewing the net impacts of the Job Network programs, a number of matters need to be kept in mind. Each program generates a number of separate impacts, some of which are not captured in the ‘net impact’ measure discussed above. But they can add to or detract from the overall effectiveness of the program. For example, a comparison of the rate at which job seekers across the economy as a whole find employment with the corresponding rate for job seekers in IA appears to show
that some job seekers in IA obtain employment more quickly than if they were not
in the program. To the extent that this is correct, it implies additional benefits
being generated by IA, which is not being picked up in IA program outcome
measures. Foremost among program impacts are compliance, attachment and
displacement effects”.

Page 5.20:

“Although it inflates measured program net impacts, the post-program monitoring
(PPM) methodology remains useful to compare previous programs to current
arrangements. However, it is important to note that while differences in results
between the PPM methodology and the third stage longitudinal method will partly
reflect attachment effects, they will probably be largely due to the time bias. For
such reasons, appendix E argues that any such comparisons need to be
interpreted carefully and that the magnitude of each separate bias or effect has to
be understood before any statements about, for example, the size of attachment
effects, can be made”.

Page 5.21:

“A sufficiently clear picture of the effects of the Job Network programs has not
emerged. As Dockery and Webster (2001) observed: As with earlier [active
labour market programs], the available evidence and shortfalls in evaluation methods leaves considerable uncertainty surrounding the estimates of the net impact of current assistance measures for the work-deprived. The experience has perhaps only cast greater reservations on the effectiveness of active assistance measures... measured outcomes are comparable to previous programs that offered extensive training and work experience at very high cost".

Pages 5.23 – 5.24

"In any case, Chapman argued that attempting to measure the impact of labour market programs on aggregate employment is a fruitless task: Macroeconomic approaches to evaluation are unconvincing, essentially because of the great difficulty of measuring the impact of relatively small and heterogeneous policies on a significant aggregate statistic. To assess efficiency and cost effectiveness, DEWR has assessed the performance of the Job Network in terms of the unit costs of providing assistance; costs per outcome; and costs per program net impact (table 5.6). It also provided some cost comparisons with Working Nation programs, arguing that the cost of the Job Network programs were on average lower than those applying to the programs they replaced. However, as noted earlier, there is much uncertainty surrounding the measurement of outcomes because of the methodology used, including the problems of constructing a meaningful control group. The main implication to be drawn from this is that
DEWR's measures of outcomes are best seen as estimates with a wide margin of error.

Consequently, it follows that the measures of the cost per outcome are correspondingly uncertain. Were the net outcome rates for IA to be 5 per cent, rather than 10 per cent, for example, the cost per off-benefit outcome (that is, the net impact) would double to over $44 000 (and at 2 per cent the figure would be over $100 000). Such net outcome rates are quite possible. Broadly similar caveats apply to assessments of cost per outcome for each program under Job Network and Working Nation. This makes it very difficult to compare the dollar cost per outcome for different programs or for different time periods. While net outcome measures, properly constructed, are the desirable evaluation measure for labour market programs, much public reporting and debate continues to be in terms of gross outcomes (or costs per gross outcome). But as noted throughout this chapter, measures of gross outcomes mean little and have considerable capacity to mislead. For example, as noted in section 5.2, the NEIS program generates higher gross outcomes than any other Job Network program, whereas the net impacts are likely to be small. In the Commission's view, much less emphasis should be given to gross outcome measures in reporting the results of program evaluations.
For the four years from 1996-97 to 1999-00, the Government allocated more than $5.4 billion to fund all labour market assistance and entry-level training programs — $1.6 billion for 1996-97, and an average of $1.3 billion per year thereafter of which, Job Network programs have averaged about $0.75 billion per year for the past three years. This compared to annual average funding in 1994-95 and 1995-96 of $3.7 billion (information provided by DEWR). This suggests that the aggregate cost of all active labour market programs (assistance and training) has fallen by something like half, but there does not appear to be much difference in levels of aggregate unemployment. This may well reflect the greater cost effectiveness of the programs, but it could also be the result of the imprecision with which the small impacts of labour market programs are measured.”

This material contradicts every claim published by DEWR for its first year of performance as well as the cost effectiveness and success rates.

5.2.3 Government Response to the APC Review of Job Network

The government does not accept the criticisms of the Job network nor acknowledge any misrepresentation created by the DEWR published material and the subsequent ministerial political statements claiming a commendable success. The following is an extract of a statement issued by the Honourable Mal Brough, Minister for Employment Services on September 19, 2002 placing an
interpretation on the APC analysis that is not apparent in the full reading of the report.

“The Productivity Commission found that Job Network’s purchaser-provider model, with its focus on outcomes, competition and choice, is a suitable policy framework for the delivery of active labour market programmes. Competition between providers and the use of outcome payments have created incentives for improved efficiency and better outcomes. The Productivity Commission found that consistent with overseas experience, Job Network’s impact on net employment is small and, while this impact is similar to that of previous labour market assistance arrangements, assistance is delivered and outcomes are achieved at significantly lower cost.”

“As to be expected in a new approach to the delivery of employment assistance, the Commission found that not all aspects of Job Network were working as well as they could to the extent to which job seekers exercise informed choice. Given that under the Active Participation Model, job seekers will potentially stay with the same provider, better information needs to be available on providers to inform choice.”

5.3 Researcher’s perception of the government claims

Given that there is no other model, offered up as an alternative to Job Network and neither Working Nation nor Job network have been adequately trialled, there is scepticism of the minister’s claim that Job Network is a suitable framework for addressing the complex enigma of the plight of the unemployed. It may be suitable for the narrow and ideological processes of implementing competition reform and market theory as an act of faith, but it is not a comprehensive intervention and support system in the manner of the CES and Working Nation.
operation nor comparable to the very credible comprehensive programmes involving case management and VET integration set out in the literature review and which are dismissed by the government either on cost or unproven theories that the private market delivery of public service is superior to delivery by public agencies and that training is a fallacy. The APC states that seventy-eight (78) percent of the case managers in Working Nation saw themselves as predominantly advocates of the unemployed while only fifty-nine (59) percent surveyed by the Australian Productivity Commission saw this as their role in Job Network (APC, 2002, 3.9).

Below is a summary of the major points drawn out of the APC review draft.

- A sufficiently clear picture of the effects of JN programmes has not occurred.
- There are small or uncertain effects on the job prospects of the unemployed.
- The job search training effect is small.
- The compliance effects for intensive assistance are far less positive than for job search.
- Gross outcome measures mean little and should not be relied upon.
- Measurement of the net impact is inherently difficult.
- It is likely that Job Network programmes have only a modest net impact on aggregate employment.
- The methodology adopted by DEWR inflates measured programme net impacts.
- Improved data and improved methods are required to allow for the discipline of external scrutiny.

It was indicated in the introduction of the literature review, and in the conceptual framework that Gamsci theorised that governments used masking tactics to hide political purpose and the removal of the data from the DEWR web site following extensive criticism in the media, analysis by the APC, by ACCOSS and others raises questions of intent for this removal. The researcher believes it is a deliberate denial of the opportunity to independently examine the performance of this particular public policy and limit criticism whilst the focus on job matching serves to reinforce an impression that jobs actually exist for the people who want them. The literature review indicated that solving unemployment it is not a simple process of matching people to jobs, yet all the evidence points to a public policy founded on this proposition and the design and implementation of Job Network ignores the reality of human aspiration to have something more than a low quality job in the burgeoning services sector or the resistance that people may have to relocation preferring a coercive style of authoritarian demands for compliance.
Masking of government performance and motive are not limited to the publishing of performance data for masking occurs through other mechanisms also, such as when a government contracts public services. Through outsourcing, the risks and obligations on performance transfer to the contractors, quarantining the government from a direct line of accountability for poor performance but leaving it open to claim success as to its foresight reinforcing the perception of superior policies and actions, over its political adversaries. When public services are contracted out and full information is withheld from independent analysis the system of open governance, examination and accountability of public policy becomes corrupted. Performance measurement, and the balances and checks of government regulatory processes and examination by parliament can be deferred whilst the system is tweaked and altered. Job Network providers are not permitted under their contracts to publish results or to issue public statements on any aspect of their contracts or performance effectively being unable to publish their successes. This greatly increases the control that government has and is viewed as a further denigration of the system of accountability.

5.4 Values and perceptions of the worth of education and training

The conceptual framework incorporates the supplementary question of the role and the value placed on VET by individuals, employers and governments, querying relevancy and the possible downgrading of VET. In seeking to answer
this question the researcher draws upon an ABS (1999, ref: 4224.0, 22) reported survey of the relevance to a job, of a course completed in 1996.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sample</th>
<th>High</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>Little</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20,603 Male</td>
<td>53.6%</td>
<td>25.1%</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22,516 F/Male</td>
<td>45.4%</td>
<td>25.3%</td>
<td>8.9%</td>
<td>11.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the age range, twenty to twenty four (20 – 24) years, fifty seven point one (57.1) percent of respondents said it was highly relevant and certain courses such as architecture and building, engineering, health and community services recorded highly relevant responses in the sixty to sixty six (60 - 66) percent ranges. In 1997, ninety-four (94) percent of people enrolled in VET for personal vocational reasons and a total of fifty three point six (53.6) percent of males and forty five point four (45.4) percent of females indicated that training had a high relevance. Twenty five point one (25.1) of males and twenty five point three (25.3) percent of females reported some relevance, with six point eight (6.8) percent of males and eight point nine (8.9) percent claiming very little relevance and eleven point two (11.2) percent of males and eleven point two (11.2) percent of females stating it had no relevance. An ABS report (no. 6278.0) issued in November 1998 stated that, of 226,500 people not working, only forty two (42) percent said that training helped them to get a job. In 1997 a total of 672,640 students did not complete secondary school however forty two (42) percent of them obtained employment. Of the 5,426,700 people who undertook no training,
fourty eight (48) percent said that they had no need to and fifty four (54) percent stated that nothing would encourage them while nineteen (19) percent cited work related factors such as improving their work prospects. These statistics imply that about half of the sample value VET either marginally or hardly at all and this is consistent with the Australian circumstance that as many as 60% of people have no formal education beyond secondary school. Within the context of examining the downgrading of VET, learning encompassed with knowledge is taken to be broader than generic vocational training for employability encompassing deeper learning, and again Australia performs poorly against this measure. The low regard for the value of knowledge is mirrored by the lack of investment in knowledge generally within the economy, as evidenced by table 8 below. This table compares investment in knowledge with that of infrastructure and buildings and before leading these tables the researcher wishes to point out that 'investment in knowledge' encompasses far more than mere training and includes higher education, research and development, patents and technology. The Senate Committee (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, p. xxxvi, s. R22) states that there is no quantitative data available that allows historical comparisons on the level of industry investment in training and although a large number intend to provide training, there is no evidence of the level of commitment in financial terms.
Table 9 - Investment in knowledge as a % of GDP

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>8.72</td>
<td>9.97</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.00</td>
<td>10.15</td>
<td>10.39</td>
<td>10.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>France</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>7.95</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>8.18</td>
<td>8.41</td>
<td>8.40</td>
<td>8.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>7.47</td>
<td>7.92</td>
<td>8.58</td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td>8.46</td>
<td>8.73</td>
<td>8.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Norway</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>8.86</td>
<td>8.82</td>
<td>8.92</td>
<td>8.90</td>
<td>7.97</td>
<td>8.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Canada</td>
<td>7.52</td>
<td>8.55</td>
<td>8.10</td>
<td>7.94</td>
<td>7.58</td>
<td>7.41</td>
<td>7.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>UK</td>
<td>7.18</td>
<td>7.16</td>
<td>7.08</td>
<td>7.05</td>
<td>7.11</td>
<td>7.03</td>
<td>6.81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>USA</td>
<td>7.60</td>
<td>8.26</td>
<td>8.16</td>
<td>7.86</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>8.39</td>
<td>8.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Netherlands</td>
<td>8.31</td>
<td>7.02</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>7.00</td>
<td>6.92</td>
<td>6.88</td>
<td>6.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Austria</td>
<td>6.87</td>
<td>7.32</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>7.12</td>
<td>7.10</td>
<td>6.96</td>
<td>7.88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Germany</td>
<td>7.26</td>
<td>7.19</td>
<td>7.09</td>
<td>6.97</td>
<td>7.07</td>
<td>7.13</td>
<td>7.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Weighted average</td>
<td>7.46</td>
<td>7.96</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>7.71</td>
<td>7.90</td>
<td>8.00</td>
<td>8.12</td>
<td>8.22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Table 10 - % of GDP in knowledge versus physical

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>91-2</th>
<th>92-3</th>
<th>93-4</th>
<th>94-5</th>
<th>95-6</th>
<th>96-7</th>
<th>97-8</th>
<th>98-9</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private investment in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>buildings and structures</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>8.1</td>
<td>7.8</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>9.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratio of investment in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>knowledge to investment</td>
<td>83.0</td>
<td>86.8</td>
<td>78.8</td>
<td>75.4</td>
<td>80.8</td>
<td>76.0</td>
<td>67.6</td>
<td>n.a.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


These statistics show that Australia is below the weighted average and the real investment rate of every other country listed for every year whilst investment in buildings and infrastructure within Australia exceeds investment in human resource development for every year.
A "National Marketing Strategy for Skills and Lifelong Learning Survey" of 252 firms, conducted by ANTA in January 2000, concluded the following:

"Employees focus on, and think about training, rather than learning (p 4)."

"One in five, or 19% of the firms surveyed are not interested (p. 5) because they are small employers, male respondents and firms operating less than ten years with turnover less than $5,000,000 per year."

In the section, "Here and Now", thirty seven (37) percent stated,

"It’s better to train people on the job than to recruit people already trained."

"On the job skills are more useful than what people learn in formal education."

"Employees should invest their own time"

"Any learning employees do in their own time helps them do their jobs better."

Only forty four (44) percent of the sample were considered to be high achieving companies that valued training and this is consistent with the percentages reported for individuals in other tables within this chapter. The researcher notes the comment that the respondents who least valued education are male, implying that males operating small businesses are less likely to invest in training and it
might be feasible to conjecture that the reason there is greater investment in physical assets, than in people, in Australia is because male decision makers dominate governments, industry and commerce.

When taken together with the federal government's removal of mandated VET from unemployment services, the data for investment in knowledge and people presents evidence for the proposition that Australian decision makers have not yet reached a mature view of the value of intangibles such as knowledge, human endeavour and inherent talent. Through the data and surveys we see elements of a picture emerging that VET might not actually enhance the likelihood of getting a job at the point of interview especially if the prospective employer lies in the lower percentiles of interest in training set out in table 11 below.

Table 11 - ACCI survey on the importance of training

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Critical</th>
<th>Large</th>
<th>Moderate</th>
<th>Minor</th>
<th>No Concern</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24.1% (530)</td>
<td>37.4% (823)</td>
<td>19.9% (438)</td>
<td>11.9% (262)</td>
<td>7.5% (165)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: ACCI, 2001, Review No.79.

Yet contradicting this is the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry Review September 2001, No 79, which says, inter alia:

"The importance of being able to recruit employees with appropriate skills is critical to the operation of the economy" (p 10)."
Against this we find that 865, or thirty-nine point three (39.3) percent, out of 2,200 respondents to the ACCC survey (set out in table 11) on the importance of training, rated the issue as moderate to no value and further, contrary to this, the Senate committee report (Aspiring to excellence, 2000, s.7. pp. 128 – 140) contains details of an Australian Industry Group's (AIG) study titled, "Training to compete", along with other quoted extracts from submissions. In that document, whilst the AIG sample size was not given, eighty two percent (82) percent identified training as an essential competitive tool and for the future whilst fifty to sixty percent (50-60) percent expected to invest with reservations. Research indicates that the organisations that values training are not small business, which unfortunately represent the majority of employers across Australia, they are large and multinational in dimension.

Tempering this, the researcher notes that when questioned through surveys many employers may respond on the basis of what answer they think is appropriate rather than indicate a non conforming view or actually tell what they intend to do in the future. With all the best intentions stated by the respondents, the data presented within this chapter will show that there is actually no training culture across the broader spectrum of employers. In support of this contention the researcher cites another part of the Senate report (2000, pp. 105 – 111), which states, "investigation suggests many firms are not able to carry through on these intentions and motivations", including an observation by Construction
Training Australia that "there is no real training culture in Australia"...(inter alia)...

ABS surveys show a "strong decline in employer investment in training" (and)...
the Committee is concerned that "very little progress seems to have been made
in generating a training culture among small business employers, which as DISR
observes, is where most enterprises and employers are" ....the decline in
expenditure on training "presumably reflects and assessment by employers of
the benefits they receive".

The Australian Council of Adult Education compiled data of the education
completion rate of males and females, by age range, in Victoria in July 2000,
which is set out below in tables 12 and 13.

Table 12 - Education qualifications profile, Victoria, 2000

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ABS (1996) 15+ years = 4,037,087</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor Degree</td>
<td>13.0 (524,821)</td>
<td>12.9 (520,784)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>6.1 (246,262)</td>
<td>3.1 (125,500)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled Vocational</td>
<td>19.7 (795,306)</td>
<td>3.1 (125,150)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Vocational</td>
<td>2.0 (80,742)</td>
<td>3.6 (145,335)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No qualification</td>
<td>59.1 (2,385,918)</td>
<td>72.7 (2,934,962)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 13 - ACE data of age range and sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participation</th>
<th>Male %</th>
<th>Female %</th>
<th>State %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aged 15 – 19</td>
<td>13.3 (536,932)</td>
<td>5.4 (21,800)</td>
<td>7.9 (318,930)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 20 – 29</td>
<td>22.0 (888,159)</td>
<td>16.0 (645,934)</td>
<td>25.6 (1,033,494)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 30 – 39</td>
<td>23.4 (944,678)</td>
<td>25.0 (1009272)</td>
<td>18.0 (726,675)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 40 – 49</td>
<td>20.2 (815,492)</td>
<td>24.3 (981,012)</td>
<td>16.6 (670,156)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged 50 – 59</td>
<td>11.5 (464,265)</td>
<td>13.7 (553,081)</td>
<td>12.6 (508,673)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aged &gt; 60</td>
<td>9.5 (383,523)</td>
<td>15.7 (633,823)</td>
<td>19.3 (779,158)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source for tables 12 & 13: A memo distributed to Members of the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACE) Board of Victoria, 12 July 2000 and to members of the Board of Directors of the Council of Adult Education, (Eastern Region) Victoria, of which the researcher was a member.

It is interesting to note that the variation between the female percentages are lower than male, for all categories, up until age thirty when it begins to exceed the male figure. One could postulate that this is because women are raising children, however such a supposition does not explain why women do not make a choice to study in their early years as males do. For the purposes of this study and the impact of VET, the lower educational qualifications of women would tend to relegate them to specific job categories and no survey data was found dealing with employer attitudes to women undertaking study, or broader societal data on how women fair in interviews.

The Student Outcomes Survey, published as a national report by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide, in 1999, conducted by AC Nielsen Research, questioned students who undertook training in 1998. Tafe
graduates were defined as students who attended a Tafe Institute, in Australia, and completed a Certificate, Advanced Certificate, Associate Diploma, Diploma, Advanced Diploma or Bachelor Degree of at least 200 hours, or of one semester, duration, and had an Australian address as their usual residence. The response rate was fifty-five point eight (55.8) percent with over sixty three thousand (63,000) graduates responding. At the same time a similar questionnaire to the one above was sent to a stratified, randomly selected sample of module completers resulting in a national response rate of fifty-two point four (52.4) percent, over 4,100 module completers responded. The survey information includes the nature of training, numerical outcomes achieved in relation to employment, satisfaction with training and goal achievements. An ABS published paper, "Labour Market Outcomes for Education and Training, 1998", had concluded that overall eighty five (85) percent of persons with post school qualifications were in the labour force compared to seventy (70) percent without post school qualifications (1999, 4224.0, Ch. 4, p. 28).

The researcher will deal very briefly with these studies since there are more recent and larger scale studies cited further in this chapter. Examination of the above type of material (training and employment outcomes) noted the implied link between training and employment outcomes. One interesting finding of these studies was that literacy skills play a major role in the workplace, and the economy, with labour participation rates showing a strong relationship to literacy
Consistently these studies show that when broken down by educational attainment level, the unemployment rate for those who did not complete school is considerably higher than any other group. The difference in unemployment rates was greater between this group and those who completed school but did not hold any post school qualifications. Persons with basic vocational qualifications spent a smaller proportion of time looking for work, compared to persons at other levels of attainment (ABS, 1997, p.29). Persons with basic vocational rates represented nine (9) percent males and nine (9) percent females respectively and skilled vocational qualifications of six (6) percent males and seven (7) percent females, of the total unemployed (ABS, 1997, p. 29). The relativity between male and female figures differs significantly from those produced by ACE (table 10) for Victoria in the year 2000, indicating either a unique situation for that state or a decline, over three years, in the entry of women to VET courses or possible errors in data capture and analysis.

Seeking further clarification of the anomaly, the researcher examined an NCVER report titled, “Statistics 1999, Women in VET 1999 at a glance”, learning that in this year females made up forty nine (49) percent of the one point six (1.6) million students across the nation. Further, between 1990 and 1999 participation by females increased by eighty six point seven (86.7) percent compared to fifty seven point two (57.2) percent for males with a corresponding annual growth rate of seven point two (7.2) percent for females and five point two (5.2) percent for males. Eight (8) percent of all women, and over twelve (12) percent of working
age participated in VET. It is this latter twelve (12) percent that indicates some relativity with the ACE statistics for Victoria at table 10.

The National Council for Vocational Research published data in 2001 for Tafe graduates in a document titled “Do they get what they want?” This study reported, in the Foreword, that 350 million hours of VET was delivered to one point seven five (1.75) million students, which by the researcher’s reckoning was about nine (9) percent of the Australian population. The graduate population for the survey sampled was 120,000, with a median age of twenty years, and 37,000 people responded. Sixty six (66) percent of labour market entrants (job seekers) and sixty one (61) percent of career change seekers were found to be less likely to have achieved their main reason for study whilst only nineteen (19) percent of labour market and twenty two (22) percent of career changers, ninety four (94) percent of apprentices and trainees and ninety one (91) percent of further education participants thought they had (NCVER, 2001, p.11). The low percentage of persons seeking a job, and choosing VET, is interesting although this figure could be added to apprentices and trainees who are also in the job market at the end of their training, considerably expanding the total. For many it would appear that VET might not be seen as the pathway to a job and career as indicated in table 12 below. The researcher has extended the NCVER data to include numerical totals of the sample and population size in the last two columns.
Table 14 - Primary motivation for participation in VET

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivator</th>
<th>Percentage of sample</th>
<th>As a number in sample (37,000)</th>
<th>As a number of total VET (1.75M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career change</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>8,140</td>
<td>385,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skill improvement</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>11,100</td>
<td>525,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking a job</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>4,400</td>
<td>210,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice/Trainee</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4,810</td>
<td>227,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self employed</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>1,480</td>
<td>70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further education</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>7,030</td>
<td>332,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: NCVER, 2001,

The above figures signal that VET is not held in high regard by a large percentage of the population and it will be interesting to see female perceptions of the value of VET in light of the ABS and ACE figures (table 10) discussed above. Moving on, the research presents in table 13 below, the number of people who had a job at commencement or obtained a job at the completion of their training.

Table 15 - Who got a job when they finished?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key</th>
<th>Employed before</th>
<th>Employed after</th>
<th>Unemployed before</th>
<th>Unemployed after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AT</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>92%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JS</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CC</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IS</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FE</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduates</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>74%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


It is believed that the inclusion of the AT category in the total distorts the conclusion for the general population since VET is compulsory for apprentices and trainees and
when this figure is taken out there is no discernible impact by VET for the IS and FE categories though the sample size of respondents, averaging of response numbers, personal and interview circumstances for employment make such an assumption unreliable. The NCVER produced statistics for 2002, albeit on a smaller population base of 136,659. This study included students taking any course, whereas previous studies only incorporated courses of 200 hours, or one semester in duration. Total numbers for source and population have been calculated and inserted by the researcher for each category.

Table 16 - Student outcomes for training and employment 2002

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Course completed</th>
<th>Module Completed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondents</td>
<td>41,807</td>
<td>8,257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Estimated population</td>
<td>136,659</td>
<td>200,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Females</td>
<td>54% of sample = 22,575 and 73,796 of population</td>
<td>51% of sample = 21,322 and 69,696 of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 – 24 years</td>
<td>43% of sample = 17,977 and 58,763 of population</td>
<td>33% of sample = 13,796 and 45,097</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completed year 12</td>
<td>53% of sample = 22,154 and 72,429 of population</td>
<td>43% of sample = 17,977 and 58,763 of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Born overseas</td>
<td>25% of sample = 10,452 and 34,165 of population</td>
<td>23% of sample = 9,616 and 31,432 of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed/student (May)</td>
<td>87% of sample = 36,372 and 118,893 of population</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed at end May</td>
<td>73% of sample = 30,519 and 99,761 of population</td>
<td>63% of sample = 26,338 and 86,095 of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed first job</td>
<td>25% of sample = 10,452 and 34,165 of population</td>
<td>19% of sample = 7,943 and 25,965 of population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enrolled for further study</td>
<td>40% of sample = 16,723 and 54,664 of population</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


There is a decline in the percentage employed, or in study, at the beginning of May (87%) and the numbers at end of May (73%) and the inclusion of those in
study in the first percentage set clouds the data relative to the unemployed, who are not in study. The number of module completers who obtained a first job (19%) is generally higher than the general trends for the larger sample at table 12 (range 4% - 22%). The number of females in courses has increased (43%) well above the figures stated for the ACE Victorian data cited previously at table 10, which were five (5) percent for age range fifteen to nineteen (15 - 19) years and sixteen (16) percent for the age range twenty to twenty nine (20 - 29) years which show it is at odds with a number of studies.

Table 17 - Employment opportunity and outcomes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Graduates employed before</th>
<th>Graduates employed after</th>
<th>Module completers before</th>
<th>Module completers after</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobseekers</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice/Tr.</td>
<td>76%</td>
<td>88%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>71%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>66%</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Whilst the researcher has observed a small impact if any for VET in the data cited in previous tables here, in table 15, VET apparently enhanced the employment opportunity for fifteen percent (15%) of graduate job seekers and five percent (5%) of module completers. The totals for all students appears at odds with the subgroup data in that they only rose five (5) percentage points and in the module category they fell one (1) percentage point implying that there are some categories of students not listed in the data set (NCVER, 2002, p.9) who may have experienced quite negative outcomes. It is interesting how apprentices and trainees, who require the sponsorship
of an employee, might have a higher outcome on graduation than at the start, in both categories? Perhaps a number lost their employment part way through the course and found another placement along the way or their sponsorship only lasts for the period of their course? The researcher notes that this particular data set, pointing to a twelve percent (12) positive impact for apprentices and trainees is at odds with most of the published outcomes for this category of student. The review of data, available in Australia, generally raises questions regarding apprentice and trainee completion rates and outcomes and conflicts with table 15. For example, the Senate committee (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, p.47) expressed its concern for the high attrition rates for apprentices generally within the Australian training system and noted that little research had been undertaken to explain this trend. One interesting observation in that report (p. 47, s.5.46) suggests that non-completion rates differ between those engaged in traditional apprenticeships and those engaged as trainees with non-completion rates higher for trainees. They note that between the years 1985 to 1993 some forty (40) percent of trainees did not complete their training and between 1995 to 1997 there was an increase in this number to forty five (45) percent, significantly higher than for non-completion rates in other forms of education and training.
Data for completion and outcomes has been extracted from the NCVER study (2002, p. 9), which is different to the outcomes implied in table 15.

Table 18 - Graduates obtaining employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Graduates who got a job</th>
<th>Graduates who started own business</th>
<th>Module completers who got a job</th>
<th>Module completers who started own business</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jobseekers</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apprentice/Tr.</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Consistent with the Senate committee observation apprentices and trainees appear to have fared less well against general job seekers whilst overall those who obtained positive outcomes was much lower than reported in tables 13 & 14 above. The researcher revisited the NCVER report for September 23, 2003 and did not find any explanation other than that it was reported that all persons completing an apprenticeship found employment within four months of graduation. Christopher Ryan has researched graduate outcomes for the higher education and vocational education sectors and the NCVER published his findings in a report titled “Where to Next?” (2002). He states, inter alia, that prior education and employment experiences are important determinants of their post course outcomes (p. viii) and those participants who were employed during study had better outcomes than those who were not (section 6.3) whilst older graduates have poorer employment outcomes than younger ones (sections 5.2 & 6.3). He has noted limitations on research arising from the incompatibility of data (p. ix) between the higher education and VET sectors.
and says, "it could be that neither sector provides a satisfactory benchmark for performance measurement". The researcher in examining the statistics of both sectors and having experience in senior management in the VET sector is aware that institutions prepare returns based on state and territory bureaucratic templates. These documents serve an internal purpose arising from student satisfaction surveys and the number of academic completions justifying the funding contract and they are not in depth surveys of the relationship between VET and employment. Consistent with the researcher’s experience, and with the literature review and data presented in this chapter, Ryan notes that competition for funding, by Australian private, public and international sources, between and within sectors, is “now a central feature of the Australian education and training system (p. 1)”. He says, “there is little analysis of the outcomes for different social groups, other than between males and females, younger and older (p. 6).” He reinforces the researcher’s comments on the variations between the statistics presented by the ABS and the VET surveys (p. 8), problems of misreporting (p. 10) and the failure to gather data on pre-employment within the higher education sector (p. 12). The researcher contends that the proposition that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job, is the implied association between training and outcomes, arising entirely out of graduate destination surveys compiled by vested interests with the underlying pressure on institutions to be seen to be delivering against their government contracts and it is not an effective system for informing public policy.
Chapter two presented the literature review out of which arose the conceptual framework described in chapter three. Chapter four dealt with the research design and the methodologies, which will now be applied, to the deconstruction and analysis of the narrative of the interviews. Chapter five provided an analysis and discussion of selected data and survey sources on the impact of, and values held for, education and training as seen through the eyes of the Australian Senate, data providers, researchers, individuals and employers. Much of what has presented will be tested, and verified through interview and deconstruction and analysis of the responses of interviewees.

The intent of this chapter is to bring to the reader, opinions, advice and knowledge of a representative group of stakeholders. The interview documentation, questions and content are presented in Appendix One and the interviews in full at Appendix 2. Changes have been made in those transcripts, to protect the identity of the respondents in accordance with the undertakings of confidentiality. The questions asked sought to test the assertion that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job moving into the domains of the conceptual framework, which are politics and society and the two models, Working Nation and Job Network. The analysis is not black and white but
utilises the methodological approaches described in chapter four towards a contribution in answering the research questions sets out in chapter three.

6.1 Deconstruction and analysis of the interview with Respondent 1

6.1.1 Content Analysis

The following table sets out, in summary, words drawn from the transcript of the interview with Respondent 1, seen by the researcher as being significant, possessing more than one meaning or being used with a certain frequency or intensity in the responses to questions.

Table 19- Content analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language – binary meanings - extracted words</th>
<th>Words, significant All derivatives</th>
<th>Frequency &amp; Intensity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Union – non union (member)</td>
<td>Skill</td>
<td>14 (high intensity)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed – unemployable</td>
<td>job (incudes job ready)</td>
<td>20 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drugs, alcohol – disadvantage</td>
<td>train</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Left school – disadvantage</td>
<td>employment</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantage – at risk</td>
<td>drugs</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pushing – free choice</td>
<td>alcohol</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the job – off the job</td>
<td>domestic violence</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Good use – bad use (money)</td>
<td>words implying some social condition</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skills – career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive – directed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Directed – choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working – not working (model)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Smart – dumb</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seller – buyer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apples – oranges (model)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual – coercion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.1.2 Language and Binary Meanings

The language of this interview is distinctly different to the other conversations. The researcher feels that there is a fundamental quality of the 'working class' in the language and tone, and has noted Respondent 1's background before entering the Australian parliament. Using binary meanings the researcher has sought to summarise the main elements of Respondent 1's thinking and beliefs, which are encapsulated in the responses, for example, the 'smart employer' who trains employees as against the unstated, 'not so smart employer'.

Respondent 1 proposes that it is not feasible to compare Working Nation (apples) and Job Network (oranges) yet chapter five demonstrated that DEWR itself actually sets out to make such comparisons. Respondent 1 raises the concept of a good and bad use of taxpayer's funds in the application of policy and unemployment services. Drugs and alcohol, not directly mentioned by anyone else in the interviews, is a focus by policy makers on those seen to be disadvantaged and at risk within the social subgroup of the unemployed. Drugs and alcohol are specifically present in the literature examples of case management cited and have been reported as barriers to success within the literature review. The researcher experienced a high level of such incidence in the Working Nation programmes with which he had association.
This, when added to the respondent's perception of a group of the population being at risk of being lost in the mosaic of change, indicates a depth of knowledge held by the Respondent and a realisation of real life informing reasoning, political policy and action going beyond the use of mere statistics and figures to the actual human condition. The question arises, does the government, through Job Network, exhibit a similar regard for the human condition?

6.1.3 Words, derivatives and frequency

Wiseman and Aaron (1970) and Singleton (1988, pp. 35, 37 & 102) influenced the researcher's choice of the technique of counting the frequency of words seeking to determine the population demographic, to which Respondent 1 is referring, as an indicator of policy targeting and focus. This method assisted the researcher to make a judgement as to the narrowness, or breadth, of thinking that may have informed the policy. The words in column two are those that appear consistently in Respondent 1's responses, or are of a particular interest, due to their links to the assertion that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job. Frequency implies clarity of purpose in use and the identification of values, beliefs and ideology and the intensity denotes a passionate belief.
Respondent 1's responses are somewhat exclusive. They do not relate to the overall population of the unemployed but to a very specific group of unemployed people and that this was the policy intent of Working Nation. The responses are an example of the thinking and rationale of the Partington Project, of intensive assistance described in the literature review. Respondent 1 demonstrated a passionate care for those who are most likely to be at risk and to be affected by globalism and technology. Working Nation and its design, as evidenced by Respondent 1, was not oriented towards assisting professional career development and problems for the well educated or experienced workers displaced by outcomes. It was blatantly skewed towards the group destined for the 'training schemes to make them job ready', being school leavers and persons who suffer disadvantage through social deviancy such as alcohol and drugs, people affected by job loss resulting from restructuring of the economy but who are not qualification holders from an Australian higher education institution or those possessing social capital. They may be migrants whose qualifications are not recognised, a group also identified in the literature review as those at most risk of global forces and changes in technology and it is on them that Working Nation focused also.

This research shows that Working Nation was not, as its name implied, a policy for the nation, but a policy largely bound up in disadvantage, targeted at a quite specific group. The researcher feels that Respondent 1 knows that the children of
middle class professionals are advantaged in gaining education credentials and they are able to go from there into employment due to their possession of cultural capital.

The respondent:

"I suppose the approach that was taken tried to make sure that any training programme that was delivered was initially involved with respect of long-term unemployed to get them job ready. That went to a range of issues from getting them back into the discipline of work, also in some instances of getting people to face up to their personal problems, drug and alcohol related or difficulties with domestic violence. It was then a question of those who were ready to undertake training and getting the others into shape. To actually try and make sure that training that was delivered was a stepping-stone to career development and skills development. Hence we sought to make sure that the delivery of employment services, were as much as possible related to skills development with the assistance of vocational education" (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q3).

Are we to assume from this that VET was used primarily as a mechanism of mutual obligation and a tool of shaping behaviour and compliance?

6.1.4 Thematic Analysis

In Working Nation and in this interview, VET is isolated from the broader education articulation framework that encompasses life long, and perhaps, deeper learning to employability and work.

"Any smart employer should invest in the training of their workforce, which is about vocational education" (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q8).
Part of that can be commenced in the lead up to getting them a job, alternatively it can be ongoing once they obtained a job either through institutions such as TAFES beyond the workplace or alternatively through on-the-job training" (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q4).

Does this imply, or mean, that an employer, who assists or motivates their employee’s development, through higher education is not smart and that high education study in say accounting or law is not vocational in nature? Perhaps the interviewee does not actually differentiate between these sectors although he did refer directly to Tafe and not to university. The researcher has been assisted by employers to obtain higher-level qualifications in education studies but does not predominantly work in the education sector, per se. Does this imply that the elements of that educational grounding have no relevance to the researcher’s chosen employment spheres? The answer is probably “no”, in respect of all questions. The respondent is himself a university graduate, however the response does raise concerns for the researcher about the focus of today’s policy makers on a lower level of education, for the larger part of the community, aimed squarely at competencies to suit employment as a priority before any deeper human talent development through higher level, intellectual education. The researcher notes that training, delivered in employment services such as in Working Nation, could be a gateway into a career and this poses the question as to the type of training and study most appropriate to facilitate such an ambition on the part of the individual or a strategy of government. Not all training in
Working Nation met this researcher's notion of a career entry point unless Respondent 1 and the policy makers see the mere act of employment as a career and the inference is that they do. The researcher feels that in the political lexicon these words (career and employment) are interchangeable and of synonymous meaning. It is deemed unlikely that training is a part of a broader strategy of life long learning since it is limited by political intent to 'opportunities for employment' and not as a social development tool. The recurring theme of VET and skills relative to 'employability and vocation' denotes a limiting, and discriminatory factor (for whatever motivation), in the thinking through of ALP policy in government.

“A part of getting people into employment is also making sure that they have the skills that make them employable” (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q4).

“Vocational education, which is about skills, provided they are relevant to potentially opportunities, in a given region, and are fundamental to employability. There is going to be more and more the case in the future because we are going to have to develop Kim Beazley's Knowledge Nation, an ongoing capacity to retrain people in a variety of occasions throughout their working life. Vocational education and training is therefore fundamental to the nation's future if Australia is to compete on the basis of its skills not low wages and conditions of employment” (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q5).

The researcher notes the phrase “provided that they are relevant to potential opportunities in a given region”, which is similar to the proposition put forward by the Coalition government in its response to the APC review (2002) on Job Network which states (inter alia), "must be aligned to job seeker characteristics in
individual areas and labour market conditions" (DEWR web site, accessed on September 26, 2002).

The responses in this interview are shaped by experience, values and beliefs subject to the external influences of party politics and discipline which to the mind of the researcher distorts reality for the observer, through repressive connotations, rules and discipline. Despite this adherence to party line and background, Respondent 1 was candid and the researcher noted no careful choosing of words and no deliberate intent to politicise the interview. The centrality of "skills acquisition" to policy may arise from the specific background of influential policy shapers such as Respondent 1. Factions in the party exert influence at policy creation forums, the state and national conferences,

"My initial involvement goes back to my service as (xxx) and discussions held with the then Labor Government for the development and implementation of Working Nation" (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q4).

Respondent 1's interview is a confirmation of the proposition that the ALP believes that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job (R1, Q5) and Respondent 1 states VET to be "fundamental" to employability. This reference to "employability" is a verification that the ALP has moved from a socialist oriented hegemony, embodied in the surfer culture of the 1970's described by Law in his work "Surfing the welfare net" (1998) to a hegemonic and common stance with the Coalition — that of education for employability. It is a value attribute indicating
a political mindset dominant in the nation today regardless of political party
however it is different from the Coalition in the presentation, language,
application and style. The ALP refrains from the use of language such as `dole
bludger', `cruiser' or 'job snob' and the interviewee describe working for the dole
as humiliating for the participants (Appendix 2, R1, Q7).

VET is central to the ALP policy platform and in the implementation of ALP
initiatives. Respondent 1 defines VET as being about `skills' acquisition. This
theme litters the interview.

"The original intent of working nation was (if I remember rightly) a 12
billion dollar commitment over four years to try to assist the unemployed
was very much related to pushing them into training opportunities
potentially related to either re-skilling them or getting them back into the
discipline to be able to undertake additional training for the purposes of
getting them into paid employment" (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q3).

"Running employment services without a focus on skills, which in turn is
vocational education, is not necessarily a good use of tax payers money"
(Appendix 2.1, R1, Q4).

"Vocational education, which is about skills, provided they are relevant to
potential opportunities, in a given region, and are fundamental to
employability" (Appendix 2, R1, Q5.)

"With respect to the long-term unemployed there is a special need to
basically invest in trying to get them into shape by getting them job ready"
(Appendix 2, R1, Q6).

Other themes within Respondent 1's responses are `value for money' and 'return
on investment'.
“Running employment services without a focus on skills, which in turn is vocational education, is not necessarily a good use of tax payers money” (Appendix 2, R1, Q4).

“We actually think there should be more accountability and a greater requirement for those network providers to actually use that money to get people job ready” (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q9).

Respondent 1 signals a dominance of political thought that, for the majority, education and training when applied to employment outcomes and employment sustainability is “a good use of taxpayer’s money”. The implementation of policy in relation to the individual is about “the act of getting and keeping a job and an ongoing career of work”. This is an example of the dehumanising of the individual in the schema of applied political thought and policy. To use Respondent 1’s own words it is the ‘discipline of work’. Respondent 1 gives further validation to the researcher’s conjecture that the ALP engaged in a transformation of its hegemony, using VET as a tool of authority, early in the nineties, moving the ALP to a common ground indistinguishable from the Coalition.

“In that context I would remind you that the issue of so called ‘mutual obligation’ is really the Labor Party concept of reciprocal obligation, which was in essence a sense of discipline. If you did not face up to your responsibilities you would be breached”, (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q7).

“The Labor Party chose not to call it ‘work for the dole”, (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q7).
The literature review informed that the concept of mutual obligation is not a closed mutually balanced system as Respondent 1 implies, when it is considered that reciprocity in relation to social welfare is not real reciprocity because the central meanings about each other (the state and the recipient) are not shared (Kellehear, 1993, p. 47). During his time of managing service provision to thousands of recipients, the researcher observed daily, a high degree of animosity from the individual towards the system and the CES despite recipients receiving welfare money. The real extent of antipathy towards the system, more often than not, was suppressed by the individual, due to the fear of loss of benefits. Out of this the researcher asks, where are the political parties', governments' and employers' demonstrated mutual obligations to develop employees and the nation as a whole, by working cooperatively and constructively on strategies to create opportunity and an environment of lifelong learning? Mutual obligation and cooperation, in the interest of the nation as a whole, are far from evident here, though party touched on for a segment of the nation and in a passing mention of Beazley's Knowledge Nation, far from evident in the literature, policy and models reviews and in the data and surveys.

As indicated previously, ALP Working Nation policy was a discriminatory one, more about the low income, minimally educated worker and others displaced through the forces of technology and change.
"They finished school at an age that could have been acceptable in days gone by but in this day and age is not acceptable because you actually have to acquire those fundamentals for the purposes of employment and ongoing training", (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q6).

It is a policy also focused on the disadvantaged, with personal problems and it is about shaping peoples' behaviours and social attributes to conformity.

"That went to a range of issues from getting them back into the discipline of work, also in some instances of getting people to face up to their personal problems, drug and alcohol related or difficulties with domestic violence. It was then a question of those who were ready to undertake training and getting the others into shape", (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q3).

"The discipline was always there under Working Nation", (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q7).

The reader is reminded of the researcher's assertion of the shaping individual behaviour and response by political forces, set out in the literature review and in the conceptual framework. The use of the term "discipline' implies a paternalistic or authoritarian view of how these people should be treated and may arise from a desire by the policy shapers in the ALP to be seen as not being weak on "dole recipients", perhaps even a sop to that particular community popular perception that people on welfare are lazy. It is an admirable objective to assist the less well off in society and admittedly some disadvantaged applicants with personal problems benefited from their association in the mainstream educational institution community and went on to other study and careers however on the other side of this coin are the issues of the disengagement and alienation of
others, affected by technology and change, restructure and rationalism for which the policy may offer little substance or hope. These are the middle aged professional workers for example for whom Working Nation was totally inappropriate, and too often demeaning, requiring them to engage in retraining. The researcher remembers a large number of unemployed adults (most notably of ethnic backgrounds) possessing accounting and other qualifications and experience in their home country, applying for retraining for employment as waiters and kitchen hands, at the direction of the CES.

6.1.5 Materialist semiotics analysis

The context of the environments that shaped Respondent 1’s experience and attitudes are important when we try to unpack all of the elements and influences to determine how they have shaped perceptions and informed the policy development role as a politician. The interpretation framework for Respondent 1 in Working Nation. This is a framework built on theoretical tradition and a cultural raping policy of the ALP and the responses are bound up in the culture and ysical context of the ALP and its interpretations of power, patriarchy and class. ere is also an underlying personal quality of caring for people and their uation. The use of anecdotal stories about barriers and particularly an vareness of their need for esteem demonstrates this caring:

"Because whilst the Liberal Party see it as attractive electorally, we actually erred on the side of putting the pressure on the people rather than

175
humiliating by painting the concept of "you are in essence working for the dole because you are useless and we are going to get brownie points by being seen to basically threaten you that you will not get benefits unless you do what you are told", (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q7).

Respondent 1 frames a view of employment services and the need for training within "Labour Process Theory" (Kellehear, 1993, p. 47), where social change occurs within a context associated with external forces such as new technology. The interviewee highlights the underlying focus of the attraction of Working Nation for professional practitioners in the welfare sector, who are realists when it comes to the reasons for, and barriers to, unemployment.

"...personal problems associated with drugs and alcohol", (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q3).

It is a case management process focussed on the disadvantaged, who are likely to have been unemployed for sometime, who may be recidivists and are at risk of being left behind. Whilst Respondent 1 makes no direct statement that the ALP policy is exclusive and even discriminatory in nature there is the inference in the language and descriptions that unemployed people here, fit a specific demographic. They are people, who require basic skills, have no skills or have the wrong skills. Again without stating it we can read an inference that unemployment services provided by governments are not designed for the segment of the population who may have high level education, training and skills
but are somehow still unemployed or disadvantaged. The ALP policy is, according to Respondent 1, narrowly focussed:

"...related to either re-skilling them or getting them back into the discipline to be able to undertake additional training for the purposes of getting them into paid employment", (Appendix 2.1, R1, Q3).

Respondent 1's conversation does not overly try to denigrate Job Network, as the constant Coalition political focus, demonstrated in chapter 5, appears to be on denigrating the CES, by carefully constructed comparisons. Respondent 1 does not turn to the excuse that in the time of Working Nation the world economic situation was less conducive to employment causing record levels of unemployment and that this was especially so for those categories of unskilled and lower skilled labour and where downsizing was in its ascendancy as a management technique, a highly pertinent and valid difference of time and circumstance noted by the Australian Productivity Commission.

Working Nation is the assembled theoretical traditions of people within the ALP, where meanings may have been set in concrete through a form of ALP cultural relativism. The researcher is mindful of the proposition that meaning in one context bears no necessary correlation to the meaning in another and cannot be translated into the other interviews or between the parties. This is patently clear as we progress through the other interviews and their analysis. There are many people within the ALP, with personal stakes in what Working Nation would mean
and could deliver, politicians, the ACTU and individual unions, vocational educators, institutions and ultimately the service providers and the recipients of the service. Respondent 1 defines this big picture in the context of the "Working Nation Policy" set and this interview is a personal reflection, and a synopsis, of the extensive source material provided to the researcher by the interviewee. In this regard it is an expose of values and attitudes and Respondent 1 has exhibited in a number of instances a passion for the obligation of government to assist the less fortunate. The responses portray the concept of good practice (Kirschner & Lachiotte, 2001, pp. 441-456) in good governance and delivery of service by government to people less fortunate and disadvantaged. This is a narrative of character and relationships (Kirschner & Lachiotte, 2001, pp. 441-456) and it is in direct contrast to the attitudes expressed in the political media releases, statements and statistics made and published by the current government, cited within the literature review and the data from DEWR which is impersonal.

Respondent 1 was the only interviewee to provide extensive documented source references, and support materials. Given the high influence of politics and political interests (Holsti, 1969, pp. 35-37) on this particular interviewee, an extensive amount of additional checking and possible bias determination was undertaken through independent sources, cross referencing, and the researcher’s own experiences. The interview with Respondent 2, following in this chapter, provides
substantial verification in its content of Respondent 1’s assertions and views. To assume that the interview with Respondent 1 indicates a limiting of the vision of ALP strategy, to a specific group, is probably an error of judgement on the part of the researcher. The ALP Knowledge Nation policy initiative published in 2001 is a comprehensive integrated model of Australian society embodying life long learning and human capital development at every level and the ridiculing of Knowledge Nation is a reflection on the maturity and sophistication of participants in Australia’s political debates and governance processes. It reflects the inability of some to put political opportunism aside and look beyond the short terms of political advantage and the interests of a select few to the larger national interest.

6.1.6 Summary of key points from the interview with Respondent 1

The respondent has described a set of political views, policies and initiatives built on the foundation belief of the value and contribution of VET to getting a job, advancing career and skills. It is a discriminatory set of initiatives directed at a particular segment of the population with peripheral links to a policy of life long learning and when case management and VET are removed, which are the high cost components, its is fundamentally in agreement with the Coalition policy of mutual obligation and discipline although less overtly threatening in the use of language and coercion.
6.2  Deconstruction and Analysis of the Interview with Respondent 2

6.2.1  Content Analysis

Table 20 - Content analysis respondent 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language - binary meanings - words</th>
<th>Words deemed significant</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>All derivatives</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Union – non union (member)</td>
<td>skills</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conflicted – unconflicted</td>
<td>dole</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working – not working (model)</td>
<td>drone</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On the job – off the job</td>
<td>train</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical – theoretical</td>
<td>job</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work based – academic (learn)</td>
<td>con</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ideal – satisfactory – not</td>
<td>drug, alcohol &amp; social</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory – restricted</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compulsory – choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inflexible – flexible</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Better – lesser (model)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>We got it right – they got it wrong</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dole – benefit</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expect – not expect</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay – obligation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cheap – expensive (labour)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET – academic</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (power) – skills (non)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (thinker) – skills (drone)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education (rounded) – skills (job)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Everywhere – nowhere</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In touch – out of touch</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recreate – eliminate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.2.2 Language and Binary Meanings

Respondent 2 has an association with the unionised side of the employment equation and this is reflected in his language although the respondent is not a trade unionist nor does the respondent work in such a capacity or within a union environment. The focus is one of education being something broader than just skills with an implication that such a singular focus may produce a type of unthinking drone whereas education is a form of empowerment. Some confusion of value arises in the rating of 'on the job' training of greater value in practical terms than off the job (academic) at Tafe. The view on which policy model is superior is unambiguous (ideal) but the respondent is pragmatic in seeking to take the best of both models to create a superior functioning system rather than eliminating Working Nation in favour of Job Network. The respondent sees value in real work rather than works for the dole (described in his response as akin to the former Red Scheme) and proffers that the model with which the respondent was involved with, "got it right".

6.2.3 Words, derivatives and frequency

The frequency of use of the word 'train' and its derivatives such as 'trainees' is due to Respondent 2's involvement in a Working Nation contract and numerous
other responsibilities associated with industry training programmes, including negotiated award agreements incorporating mandated training.

The use of the term 'drone' was unique to this interview and none of the other interviewees used this type of derogatory description. The respondent used colloquial words such as 'dole' and 'con' and this was also unique as a style of response in comparison to the other interviewees. Perhaps in the respondent's view the possession of a VET qualification, "that piece of paper" (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q17), acts as an insurance against the employer being 'conned' by the applicant for a job.

Respondent 2 does not have the ideological oratory that was the constant of Respondent 1's interview. This interview is more of a narrative, sometimes digressing and perhaps boastful through statements such as 'we got it right', viewing the success of the Working Nation programme as worthy of high praise. Perhaps this is no different to the ideology of implied truths and irrefutable argument of the politician, couched in different language and often hidden from sight.

Respondent 2 is colourful in description and example indicating a down to earth style with no reference to the particular demographics of target recipients inherent in Respondent 1's interview. For Respondent 2 it is about people without jobs
who were on the dole and should have some mutual obligation to work and take training. There is an uncomplimentary observation of current government policy and the work for the dole scheme comparing them to another era and scheme.

"You can keep people on the dole, make it very difficult for them to get the dole and you can make them work at cleaning streets or whatever happens to be the latest local project reminiscent of the old, discredited "Red Scheme" of the early seventies. But if you pay your money you should expect people in return to take training, take working and receive a wage. I think it is a far better system", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q7).

6.2.4 Thematic Analysis

Respondent 2 goes beyond Respondent 1's reflections on 'skills' to the broader theme of the human value of education:

"Education to me has always been giving the person the power of how to think, for themselves. I mean the skills are fine; you have to have the skills, if you can't think for yourself you'll be a drone for the rest of your life. Now, some people like being a drone for the rest of their life but if I want a nice happy workforce, providing a nice happy atmosphere and a nice happy appearance to the outside, I've got a recipe for success in business — its success is people. I think that is very important, I think probably overlooked", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q7).

However, in the response to Q15, VET and education are separated into two distinct concepts. The researcher in discussion with a number of Tafe teachers with industry experience has noted the tendency to clearly delineate training from education. Like Respondent 1 the interviewee has a clear and unequivocal view
of training and its value, especially in services to the unemployed and the performance of the Working Nation programme.

"In fact without the on the job training the project could not have possibly worked", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q2).

"The results speak for themselves, 63%, had a good experience at work and were able to continue on with their careers" (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q2).

"... if you want the ideal system you have to put them together. I mean there is no point in having vocational education in isolation", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q2).

Respondent 2 refers to 'on the job training' rather than the broader notion of classroom VET, for which there is a degree of skepticism.

"And without actually having the work experience at a work place rather than the cold classroom style of training, I suppose, or the 'make work' type of training that can be conducted in isolated academia", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q2).

The mandatory inclusion of VET is supported, subject to individual circumstance, being in this case the person's prior experience and training.

"It should be included in it but it has to be optional. Not everybody is suited to go immediately into a workplace to commence training", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q5).

It is clear that VET is a necessary component of a fully functional and successful support model:

"...if you want the ideal system you have to put them (VET and work experience) together. I mean there is no point in having vocational education in isolation", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q2).
This interviewee had strong views of the government Job Network contractors' performance, based on their failure to collaborate and draw on opportunities with the respondent's association of employers across the state.

"Well it's a disgrace. This organisation is a conduit to small business, the employers, employing approximately 120,000 people across the state in a key industry", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q26).

"There are no official programmes that the xxx is involved in that I am aware of with respect to trainees", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q11).

In relation to Working Nation his comments were more positive

"We were constantly in touch with the actual department because for a number of years, right through the nineties, up until the government changed in '96 and for a little while after that it was phased out. We had an officer of the Department working out of this office", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q22).

Respondent 2 expresses strong views as to how the best model should have a relationship with industry, similar to the Wyatt Project described in the literature review and the need for a true national network, seeing such omissions as casualties of Job Network.

"Well there are no two ways about it. The old CES was in every town and city in this state. So that none of our members, with one or two exceptions, in the very outback was very far away from a CES", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q9).

"The withdrawal of the CES from rural areas just compounded the withdrawal of banks, the withdrawal of post offices and the withdrawal of
other services in regional areas and we are seeing the effect of that now. A very angry group of people out there, including our members who spend an awful lot of time ringing me and this office seeking extra services. We are not in position to provide them but we do go out of way to assist country members probably to a greater extent than our city membership who have so much more advantages”, (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q20).

“Obviously, the CES is no longer there. Now the contractors, whether they're providing that service they certainly are not providing the service that the CES did”, (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q20).

Respondent 2 cannot judge the actual performance of the Job Network contractors because he has no experience and no association with anyone from the current system. He perceives the Job Network as predominantly working at the community level dealing with an individual client and individual employer.

"As to the contractors themselves, I don't know. I haven't dealt with contractors directly so I am not in a position to comment on their carrying out of the job the government has given them via the contract. I am aware of the publicity that has surrounded the chopping and changing that has occurred over the years. I can do more than regret", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q20).

By comparison Respondent 2 had knowledge and experience of the CES, perceived by industry as under performing in some respects, but able to be improved.

"I have to say this, the CES was not always the greatest, certainly it was never an organisation that I thought couldn't be reformed. The problems that I had in originally negotiating with DEET via the CES to have that project up and running back in 1996. The previous two years were a nightmare dealing with a bureaucracy, which was really something that I found it quite difficult to deal with. So I suppose from that viewpoint if you
reform the bureaucracy that are actually running the CES one could bring back the CES in another guise ensuring that the services we all want are available to everybody", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q20).

6.2.5 Materialist semiotics analysis

Respondent 2's interview is reflective of the politics at the time and in some ways reminiscent of a bygone era. If there is a bias it is towards the inclusive and constructive nature of the Working Nation model that promoted collaboration and recognised the contribution that industry, and the committed individual, could play in the actual delivery process and outcome: gaining a job. Unlike Respondent 1, While Respondent 2 did not offer documents to reinforce his responses his views of the value of workplace training are upheld by Dusseldorp (1999-2000). If Respondent 2 has a negative disposition towards the Job Network and the Coalition strategy and policy it is borne out of the fact that there is now no contact with the Department and the providers. This may be read as a "slight to the Association in the eyes of the interviewee, who makes it quite clear that the organisation has a performance history and is of a stature and size to warrant attention, with a role to play.

The respondent offers no explanation for this oversight or possible slight and the researcher feels that the interviewee reflecting an uninformed response and perception of the Job Network model where it does not have the comprehensive
features and participation by all stakeholders as did its predecessor, Working Nation. Then again the respondent gave no indication that his association has actively sought out participation, unlike Working Nation, which allowed anyone who felt they had a role to participate and actively placed DEETYA officers within this organisation. The Coalition policy does not preclude participation by anyone for it is an open tender system and that is the dimension of the service though Job Network does not include public service employee placements described by Respondent 2. The provider may do that if they choose and the government leaves the relationships to the capacities, resources and willingness of the providers and participants.

Respondent 2 draws views from a history of involvement in the industry side of the dynamics in quite specific domains and tasks. The greater part of this interview deals with an experience of Working Nation within the confines of this particular industry, which is very broad and diverse in its own right. Respondent 2 highlights the lack of co-operation and integration of all stakeholders in the current Job Network model and proffers that success requires collaborative participation.

"Now to do that you need the co-operation of employers, fellow employees, trainers, and most essentially, and underwritten by, government", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q3).

Such collaboration should extend to the client receiving the services and according to Respondent 2 it should be more than a type of branded "work for the dole", describing the Working Nation programme with which he was involved.
as a conversion of the dole to a form of (trainee) wage. When the unemployed person is taken into an operational work environment it confers esteem and by implication participation in a form of constructive employment:

"But if you pay your money you should expect people in return to take training, take working and receive a wage. I think it is a far better system", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q7).

The respondent describes the Coalition philosophy of working for the dole as some form of mediocre exercise using the word "drone" and extending it even into the ALP territory of 'skills' differentiating 'skills' from intellectual capacity to think. The implication is that narrow based skills training is a type of system of programming the individual, much like a worker bee, without challenging the intellectual capacity of the recipient. There is an acceptance of mutual obligation, expressed in another form of work for the dole:

"... in return for that wage they participated in vocational training and they participated in work training, that is they participated in training at work", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q7).

The interviewee rates Working Nation, and its flexibility within a mandated framework as being superior to Job Network.

"Yes, well that is certainly a better model. I mean when I fact you look at the programme we were involved in it was one f the last that was approved by the then Keating government just before they lost office in March of 1996. Now there had been an awful lot of time, money and energy spent on similar programmes in various industries but I think I can safely say that in
the case of the hospitality one, we got it right. We finally achieved what all the other programmes had been looking to do. And it was a nice mix”),(Appendix 2.2, R6).

Despite the opinion, Respondent 2 is still pragmatic and a politician in his own way, favouring a considered evaluation of both models combining their best features.

"I would like to see the government, be it an incoming Labor government or a Liberal (if one could persuade it to do something, which is doubtful) to recreate the model we had before. (and) Try and eliminate the difficulties we had before. That will require a fair bit of work obviously. You can't just slash a pen and get rid of the contractors and reintroduce a CES. That would be a backward step. What you can do is take the current system and take the best bits of the current system and marry it with the best bits of the previous system and come up with something that does underpin proper vocational education and training", (Appendix 2.2, R2, Q28).

Respondent 2's reflection on education, and its cerebral quality, states the value of life long learning and development to the individual and the employer as a spark to generate this in a disadvantaged, unaware and previously unmotivated individual and this can be generated out of a programme of services to the unemployed and the Working Nation programme is perceived as doing just this. The lack of such strategies in the government's preoccupation of 'working for the dole' in terms of simple task performance and failure to deploy VET in Job Network is, for this respondent, a negative.
Unlike Respondent 1, Respondent 2 makes no mention of the level of disadvantage and the backgrounds of the participants in the Association's programme. The participants in the programme, drawn from a demographic with mild to severe social and personal problems, were consistent with the description given for the Partington Project in the literature review and within the interview with Respondent 1 and the extent of disadvantage may explain the level of success for the project being in what would, at first glance; appear to be in a low range, around sixty four (64) percent but the researcher notes that this is double the success rate of Job Network set out in the data at table 5, chapter five Such acknowledgment of individual case hardship is absent from DEWR's comparisons of the merits of the CES and Job Network outcomes.

It is interesting to note that none of the interviewees, beyond Respondent 1, make reference to the theme of opportunity and absence where absence can be defined in two ways; (a) lack of jobs and (b) personal attributes that create barriers or the absence of positive factors in an individual. There is no acknowledgement of the lack of jobs by anyone other than perhaps obliquely in Respondent 3's comment on the level of unemployment. The latter (b) omission is, to the researcher's thinking, a common reflection by the able, of the disadvantaged including disabled and impaired, forgotten and out of mind, not rating a mention.
6.2.6 Summary of key points from the interview with Respondent 2

The respondent has a much broader view of education than mere skills training for employment and whilst supporting VET feels that it should be optional on the part of the participant. This may be inconsistent with the comments about conning employers who might view a piece of paper as some form of security and those jobs where VET is mandated. The interviewee's responses were not clear on the impact of VET in the decision to employ but are interpreted to be limited to having a piece of paper to gain an interview in certain circumstances, rather than a major consideration in the final decision to employ. The interviewee is strong on the failure of Job Network to build on the past and involve as broad a church as possible and perceives Working Nation as superior in performance though the respondent has no experience of, or knowledge about, Job Network contractor performance. There is no indication that the interviewee has raised these concerns with government agencies, with the Department or that he or his organisation may have approached a Job Network contractor or that any member of this Association may be working with Job Network at a local level. Reference to the adversarial nature of politics where governments will not work together to build complementary systems of lasting value and the similar themes of obligation for receipt of moneys arise though there is a lesser focus on value for
money. There is no overarching reference to a particular population
demographic, to personal disadvantage or the issues that underpinned
Respondent 1's perspectives and this may arise since Respondent 2 is an
advocate for employers.

6.3 Deconstruction and Analysis of the Interview with Respondent 3

6.3.1 Content Analysis

Table 21 - Content analysis interview with Respondent 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binary meanings</th>
<th>Words deemed significant All derivatives</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not familiar — familiar</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience — familiar</td>
<td>Career</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers — person of rank</td>
<td>Train</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peers — no rank</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>2 not relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated — stand alone</td>
<td>Drug, alcohol &amp; social</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prerequisite — optional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value diversity — value conformance</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career — job</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Right people — wrong people</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employable — unemployable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>System failure — system success</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anecdotal — evidence, source</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience — anecdotal</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience — history (social badge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qualification — none (social badge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude — conformance (social)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dress — professional (social badge)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6.3.2 Binary meanings

There are no union oriented and working class themes within this interview and Respondent 3 is distinctive from the others though the researcher had expected some relativity between this person and Respondent 2; given they both work in the private sector and have exposure to, and participated in, unemployment assistance projects. Respondent 3's is a perfunctory view of what constitutes the prerequisites for success in education and career, which is the integration of work skills and work ethos down into secondary school coupled with the mandated requirement of a higher education qualification. Respondent 3's view is, according to the researcher's experience, consistent with a senior executive in the private sector. There is, it appears at first glance, a de-emphasis of the social and an emphasis on the corporate. The analysis bears further thought. Logically the respondent sees there is high unemployment and ipso facto, there is something wrong in the external system. It is an external system, as belonging to government and the public service, as distinct from a system that, by inference, might work well in the private sector. The respondent sees unemployment as a problem of government and society generally and not a responsibility also of business. Inherent in Respondent 3's responses is the proposition that useable, valid and worthwhile knowledge comes from experience and one's peers and the validation is anecdotal with no tendered evidence. From the corporate
perspective, there is no benefit in considering the most appropriate policy model for dealing with unemployment and thus no need for familiarity or contemplation of public policy.

Social badges of conformity are the dynamics of the employment decision context; these badges of in ranking order are experience (work), qualification (minimum Bachelor Degree), attitude (consistent with acceptable employer philosophy) and dress (conformity with business). There is no reference to measurements of ability mentioned, perhaps it is taken as granted from both the experience offered by the applicant for a job, and the possession of a degree. There are the right and the wrong people, consistent with the proposition that employers know quite clearly those people characteristics that they do not want. Professionals interviewing applicants, it would seem, are most likely to hire those people most considered to mirror their image within a system of peer review. In this regard the large corporation is a society in its own right and existence distant and unmoved by the problems of unemployment and disadvantage.

6.3.3 Words, derivatives and frequency

The application of content analysis is limited given the brevity of this respondent's replies. Respondent 3 made no reference to 'job' and 'skills' and he has a profession not a job. The word 'job' was mentioned during the answer only in
relation to a vague knowledge of the job search capability on the Internet for Job
Network. Instead the reference is to 'diversity' and to 'career' within the context
of a corporately managed education and training programme, driven by a mutual
obligation of the individual and corporate responsibility in concert. The frequency
of occurrence (Singleton, 1988) from which a particular perspective or dominating
view can be taken is in this case, most evident in the word 'career'. Respondent 3
is focused on the profession of "marketing" where the basic entry qualification is a
Bachelor Degree or progression towards completion. There is no Traineeship
style entry point into this domain and it is as if it is compartmentalised from the
rest of the organisation. Given the size of the company, and its diversity, this is
not surprising and is a trait of very large and complex, global organisations.

Respondent 3 differs from other interviewees in that there is no exhibited political
intelligence, which framed the previous two interviewees views and responses
and the content of the Respondent 4. There are no words describing or related
to social disadvantage. For this interviewee unemployment is a function of "the
system failing, somewhere", without any acknowledgement that unemployment
might be the outcomes of the objectives of corporatism, globalism and
technologism. Respondent 3 does have experience in Working Nation
programmes in that the interviewee was a contributing member of a large
programme with the same organisation with which respondent 2's association
has its joint venture, but he does not refer to this past association. Given this, it is
puzzling that the respondent does not support VET in government employment services delivery having actually arranged the delivery of VET courses ultimately with the aim of using the knowledge learned to promote the company's products in peoples' places of employment and in light of the statement regarding the contribution of all experience to a career. Rather there is an indication that higher education should be linked to secondary schooling and it may be that the interviewee was focusing on profession and the world of work and did not relate his response to his company's production factories and other work areas where skilled trades are applicable. Perhaps he is reflecting a broader view of the human potential than just skills to do a job or piece of work.

"I cannot think of reasons why this is not achievable at all levels of education from year 10 upward", (Appendix 2.3, R3, Q2).

This statement might imply some associated link to VET, and further education, since that is the most likely mechanism by which the individual could integrate experience and education at that age into the pattern of experience, work, education and career. The researcher however feels that Respondent 3 is saying that the education system should be restructured to fulfill the pathway into corporate responsibility for education and work extending the ethos of education for employability down into high school. It is here that the interview enters the social frame, acknowledging that corporation's have an obligation to participate in education and provide and sponsor it for their employees, an obligation to invest
in human capital. The interview content goes beyond the others to this vital theme since only Respondent 2 mentions developmental education but he did not make it a corporate (employer) responsibility.

6.3.4 Thematic analysis

Respondent 3 has a stated ideology and it is cloaked in the uniform of corporatism. The primary theme of responses is individual and corporate obligation to a career, not a 'job' as a set piece, field of work or a set of skills. It is the employer's obligation to invest in the skills of the employee and it is the obligation of government to engage the student as early as year 10 in the notion of a career and education to suit inclusive experience and preparation for work and might be viewed as the initial motivation for life long learning.

On the proposition that governments should incorporate VET into employment services, this respondent differs distinctly and unequivocally from the other interviewees to the extent that the interviewee is categorically opposed, placing the onus squarely on the employer.

"Whilst I am not, and my peers are not, familiar with the government policy on vocational education programmes, I have answered no because I feel that the employing organisations should hold the responsibility for vocational training and include recruitment and training as a base entry level role for all functions", (Appendix 2.3, R3, Q2).
This is consistent with the responses reported for the corporate survey data in chapter five. Other factors are important once the minimum ‘piece of paper’ or study requirement has been met. This response appears to imply that VET is in this interpretation, narrowed to the training specified by the employer coupled with the higher education, external study.

6.3.5 Materialist semiotics analysis

Respondent 3 is a professional practitioner in the world of private enterprise exhibiting no apparent association or resonance with external politics and government. They are separate worlds. A highly experienced senior manager, the answers are short (probably since they were electronically submitted) and in follow up interview, by telephone, the researcher experienced similar brevity. The respondent is not ambivalent to the issue of education and participation. Candidates for employment in sales and marketing must present with higher education qualifications.

"... approximately ninety (90) percent of roles have a pre-requisite of a Bachelor degree in Business, or at least progression toward completion", (Appendix 2.3, R3, Q3).

Whilst this is a determinant for employment in this professional field the researcher has observed Respondent 3’s positive attitude to VET during participation in employment services and training programmes, which included a
high level of VET. This participation may be qualified, to a certain degree, as an opportunistic attitude. In a previous negotiation and business discussion with the researcher, the respondent had indicated the benefits of having exposed hundreds of future and current industry participants and decision-makers to company products. Respondent 3 manages sales, retail product supply and distribution. The company sponsored the fit out and curricula design for trainees working in a number of operational businesses with which the researcher was involved. These were located across the nation. Some were the sites in which, among other things, DEETYA/CES allocated clients were being trained, in VET certificated courses. Respondent 3 directly funded, and participated directly in the delivery of training for 227 people in Queensland, who were allocated clients of CES/DEETYA under an employment services programme.

Respondent 3 was the only interviewee to specifically denote the prime objective as being the development of a career embodying all elements of experience including education as distinct from obtaining skills to do a job. In this regard there is some relativity with Respondent 1’s view of career, although the latter has differentiated the participants and the type, extent and level of education and career in comparison. There is an implication of life long learning in Respondent 3’s responses and focus on higher education and career.
"I place high value on a candidate's diversity of experience early in career development as this reflects a keenness to develop and establish a career", (Appendix 2.3, R3, Q3).

Respondent 3 admits no awareness of the Job Network and says that the peers and colleagues also have none. This may be again implying again that there is a failure of government and providers to create an integrated circle of knowledge and awareness, at all levels of the community, leading to positive outcomes with employers that were targeted in the Working Nation model. A past participant and contributor to assisting the unemployed, like Respondent 2, this interviewee has not been approached for an ongoing role in the new system.

In May 2002 the Australian government announced an increase in the intake of immigrants with 'skills' in targeted industries where shortages occur. The government came to office in 1996 and in that six years it does not appear to have created and implemented strategies that would address the shortages in skills through education, training and industry relationships to which Respondent 3 alludes. Respondent 3 sees something flawed and wrong with the current system of labour market policies and strategies.

"Unemployment is high, and we have trouble finding the right people, the system is failing somewhere", (Appendix 2.3, R3, Q5).
Interestingly enough the concept of the 'right people' may be the nub of the problem. It is as if there is an unstated belief that somehow someone else (educators, governments and individuals themselves) has responsibility to provide a continuing pool of the "right people" from which employers may choose. Respondent 3 makes no assertions and offers no view as to what the problem of the systems failure may entail. Inherent in this statement is an implied mismatch between available supply of skills, experience, adequate education and the opportunity of individuals (by location or circumstance) to obtain available work and the specific needs of business. The respondent does not encapsulate this theme in the absence of opportunity or in disadvantage. Vet does not enhance the opportunity of people applying for work in this particular area of the firm.

The order of priority for the right people is: “1. Experience / qualification, 2. Attitude, 3. Dress.”

There is no offered weighting factor for the prerequisites but rather indicates that it was an overall impression, where judgemental factors and values and the interviewer's own circumstance and attitudes played a role in the decision to employ.

*R, Q9: Do you think that the fact the interviewer (such as yourself) has a qualification themselves, influences the factor or the employment decision?*

*R3, Q9: Yes*
R, Q10: Would there be a correlation between you having a higher education and your view on the above question?

R3, Q11: Yes.

The researcher discerns a tension of bias between the respondent's implied individualistic employer philosophy, mutual obligation philosophy and the strong and extensive personal commitment exhibited by the interviewee's own participation in organizing VET for a group of unemployed and support for the unemployed through the participation in an employment services programme.

The researcher had negotiated in 1995, with Respondent 3, for participation in labour market programmes and he saw this as beneficial to his marketing goals and to the corporation in which he is a manager. This, and the continued theme of omission of industry involvement, other than job vacancy matching and personnel services, is evidenced when Respondent 3 says that there is no contact between his organisation, himself and Job Network and it is a demonstrable failure by the government to build upon what has gone before and what was an expensive investment by the nation at the time.

This is not to say that the Human Resources and Personnel divisions of companies such as the one in which the respondent works do not have some contact with Job Network providers in placing vacancies or contracting providers to fill positions.
Respondent 3 and Respondent 2 are highlighting that the association between Job Network (DEWR) and Job Network (providers) is not seemingly at the higher level of senior manager strategic involvement, evidenced in Working Nation and the philosophy of past providers.

They paint a picture of Job Network as just another personnel agency, sponsored by the government, replacing the CES without the commensurate CES structure, strategy, interaction and operation.

This begs the question as to why the government would want to be the funding source of what essentially are small personnel agencies? It should be stated that the researcher did not seek out examples of the existence of higher-level interaction between Job Network providers and corporations. The researcher feels that they would probably exist in a number of private agencies that have long standing relationships with companies and who are Job network providers.

6.3.6 Summary of key points of the interview with Respondent 3

Respondent 3 provided written answers and the researcher had a short discussion over the phone and a subsequent meeting to discuss a number of points. Though short in response and content this piece is considered extremely
interesting. For the interviewee, education represents a higher qualification, consistent with data in chapter 5.4 that indicates larger companies value education much more highly than small business. The respondent sees education as a form of mutual obligation between employer and employee where VET plays no role in the decision to employ, which is based on experience, dress and attitude. The respondent works in a multidisciplinary, multinational company, which includes trades and factory personnel and a diverse range of semi-skilled and skilled personnel but limits his responses to his own narrow part of that organisation. The responses are consistent with the focus on business isolated, and unconnected with the political world in which the respondent has no interest in, or knowledge of. Broader societal and political themes are gathered into the view that there is "something wrong with the system".
6.4 Deconstruction and analysis of the interview with Respondent 4

6.4.1 Content Analysis

Table 22 - Content analysis for respondent 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Binary meanings</th>
<th>Words significant All derivatives</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy maker - operator</td>
<td>Skills</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conduit - blocked</td>
<td>Dole</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outsourcing - competition</td>
<td>Churning</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jealousy - commitment</td>
<td>Train</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resentment - co-operation</td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>8 (not as a name)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structural - performance</td>
<td>Disadvantaged</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentives - outcomes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes - competition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disadvantage - special groups</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Churning - individual assessment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barriers - challenges</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET optional - individual choice</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal VET - other support measures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic skills - job - career</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competitive for jobs - barriers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outcomes - positive - negative</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.4.2 Binary meanings

Respondent 2 expressed a view on the CES, and its performance, and

Respondent 4, interviewed last, described an organisation fraught with jealousy

and resentment regarding the introduction Labor's Working Nation.

*What happened in the early days of Working Nation was that there was a
significant amount of jealousy, or resentment, within the CES network to that*
happening. It was to ESRA and the Department to overcome these major challenges and I guess there were issues in relation to a Department delivering those services at the same time as, having a responsibility to service candidates that were being looked after by the agencies contracted by ESRA. In other words people were basically referred to those arrangements by the CES. A competitor was also delivering the service and managing parts of it as well, ESRA was trying to sort that out. There were structural issues that needed to be addressed in the early days", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q2).

The implication is that the CES fuelled its own demise and the measurement of performance, according to Respondent 4, was one of public service style indicators rather than real measurable outcomes, which are defined for the Job Network market model. This claim is contrary to the APC finding that it was difficult to measure the performance of Job Network and its impact was minimal. There is a qualification placed on the benefit of this singular focus as Respondent 4 recognises that the pursuit of outcomes driven by fees may result in clients being placed into unsuitable situations. The interviewee’s background, in case management shows, in the acknowledgement of disadvantage and barriers to employment outcomes however the respondent makes no mention of the absence of (job) opportunities seemingly providing the justification that a client can always choose another service provider. This is not the case since the government has responded to the APC review, which recommended this transfer ability, in the negative, disallowing voluntary choice and transfer. The rhetoric of the government is that people should not be ‘job snobs’ and should go where the work is and the primary objectives of competition and choice, outcome for a fee,
have become the raison d'etre of Job Networks existence without explaining how Job Network deals with the finiteness of opportunity.

Win this interview there is the evidence of conformance with government philosophy being that the outcome of employment is a matter of the client choosing a provider, the structural readjustment of the services model and realignment of the unemployed person's aspirations and barriers, since jobs are apparently available for those who want them.

6.4.3 Words, derivatives and frequency

The word “job” (not in the context of Job Network) appears eight (8) times and it is noted that the word ‘careers’ is not mentioned. The Job Network is about getting a “job” and Respondent 4 has made the contrast stark as the word `skills’ is used minimally appearing only four (4) times and training appears a large number of times but only in the context of responding to a question regarding Working Nation and not Job Network. Respondent 4 introduces the word ‘churning’, which is a confirmation of the researcher’s view that the CES did send clients to multiple training programmes.

This interview, in comparison to the previous three, is focused more on the mechanics of service delivery in the context of a comparison between Working Nation and Job Network. Respondent 4 does refer to the Job Network provider's
roles in determining barriers to employment and there is some consensus between Respondents 1, 2 and 4 on the themes of ‘barriers and disadvantage’ with Respondent 1 placing the greater emphasis. However the researcher believes that that ‘barriers’ in the Job Network lexicon relate to the inability to prepare a resume, faults in language and presentation and job search and not so much barriers such as drugs, alcohol use, deprivation and disability.

This interview is a counter view to Respondents 1 and 2, who both saw Working Nation as superior, with qualities that should have been transferred by the government into Job Network. Respondent 4 views Job Network as superior for its focus on ‘choice’ and ‘outcomes’ and if there are any words in this interview that point to a particular perspective on the part of the interviewee the researcher would choose ‘choice’, ‘individual assessment’ and ‘outcomes’. These words are not singled out by incidence of use, but by the intensity of the interviewee response.

6.4.4 Thematic Analysis

The respondent claims that Job Network “offers people a choice”. Choice is a word that has been constantly used in the DEWR publication and government speeches and its is viewed by the researcher as an ideological, primary trigger in political thinking (Edsall, 1998, pp. 4-5) reinforced into the Job Network providers’
psyche by continuous programming. Choice is the defining factor that separates the two models in Respondent 4’s perception. The researcher disputes that choice did not exist under Working Nation since in the researcher’s experience providers, under Working Nation, had to arrange and present their wares to potential clients at many CES offices in order to persuade the unemployed to choose a specific provider.

Further, the Australian Productivity Commission refers to the ‘fallacy of choice’ (2002, 3.3:11) and the quite random allocation of clients into the Job Network by Centrelink. Respondent 4 acknowledges some problems but does not concede that choice does not actually exist to the extent implied.

“...to get information on Job network assistance services can be difficult and confusing for some people to make an informed choice because of the amount of information that is sometimes thrown to them and sometimes the sheer volume of activity that happens in the Centrelink office”, (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q2).

Respondent 4 applies lessons from Working Nation into the structure of the Job Network and his role within it. The assessment of individual need was the starting point for all case managers and Respondent 4 was an officer in the DEETYA – CES, Working Nation, environment and the reference to ‘jealousy’ arising within the CES is an interesting perspective. This view is balanced with the acknowledgement that Working Nation had good features that were migrated into
Job Network a point that was contradicted by Respondent 2 who may have felt that all aspects of Working Nation had been abandoned in favour of Job Network because there was no continuing association. Respondent 4 is by far more able to make such a statement with conviction due to experience and depth of knowledge. However from the researcher’s perspective, and from an examination of the dimensions of both, it is believed these transfers are of a mechanical operations and participant classification nature and not the extensive interventionist social nature such as case management and support for the disadvantaged described by Respondent 1. Respondent 4 makes no comment about the reduction of $1 billion dollars from the employment service’s budget, which would by logic infer that not all elements of Working Nation in terms of intensive support have been transferred. A large component of that expenditure was formal VET.

“Working Nation has a very strong emphasis on training and there was a lot of churning where people were put into training for the sake of filling courses, it wasn’t always directly related to the employment opportunities or to a lesser degree, the needs of the individual”, (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q6).

The researcher believes that Respondent 4’s experiences under Working Nation extensively influences the manner of operation and quality of this particular provider’s service delivery within their contracts.
"Under the new Job Network it is very much an assessment of individual needs while there are some generic programmes to provide to people, at least initially, job search, job preparation and such. Some agencies do have standard programmes. In terms of vocational training I think there is lesser emphasis now on the training", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q6).

The researcher has difficulty in accepting that the current contracts, funding and philosophy of Job Network has the resources and the capacity to engage in the deeper assessment and actions described in the Partington Project and in the operation of Job Network and this assertion is inconsistent with Respondent 1’s observations of Job Network.

The second theme of Respondent 4’s interview is the ‘barriers to employment’.

"The challenging part I think is assessing the barriers to employment for candidates", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q6).

"Training is definitely one option that must be considered, as is a range of other options that may address the barriers to employment”, (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q6).

There is no enlightenment as to the methodology of this assessment process and the subsequent extent of case management support that is given to assist the disadvantaged to overcome these barriers and training is cited as only one option.

"I think it should be optional. It will be a significant part of addressing the needs of an individual candidate. It should not be compulsory for every candidate since everybody has individual needs. We are talking about formal VET. Other people just need support measures to help them overcome that barrier. IT certainly has to be a significant option in terms
of helping long-term unemployed, disadvantaged people back into the workforce", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q7).

Respondent 4 says that VET in some form does enhance employment opportunity but if VET is to be provided, the shorter courses are preferred consistent with the literature reviews exploration of the trend towards generic skills training and narrow competencies.

"Now what we find generally is, the shorter courses that offer a specific vocational skill, whether it be a computer skill or operating a piece of machinery or first aid, do contribute to an employment outcome", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q8).

"From our experience the short sharp skills development type programmes are the ones that do contribute towards, well there is direct evidence that they do contribute to employment. As measured by the outcomes we can achieve", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q8).

Whilst having stated above that Vet does enhance the likelihood of getting a job Respondent 4 reinforces the proposition that there is insufficient data and knowledge of the impact of longer VET completion on the decision to employ.

"Sometimes it is harder to assess the longer - term employment outcomes for a Diploma or Certificate 4 level course, unless it is associated with a traineeship and that does improve a person's competitive position in terms of applying for jobs by having qualifications", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q8).

Respondent 4's view contrasts with that of Respondents 2 and 3 where they proffer that education should be something deeper and imparting characteristics more in tune with a career but Respondent 4’s perception is in keeping with the
survey data for employer attitudes at chapter five. The provision of training is
easier for this Job Network provider due to commercial relationships with a Tafe
and university.

"We do provide a fair bit of support to our candidates for training not only in
areas that our college traditionally operates in which are office and hospitality
but also quite a bit of training for other technical areas. They might be
technical courses in building and construction, warehousing and plant
operating and first aid, software operation, that sort of thing", (Appendix 2.4,
R4, Q6).

Under Working Nation, providers had access, through DEETYA, to a broad range
of human services such as psychological counselling, assessment and medical
services. There is no evidence that these are available through Job Network and
the precise meaning and extent of individual assessment by Job Network
providers cannot be stated. It is expected that this provider could however
provide counselling and advice through an association with an entity that carries
out these services for students enrolled in the college. Not every Job Network
provider has the luxury of such an attached association. While integration of
intergovernmental agency co-operation and support is not a prominent feature of
the Job Network if it exists at all, Respondent 4 does refer to participation in
forums that may canvas such issues.

"Since May 1998 I have been involved, and that has included input into
policy options and developments, mainly through the National Employment
Services Association forums. They are a conduit to providing information
to the Minister through the Department of Workplace Relations and in
some working groups for same that look at delivery aspects of the Job
Network", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q1).
6.4.5 Materialist semiotics analysis

Mounin's (1985, pp.103-104) research into advertising and its rules of construction, suggests that the use of subliminal messaging and manipulation has been embraced by the modern Australian political party and by governments and this work resonates with the researcher's perception that Job Network is one of a set of orchestrated, programmed and managed strategies and language by a government using methods designed to ensure replication by providers, of the mantra of comparing the Job Network and Working Nation (CES) presenting the latter in an unfavourable light.

"Under the Working Nation there was the lesser emphasis on performance and outcome but ESRA were moving towards the outcomes of disadvantaged and special groups of candidates", (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q5).

The researcher had noted Respondent 4's assertions of the differences between the two models in relation to "outcomes" and decided that the assertion should be tested. The researcher turned to the methodology for crosschecking and bias determination set out in chapter four of this study, using the APC's findings on Job Network, which did not support this view.

The researcher asks, what were the performances measures for Working Nation providers if they were not outcomes? Respondent 2 refers specifically to
outcomes, in terms of employment placement, as a measure of performance. The researcher knows that the balance of the contract fee, under Working Nation, was payable only after the participant was placed, and maintained, in employment for 13 weeks. In the experience of the researcher, there is no difference between the contracted outcomes of Working Nation and Job Network since outcome assessment was very complex for Working Nation, with contracts designed to demand ongoing assessment reports from providers for each individual with these documented reports going to attitude, participation and training, behaviour and barriers to success and therefore it was not possible to ‘park’ the client. Working Nation had high levels of training and case management not inherent in Job Network and which have a long-term value and for which payments were made for work done by providers. In one case, a participant in a programme managed by this researcher, received 714 hours of customised, one on one training and support to gain a specific job and it was standard policy for participants of unemployment services programmes to receive priority in casual and intermittent employment opportunities or they could elect to continue VET study at a Tafe and articulate to university. This is the ‘apples and the oranges’ comparison deplored by Respondent 1.

Job Network pays on performance outcome only and requires that the provider bear the risk of providing any value added services, such as training and support, barrier assessment and removal which places the individual at the mercy of the
market and unscrupulous operators, the internal cost structure of providers and the profit motivation unprotected by the public sector, which had an obligation to look after their interests, obligations which have been transferred to the Job Network providers.

The researcher has the impression that the assessment of the needs of the individual and attention to barriers described by Respondent 4 is very basic and generic. There are higher risks in Job Network, since providers focus on cosmetic, and observable social skills, presentation of resume, dress, attitude, education attainment and work experience rather than deeper assessments to remove real barriers enunciated by Respondent 1, the Partington Project and Mildura - Sunraysia Tafe examples cited in the literature review. The total of the budget for all contracted rates of payment for Job Network services are well below Working Nation which was attuned to providing an extensive assessment and support and there is evidence that the more difficult cases are being "parked" by providers (APC, 2002). Tailored training, according to DEWR is 15 days, and this is the training described by Respondent 4, which compares to the sixty days of VET and seventy days work experience in the researcher's managed Programmes and those described by Respondent 2.

Of interest is Respondent 4's implied proposition of the difficulty or restrictions in measuring public sector performance as an outcome in Working Nation and the CES.
"So it was a performance-based system with no real addressing of those issues apart from measuring in a public service environment, whether or not an officer is achieving certain results. So now with the Job Network agencies must be very responsive on performance”, (Appendix 2.4, R4, Q5).

The Australian Productivity Commission, among other bodies, devotes itself to determining the 'value for money' comparison and the measurement of outcomes for public expenditure and to contend that Working Nation was not outcome oriented is to disregard the contribution of a variety of contracted performers and providers under that scheme, who rather than bidding on price would bid on the more complex and beneficial services of competency and ability to assist and overcome significant barriers. Respondent 4's assertion is not supported by the APC independent review, which states that it is not possible to measure and verify DEWR's claims for the success of Job Network.

6.4.6 Summary of key points from the interview with Respondent 4.

Respondent 4 provides an invaluable observation of both models from with inside the operations but the interview reflects some views and perceptions, which are not supported by evidence and independent analysis, such as measurement of outcome comparisons and the claims of choice for Job Network participants.
VET is seen as making a contribution to gaining employment but it is VET of
generic skills and narrow competencies. While this provider, it is felt would be
delivering a service well above the norm, given the experience, background and
its Tafe association, it is not seen to be at the same level of comprehensive case
management, support and training that would have been provided under Working
Nation.
7 FINDINGS, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has sought to establish a narrative correspondence between the literature review, the data, surveys and a small group of stakeholders. The research presents a picture of a complex system interacting with people at every level of society theorised within the conceptual framework described in chapter three. The deconstruction and analysis of interviews unpacks the value and perceptions that the interviewees have of VET, its role and the relative merits of the two political models dealing with the vexed issue of unemployment. The analysis of the literature, data and surveys and the interviews by the researcher has sought out underlying and unstated values, diversity of opinions, beliefs, mantra, ideology and inconsistencies. Triangulation methods testing the validity of the claims for the success of each of the political models particularly the key determinants of "choice" "intensive intervention support through case management", "training" and "the measurement of performance through outcomes" have been applied using alternative literature sources, research, analysis and interviews. The interviews, as a microcosm of employers and policy makers, reflect some of the implicit reality buried in the literature, surveys and data that Australia does not have a training culture, nor a national consensus on the value of education, training and knowledge, nor does
it embrace a common and nationally agreed strategy for dealing with unemployment. Knowledge, education, training and people are shown to be subsidiaries, predominantly valued for their contribution to economy, employability and the goals of government, managerialism and capital.

7.2 Overview summary and discussion

"... very little progress seems to have been made in generating a training culture among small business employers, which as DISR observes, is where most enterprises and employers are", (Aspiring to Excellence, s. 7, pp.127 – 128).

Small business is the largest group of employers in the nation and their attitudes are extremely important in understanding the value, and the place, of VET in Australian society and workplace culture. However the researcher does not believe that people frame their views of VET, and other education, in isolation of other influences and the literature review pointed to the absence of a life long learning strategy and the failure by governments, and others, to instil a national value system for training and education. Tamkin and Hillage (1996) in their work on motivators for education claim that the signal that governments want is that learning pays, and has beneficial returns for both individuals and employers and while the researcher accepts that this may be one of the many statements in the government’s mantra it does not translate through to policy and action since VET has been withdrawn as a mandatory component of the government’s measures.
to address unemployment. Furthermore a great number of employers, employees and individuals do not accept the proposition that learning pays.

"What concerns the Committee however, is the high percentage of the labour force, nearly fifty (50) percent, who have no post school qualifications", (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, p. 44).

The researcher finds that proponents of the theory that learning pays, including the government, rely upon individuals and employers possessing the logic, maturity, good sense and foresight to understand the value of education without being forcefully told though national policies and strategies to undertake self education or to train their employees. The Training Levy legislation, enacted under Labor, has been withdrawn and the government has continually reinforced 'choice' as the primary driver.

"Choice", the option to participate in education and training so inherently dominant in the findings of this research, really acts against the likelihood of changing attitudes in Australia, as do the messages and views of senior policy makers who shape those attitudes. The Senate Committee (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, p. xxxix, s. R26) is of the view that "user choice" as a mechanism for developing the training market and encouraging flexibility and responsiveness by providers is unproven. The trend to imparting generic skills as a foundation approach to the relationship between VET and employment implies that policy makers believe that there is a basic recipe of "one size fits all" and if people are taught certain homogenous competencies they will be equipped for
employment. This perception is reinforced by the Senate Committee's extensive reference to the Mayer Key Competencies (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, p. 1555, s.8.149), which are summarised as:

- Collecting, analysing and organising information.
- Communicating ideas and information.
- Planning and organising activities.
- Working with others and in teams.
- Using mathematical ideas and techniques.
- Solving problems.
- Using technology.

From the researcher's perspective this is a reductionist approach to education and training reinforcing the proposition that minimal competency training can be undertaken and is required initially for "employability" and then "choice", driven by economic and social imperatives, can be the determinant of any future development for deeper learning, by the individual. Choice relies upon people having an extensive amount of information and the APC in its independent
review of Job Network stated that people did not have sufficient information to choose service providers or to know where to go, let alone grapple with choices about the future impacts of globalism. Given that the Mayer competencies outlined above can be taught on the job why would an employer, or employee, bother with a formal VET institution? The ideology and demands of the markets, within the framework of the economy (capitalism) and the goals of business simultaneously influencing political ideology, action and policy are driving a downgrading and narrowing of education and training.

Through the application of the conceptual framework, described at chapter three, the researcher believes that he has identified a new class system in Australia. Building on Patricia Harris' theory of political rationality (2001, pp. 5-26) the researcher theorises that this new class system consists of two primary groups, the "Employable Class" and the "Unemployable Class" and previous theories of the working class, the middle and upper classes are naturally accommodated within these new class structures. Within this system the researcher theorises that there are subgroups of people possessing varying levels of skills and knowledge and these subgroups may be generally classified as follows:

(a) That group of people possessing generic skills for general employability, particularly focused on the Mayer Key Competencies, suitable for initial
entry to employment and lower levels of semi-skilled work migrating upwards;

(b) Another group, possessing the above generic skills who in addition possess advanced knowledge derived through higher learning and education and;

(c) A group who have neither, and;

(d) A group who have both generic and higher level skills but who are unemployable due to elements and practices of discrimination.

In trying to explain how the thinking and action of policy makers, and employers, have created this new class system it is relevant to examine the role, nature and contribution of education to individualism and employment. Work, for the Coalition government, is the predominant vehicle by which an individual can make a contribution to Australian society and work encompasses key traits such as choice, exertion and ambition and, for the political class; higher education is a natural vehicle to achieve these material goals. The researcher believes that government and business assumes most, if not all, people are driven by the pursuit of materialism and this can be achieved, and supported, through the higher wages and benefits that derive from personal exertion including investment.
in their education. According to conservative liberal theory (actioned by the
Coalition) it is this singular consumer motivation that will logically drive the nation,
as a whole, to pursue investment in knowledge and education.

Unfortunately, according to the evidence gathered for this study, this is not
occurring despite the government's published claims to the contrary. The
economy may be growing but concurrently class disparity is also growing whilst
investment in education and knowledge is not.

The literature review implied that, in this modern global world, enterprises would
move towards a knowledge economy away from manufacturing and such
changes would generate demands for (1) higher levels of educational and
training qualifications, (2) intellectual skills associated with powers of problem
solving and decision making and (3) personal skills associated with interacting
positively with colleagues and clients, with (2) and (3) being much along the lines
of the Mayer Key Competencies. But this is not the case as evidenced in table
09, which shows a poor level of investment in knowledge by industry and
government. The 'knowledge' tag in an 'information society' may be narrowly
conceived as implying competency in the use of technology and information, e.g.
the Internet, rather than a broadening of the intellect and deeper learning.

Alternatively driving the market through higher educational requirements in
technology, may have the adverse effect of excluding some VET aspirants from
the 'knowledge workers' category due to the intellectual rigour required from a
higher-level technical course or degree, for which they are not equipped. Universities have been encroaching onto VET landscapes with competency degree courses for specific employment or by offering articulation from Tafe, marketed to prospective students as a response to the competitive and fiscally frugal agendas implemented by governments. Some critics respond to this marketing initiative describing it as a back door means of obtaining a degree at less cost than traditional enrolment in universities and argue that the government should raise the student's contribution cost by introducing a higher education contribution scheme (HEC) which is utilised by governments to partially fund universities. The problem and debates of education can be seen as very complex and the political response to the education issue invariably in terms of cost, choice and application for employability rather than education for education's sake does nothing to provide solutions or ease competing and undermining tensions. These tensions, together with increased costs for VET, will further erode the impact that VET may have on the individual's perceptions and reinforce the negative views of VET with employers, with possible grave consequences.

"Australia is on the path to becoming a knowledge nation already, it is an underperforming one. We are in danger of becoming a nation of followers and not creators." (Chifley Research Centre, 2001, s. 4).

"The Committee supports a strong and active role for industry in VET but believes the leadership role it has been accorded by the current
The research informs that even when the liberal theory of individualism and choice was applied in Job Network there is no proof that an employment outcome can be directly attributed to such theories, even when VET is included as it was in Working Nation. On balance the researcher concludes that Working Nation had only a slightly higher impact on unemployment and claims and assumption on the part of the respective governments for the success of either system are not supported by the data and surveys set out in chapter five, and the independent observations of the APC. Job Network, in comparison to Working Nation, is a screening and matching service, much like a private employment agency and instead of the employer or aspirant employee paying a fee to the service provider the government assumes the cost while Working Nation was a far more sophisticated, and individually beneficial, intervention model. In this latter regard comparisons between Working Nation, the CES and Job Network, made by DEWR and the government, are focused on cost and not on examining all of the benefits that participants may have received under Working Nation. On the evidence presented the Coalition has not undertaken a balanced comparison, making no attempt to calculate any personal values or development that could arise from case management and VET. The Coalition government, in designing Job Network, did not seek to evaluate and measure the tangible and intangible benefits of the previous model such as motivation for continued learning, self
esteem and support against disadvantage, addiction and anti-social behaviour addressed through case management. Research indicates that intensive assistance clients are "parked" in the Job Network and a success fee is claimed even though the person may achieve a job on their own merits without the assistance of a provider. However, regardless of the perceptions about VET, its removal from Job Network, as a distinct and separately funded component, may well be justified on the evidence provided from within this research thesis.

7.3 Findings as to the questions

Finding 1: As to the question that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job.

It is the primary finding of this study that there is no direct evidence supporting the proposition that VET enhances the likelihood of getting a job; rather it is viewed as circumstantial support only, since it is predominantly based on graduate outcomes and small surveys. Applying the data in chapter five, at table 11, it is clear that where an employer has an attitude to training lying within the negative to ambivalent ranges of the scale then the impact of VET on the decision to employ will be in a range of irrelevancy to just slightly relevant which, according to the sample, represents between eleven (11) and thirty seven (37) percent of employers and, the smaller the enterprise the less likely it is that VET will enhance the likelihood of winning the job at interview. It is also logical to
assume that of the fifty percent, or more people, who have no qualifications, quite a number are employed and obviously VET was not a determinant in their gaining a job. For many occupations VET may well be the entry ticket through the door, as stated by Respondents 2 and 4, but after that compliance it is not clear that Respondent 3's stated influences namely, dress, attitude and experience, will not dominate the decision.

On the question of sources that might support a proposition that VET does impact the decision the researcher has concluded that the sources are limited and isolated. According to Christopher Ryan (1999, p. 4) there are only three narrowly defined national data sets reporting the outcomes of education and training in Australia. They are (a), the Graduate Destination Surveys for Higher Education, (b) similarly for Tafe and (c), the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and all of this data is gathered in isolation, remains unlinked and in part, irreconcilable (Burke, 1995) whilst Graduate Destination Survey Data is collected only for those programmes funded by the Commonwealth and excludes private sector institutions and providers. Another useful piece of information supporting circumstantial evidence of the impact of VET would be the total number of people who hold a VET qualification, by industry, occupation and level. However again,

"This information proved difficult to obtain. The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) collects and reports on 'highest educational attainment of the labour force' in its Transition from Education to Work series. As only the highest level of qualification is reported, VET qualifications held by
people with higher qualifications are not reported". (Aspiring to Excellence, 2000, p. 43)

**Finding Two:** As to the question regarding the downgrading of VET.

It is clear that VET has been downgraded within the Job Network model. Whilst Working Nation mandated the inclusion, under Labor, the Coalition has adopted choice and has reduced funds impeding the likelihood that a provider will undertake anything above the simplistic preparation described in the Job Network skills table, such as resume and job search. The researcher notes that Respondent 4 did refer to short course training such as forklift driving but this is not observed as being the norm.

Beyond the parameters of the two political models, within the outer framework, the research points to the attitude, values and participation data set out in chapter 5 and the lack of a national strategy for lifelong learning and within this the lack of a seamless plan, by government and employers, to move from school to VET to higher education. The researcher finds that perhaps it is not VET that is downgraded but public policy aspirations, goals and parameters. The Mayer competencies reinforce the trend and deliberate policy action towards generic skills implying, for this researcher, a very specific programming intent of public policy for the nation’s human resources aimed squarely at employability. While it is possible that complex and deep education could be
embedded into these competencies, no evidence was found to support the argument that this was the intent. The inference from reading the literature is that individuals and employers may choose to approach VET in this manner, or that education providers such as Tafe and Universities could offer a broadening of the curricula. Overall the researcher finds that under the focus and intent of public policy for employability, a base of shallow, generic competencies have been indicated for the nation and this may or may not imply a downgrading depending upon one's professional view and the likelihood of fulfillment of policy makers' beliefs that logic and the imperatives of competition policy and globalism, will eventually drive individuals and employers to embrace higher goals.

Finding Three: As to the question regarding primary beliefs, and drivers, that inform public policy.

The research indicates that a focus on ideology, and adversarial politics, is an end in itself with acts of faith replacing research and information as the informants of policy and action where the Coalition appears to have replaced a valuable and functioning system with a lesser performing model. The researcher concludes that this is a less than satisfactory approach to policy formulation and action and is open to criticism and a charge of placing political self interest before the national interest. The conceptual framework has exposed actions taken to justify these 'acts of faith'. Job Network, and the government's rhetoric on
unemployment and descriptions of the unemployed, together minimise and
demean the human aspect and in the background of Australian society lurks the
natural human conditions of fear and insecurity, especially in the social welfare
sector where these conditions are exacerbated by coercion (Falk, 1995, pp.13-29) and the threat of loss of benefits. Dealing with the problem of unemployment
goes well beyond the creation of systems such as Working Nation and Job
Network for it should encompass all facets of the human dimension and condition
as recipients of welfare are required to perform tasks of a directed form to
maintain their benefits and the failure to create an all encompassing public policy
has had unintended consequences for participants in Job Network and Working
Nation.

“In some cases the introduction of concepts of mutual obligation and case
management under the former Labor government led to perverse outcomes,
with some unemployed people forced to undertake inappropriate and even
demoralising retraining" (Tanner, 1999, p.135).

This may be one of a number of contributing factors to Labor's loss of primacy in
social policy agendas. In the changing nature of Australian society, and
perceptions regarding the unemployed, the Coalition has extended its shaping, its
coercion, labelling, threats and verbal assault on the unemployed resulting in a
debasement of people receiving social security benefits (Goldman, Lancaster &
Lindsay, 1998, pp.20-25). Such a deliberate style, together with the dismantling
of the institutions of government (CES, Employment National, DEETYA) is seen as part of a strategy of effective measures designed to ensure that people are disinclined to remain on assistance and that avenues for the likely challenging of government's policies and actions are diminished or removed. Language has the potential to exploit community attitudes, and political parties are both no less culpable in claiming to have solutions even when unemployment remains high despite record economic growth and while sociologists and others point to the widening gap of inequality. Former US Secretary of Labor, Reich, stated that inequality was the greatest threat to the United States and this translates to the Australian scene since the adoption of American neo-liberalist philosophies to employment and governance. The use of terms such as 'job snobs' and 'cruisers' by senior Ministers within the Australian government creates a 'hysteresis' (Bourdieu, 2001, pp.893 - 912) polarising the community, with many accepting that unemployment is a product of the welfare system, a personal choice, and not a by-product of government and business behaviour, ideology, administration, policy, economics, competition, interests and outcomes which have resulted in the creation of the new class system proposed by the researcher. Finding reinforcement is not limited to open language and statements, for powerful people, including governments, also message without communicating (Mackay, 1999, p.102) through policy and action. The fundamental message, which is openly observed through the literature review, is that Australians can make a valuable contribution to the nation primarily through paid employment. With the
crafted application of policy, strategy, media, language, statistics, orchestrated representation of policy outcomes, and benefits, the governments of Australia have been, and still are, manipulating reality and perception.

**Finding Four:** As to the question of the performance of Job Network and Working Nation and their respective effects in reducing unemployment.

Aspects of this finding have been covered with finding two and while the evidence is not conclusive for either on balance the research finds that neither has a pronounced effect except to the point that Working Nation subsidised employment opportunities. On balance the research finds that Working Nation has greater intangible and personal development outcomes well above Job Network through the provision of Vet and case management. The reduction in funding and resources by the Coalition government for VET and employment services in favour of simplistic job matching and shallow preparation, inhibits the addressing of the more complex and debilitating factors (described by Respondent 1) that work as barriers against many people succeeding (ACOSS, 2002:1-13) in gaining a job or participating more fully in society.

"Most resources (in Job Network) are targeted at improving the job search skills and the employability of job seekers", (APC, 2002, 2.4)
Despite the rhetoric pushing this particular public policy since 1996, Job Network still has poor public recognition and penetration in the community as evidenced in the interviews with Respondents 1, 2, 3 and its probable effectiveness is reduced by limitations on access and information (APC, 2002, p.48). There is no observable or promoted cooperative integration and cohesive interaction between government service agencies such as health and education with participants and providers in the Job Network. It is an ideological act of faith model, within a subset of liberal economic and social ideologies and values depicted through the conceptual framework of this study and it has questionable measures of assessment of performance. Perhaps of greater concern is that Job Network is a politically inspired connivance arising out of the perceived failure of the public sector (CES), engendered and fostered by critics who engage in denigrating the value of public service work practices with long term damaging consequences and flow ons.

The researcher concludes that there is an overwhelming political desire and objective to rid the nation of support, and memory, for a Labor created initiative and has the Coalition has no desire to brook criticism. With the CES abolished and remnants placed in a new entity the government launched Job Network, diminishing the public asset base, both human and infrastructure, of the public enterprise and has not capitalised on the previous large investment in Working Nation, preferring to scrap key elements with which they did not ideologically
agree. There is no demonstrable recognition of the role and contribution of the 
bureaucracy and the differences between the objectives of the free market, 
private sector ideological theory and the responsibilities and objectives of the 
public service. This is application of an ideology which theorises that public 
services can be effectively, and more cheaply delivered by the private sector a 
belief which drives competition reforms, privatisation of public services and the 
sale of public assets (Beck, 1992, various). The evidence, which disputes this 
theory, particularly in relation to Job Network, is that Working Nation was a 
positive mechanism (APC, 2002, sections 5.1, 5.9) for assisting the 
disadvantaged whilst simultaneously developing human capital.

Despite the rhetoric of economic rationalism that implies otherwise, the public 
service does not budget maximise and over deliver, wasting public resources as 
the government would have us believe that the CES did. Allocation of funds and 
the manner of delivery is a bargaining process of powerful politicians and interests 
and the CES manifested its commitment through service and case management 
to the public it served. The individual integrity of public officers and the people 
who delivered programs, such as those described in the interviews, translated this 
commitment into a public performance that can be stated and valued through 
measurement (Ascher, 1987 in Crowther and Olgivie, p. 12) just as Respondent 4 
claims that Job Network can be.
In the view of the researcher, the loss of opportunity to establish Working Nation and the loss of assets of the CES along with wasted expenditures is so great as to cause antagonism and division within the professions, the community and the supporters of intervention management and training for the unemployed. Public servants in the CES and DEETYA have suffered criticism from the ideological and the uninformed in a critique based, not on fair and unbiased evaluation, but on anecdotal experience and fiction, misrepresentation and probable distortions. The abolition of the CES sent the clear message that their work and contribution was not highly valued just as VET, and its providers, are not highly valued by the government as assistants in the solving the social enigma that is unemployment. The motivation of government policy action in relation to strategy is one of profit to the government – both political and economic – and these motivations have lead to poor governance and solutions.

"The pursuit of profit, the primary motivation of commercial organisations, is a recipe for poor performance in government", (Ascher, 1987, p.12).

Finding Five: As to the question of the role and contribution of VET.

The researcher points to a great waste of human potential within Australia even if only because the government foregoes the opportunity to use mutual obligation to develop a gateway to lifelong learning for those whom would benefit from the
initial experience of VET. Government policy and action, along with industry and employer objectives, operates in a vacuum of mature and sophisticated debate and strategies for human capital development. The literature review found that Australia in 2002 is at the initial stages of researching literature and writing reviews as a precursor to engaging in a marketing campaign to test reaction of the nation to life long learning. ANTA's approach indicates a tentative caution as to how the issue might be progressed and this reticence further highlights the researcher's claim of immaturity of policy and planning where governments, for political expediency, refuse to confront hard and biased attitudes which are a direct consequence of a policy of "choice" and the failure to create our own, or emulate overseas nation's, strategies for LLL.

Education as a national objective appears doomed to the vagaries of individual choice with little motivation fostered by government and industry for anything other than getting a job. There is no fertilisation of the seeds of personal development through an introduction to life long learning via consistent standards of quality and training within the Coalition government funded employment services sector. On balance the research asserts that it is more probable that a Working Nation model would engender a desire for extended learning in some of the many thousands of clients, by opening the door to learning, framed within a much broader context of public and privately provided education and employment. Working Nation had the basic support services offered in Job
Network plus an opportunity of almost any type of nationally accredited VET, with articulation to higher education, and the extra one billion dollars in funding provided by the ALP. This latter amount was in effect additional spending on education and personal development services of high value to the community.

The training and case management services within Working Nation have been described by the Coalition, as both a waste and a fallacy. For the unemployed, Working Nation brought exposure to public and private education providers and successful industry individuals that could be role models for participants and these role models showed the value of education and a career. Respondent 1 tenders source material in his interview, which demonstrates an attempt by the ALP government to integrate the unemployment services strategy in a national framework of other strategies including education, competition policy and lifelong learning, espoused in the "Knowledge Nation" blue print (Chifley Research Centre, 2001), derided and relegated to the filing drawer. This is such a waste of opportunity and is demoralising to education professionals who grow disenchanted with political interests taking precedence over public interest.

Working Nation was an outworking of a decade where there had been bipartisan support for a planned approach with national consensus (Maglen, 1999, pp. 231 - 236) and the Coalition government has broken down this overall policy and planning framework abolishing national interactive networks between employers and providers that organisations such as the CES and DEETYA created, downsizing and under funding existing institutions creating a new ambiguity (Maglen,
1999, ibid) whilst eliminating VET as a central contribution. It is ironical that given all of this effort, by the Coalition, that the APC should opine that Job network has had negligible impact for its substantial outlays and reforming zeal.

Education and training is being reduced to a set of generic skills and framed as a system of dispensing narrowly defined information and competencies for the sole purpose of helping people to acquire skills (Aspin, 1997, pp. 171 - 187) for work. It is part of a sustained reform movement driven by government, in concert with business and industry, with conflicting trends and competing philosophies using education and training reform and employment services to further political and economic agendas (McKay, 199, pp. 61 - 70). The research exposes the rising tide of challengeable claims of efficiency by Australian governments, which masks a reduction in the quality of public policy and services in an attempt to reduce the level of resources invested by government. This research goes another step in exposing the continuing trend of the manipulation of economics and statistics behind the rhetoric to which researchers like Welch (1998, pp. 157 - 175) refer.

The focus on value for money, economical returns, employability, current theories of the place and value of education are a major impediment to the development of human capital of Australia. Government and business has lost sight of the individual development that is the very definition of education (Winning, 1993m, pp. 215 - 221). This, together with denigration of the unemployed by language, action and threats undermines not only peoples' opportunities to acquire
successful employment and social outcomes but also their notion of citizenship and their every day existence including active participation in the social and political life of the nation, family, recreation and the things to which government would have everyone aspire. Despite the efforts of interest groups to entrench their own agendas there are people, along with this researcher, who believe that education can underpin the functioning of the Australian labour market (Brynner (1998a, pp.4-15) whilst developing the nation for something other than a world of work.

Finding Six: As to the question of the extent of masking and misrepresentation by government.

The research finds that the limitation, or lack of research, systems and evaluation methodologies including data capture and investigation, deliberate constraint of debate, the conditions of contract placed on Job Network deliverers and the removal of statistics of Job Network performance from public gaze and interrogation, all contribute to a charge of extensive masking and misrepresentation by governments of their policy intents, actions and outcomes. The use of policy mechanisms as tools of authority, and compliance, in the political model hides the continuing merging of political party ideology leading to a common ground of belief in “mutual obligation and the social condition” and education for “employability” masking the reality, using various forms of representation particularly through political statements, about the success of Job
Network over Working Nation and the CES, and through the previous publication of statistics. The researcher sought out if there was any reliable source that would prove that there is a job for every person who wants one, where they reside or generally across the nation, and chapter five and the literature review, has demonstrated that there is not.

Further supporting the findings of masking and misrepresentation is the inherent design of Job Network itself. When a government contracts services, the risks and obligations on performance transfer to the contractors, quarantining the government from a direct line of accountability for poor performance by declining access to data on the grounds of commercial confidentiality but leaving it open to claim success. Performance measurement, and the balances and checks of government regulatory processes and examination by parliament, can be deferred, whilst the system is tweaked and altered. The researcher has interrogated the available data on the performance of Job Network and examined the independent review conducted by the APC has concluded that Job Network does not perform as claimed. Other critics and independent reviewers have stated as much and the data on the performance of Job Network no longer appears on the DEWR web site.

Given all of this the researcher asserts that it is vital in a democratic society to challenge claims when government campaigns, designed to influence social behaviour in relation to welfare and work, are increasing in prominence (Tanner,
1999, p.202). The instruments of debate information question and exchange are quite deliberately controlled and limited in relation to Job Network and public policy debate much more so than in Working Nation, which actually did not exist long enough to adequately, and fairly, gauge its impact. The proposition that economics and mutual obligation holds the ultimate solution to solving unemployment has gained ascendancy in both major parties and up until the end of the 80s the payment of social security to the unemployed was a passive system with little applied obligation. There has been a gradual shifting, by the ALP, to an economic, mutual obligation view of unemployment, with attendant shaping characteristics through case management and VET and the researcher contends that they were also used as masking agents in the intent of customising the relationship between the recipient of welfare and the government.

"The introduction of case management and mutual obligation has helped customise the relationship between state and beneficiary", (Tanner, 1999, p.2).

The researcher concludes that case management was coupled with the tools of authority in the dynamics of power and cultural hegemony (Dissertation Abstracts, 2000, p.1791A) as masking the intent of shaping and the ideology of the market eventually captured Labor party policy.
RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This research is at the contemporary, cutting edge of the examination of government policy in relation to unemployment services and the role of VET in Australia. The reader may note this thesis paralleled the APC (3/2002) review in both timeframe and research. The questioning of published outcomes by DEWR, ahead of the rising political and community debate of the worth and merits of the government's Job Network and the investment in opportunity (or lack thereof) in human capital, is a debate yet to be seriously had. This thesis is effectively a work in progress upon which others may build and hopefully will do so.

The recommendations for future research are:

6.1 Analysis of the outcomes for Job Network measured against the available number of jobs and types, organised in category from those of a 'low quality' to high quality, reported for every region in Australia.

6.2 The weighting factors of the influences in the decision to employ through surveys completed by employers at the time of actual interview or shortly thereafter.
6.3 The possession of VET qualifications.

6.4 Why people choose not to engage in education?

6.5 Why do certain employers not value education and training?

6.6 The incidence of ideology (acts of faith) in implementing public policy.

6.7 Other tools of authority, and beliefs, used in the transformation of the political hegemony of the Australian Labor Party and the relationship of that transformation to the nation's psyche and attitudes affecting their support for, and voting patterns and within this the proposition of the indistinguishable positioning of the ALP and Coalition.

6.8 Research into the incidence and use of published materials, which appear to distort, omit or misrepresent the impact and performance of government policy and outcomes in Australia and the performance of ministries.

6.9 Research into the formation and components of a comprehensive strategy to utilise all of the talents and capabilities of Australians.
BIBLIOGRAPHY


Aspiring to Excellence, see Australian Senate, Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee (2000).


Edsall, S. (1998). Three years of ideological, political and budgetary attack, the Howard government. In *Education* v.79, n.7, 4-5. ISSN 00131156.


257


Millikan, Ross, H. (Dr.). *A Step – By – Step Approach To Thesis Writing.* University of Melbourne Institute of Education.


Watson, Louise, (1999). Outputs and outcomes from different education and training sectors. Project of the Lifelong Learning Network, Faculty of Education at the University of Canberra, Australia.


Appendices

Appendix 1    Mail Out Inviting Participation.

20 July 2000

MASTER LETTER

The Human Research Ethics Committee, of the University of Melbourne, has given approval for research into the effects of vocational education on employment opportunity, to be undertaken by myself, as a part of my study for the award of Master of Education. This research will be carried out under the supervision of Mr. Paul Hanrahan, M.Ed, who may be contacted at the University by telephone. I may be contacted on email or by telephone.

The central questions of the research are:

How are the job prospects of unemployed people enhanced when vocational education and training becomes the responsibility of the employment agency? Has vocational education as a support strategy been subsumed, or lost in the reform process?

Literature reviews of sources in the fields of sociology and education are being included in this research together with a study of published data by government departments, analysis of debates in parliament and a study of the Hansard records.

It is planned to interview a number of people in government, industry and academia. We would be most appreciative of your valued contribution. The interview, for about 45 minutes duration, is conducted through a face to face process based on the attached questionnaire at an agreed location and time between September 2000 and preferably the end of the year. However we are able to extend this out to March 2001 if need be. The research will be published upon completion in mid 2002.

It is intended that interviewees will remain anonymous subject to legal limitations, through use of a coding process, unless they expressly choose to be identified and quoted or acknowledged. Although the size of interview sample, and status of the people, may mean that anonymity is difficult to guarantee. All materials collected in interview are confidential, again subject to legal limitations. All participants in the research will be acknowledged in the Appendix and a copy of the final thesis will be made available through publication on the net.

It is intended, with participant approval, to tape interviews. All tapes, data and material, will be retained, unless otherwise requested, for a minimum period of five
years. The researchers intend that this work will form part of an ongoing program and the material therefore may be retained beyond this period.

Only the two researchers, named above, will have access although participants are advised that legal limitations on this guarantee, and other access, may apply in certain circumstances.

Participants may withdraw from the research at any time up to, and during the interview process, and may ask that any unprocessed materials that they specifically provided or copies of interviews be returned or destroyed.

If the participant should have any concerns arising from the conduct of the research they should contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010. Telephone 03 8344 4071 or fax 0393476739.

I thank you in anticipation of your favourable response.

Yours sincerely
Kevin R Beck
CONSENT FORM

I, ___________________________ (full name) hereby consent to being interviewed and for the interview to be tape recorded. I further agree to the published acknowledgement of my contribution, in the Appendix of the research thesis and any documents or publications arising from that research.

I may choose to have my interview particularly identified realising that to do so I will have waived my right to anonymity. I may reconsider this up and until the final draft of the content of my particular interview, a copy of which I will receive as notice of the deadline.

I, acknowledge that I may withdraw up to the time of preparation, and receipt, of the final draft of my contribution to the research and if I do so my personal comments and opinions will be removed from the final draft documentation.

I understand that should I choose to withdraw my overall contribution may still form a part of the finished research provided that my identity is not published and the contribution is referred to as an overall impression or conclusion arising out of the research and findings.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: ___________________________

Contact Details: ___________________________

PLEASE FAX YOUR SIGNED CONSENT FORM TO:

Kevin R BECK

(Reference: Attachment to the consent letter - K R Beck – University of Melbourne Research)
Proposed Standard Questionnaire

Semi Structured Interview Content (consistent for all interviews)

Please state your name and occupation.
What association do you have, if any, with the past and present policy making of government in relation to the delivery of employment services or vocational or other education within such services? Was this a paid association? What was your specific role? For example have you debated the issue of inclusion of vocational education in any parliament or public forum, worked on establishment or implementation, been a member of an ITAB or other body, engaged in contractual implementation with providers or in any research activity or any other forum or participation? Do you support the formal, directed or optional, inclusion of vocational education training in the delivery of employment services support as a means of increasing employability? Yes/No Why?
Do you have any evidence, data or other sources to which you may wish to refer the researchers, to support your views or statements made in this interview? If so name the sources.
Should vocational education be mandatorily included? Yes/No Do you employ, in your office, business or department any person/s who have been recipients of such employment services programs, or placed as trainees or recruited from agencies under contract to the government? If so, did they receive training prior to joining your organisation? Do you have a view on the success of the past system? Do you have evidence to support this view? If so the sources? Do you have a view on the present system? Do you have evidence to reinforce this view? If so the sources?

(Reference: Attachment to Consent letter - K R Beck, University of Melbourne Research)
Appendix 2 Backgrounds of Contributors and Interview Transcripts

Appendix 2.1 Respondent 1

University graduate (honours) was elected to the Commonwealth Parliament of Australia, in the House of Representatives in 1996. Respondent 1 has very strong credentials in policy formulation relative to unemployment services and welfare and was an advocate prior to entry to parliament.

R.Q1 Would you please state your name and occupation.

R1, Q 1: Respondent 1, Federal Parliamentarian.

R.Q2. What association do you have, if any, with the past and present policy making of government in relation to the delivery of employment services or vocational or other education within such services and was this a paid association?

R1, Q2: My initial involvement goes back to my service as xxx with xxx, prior to parliament, and through discussions held with the then Labor Government for the development and implementation of Working Nation. When I was elected to the House of Representatives, I continued to be involved extensively up until October 1999. So I have been employed in a policy sense over that period.

R, Q3: What was your specific role? For example have you debated the issue of inclusion of vocational education in any parliament or public forum, worked on establishment or implementation, been a member of an ITAB or other body, engaged in contractual implementation with providers or in any research activity or any other forum or participation?

R1, Q3: The original intent of working nation was (if I remember rightly) a twelve billion dollar commitment over four years to try to assist the unemployed. It was very much related to pushing them into training opportunities potentially related to either re-skilling them or getting them back into the discipline to be able to undertake additional training for the purposes of getting them into paid employment. Later I was directly involved from the Labor Party's point of view in actually thinking through policy positions we would pursue in government.

3 Identities are protected; other identifiers are replaced with xxx.
I suppose the approach that was taken tried to make sure that any training programme that was delivered was initially involved with respect of long-term unemployed to get them job ready. That went to a range of issues from getting them back into the discipline of work, also in some instances of getting people to face up to their personal problems, drug and alcohol related or difficulties with domestic violence. It was then a question of those who were ready to undertake training and getting the others into shape.

To actually try and make sure that training that was delivered was a stepping-stone to career development and skills development. Hence we sought to make sure that the delivery of employment services was as much as possible related to skills development with the assistance of vocational education.

R Q4: Do you support the formal, directed or optional, inclusion of vocational education training in the delivery of employment services support as a means of increasing employability?

R1, Q4: Running employment services without a focus on skills, which in turn is vocational education, is not necessarily a good use of tax payers money. Employment services are obviously about trying to get people into employment. A part of getting people into employment is also making sure that they have the skills that make them employable. Part of that can be commenced in the lead up to getting them a job, alternatively it can be ongoing once they obtained a job either through institutions such as TAFES beyond the workplace or alternatively through on-the-job training. So I think in essence that you don't have a decent employment service unless you also focus on skills and vocational education.

R Q5: Are you of the firm opinion that vocational education does increase employability?

R1, Q5: Vocational education, which is about skills, provided they are relevant to potentially opportunities, in a given region, and are fundamental to employability. There is going to be more and more the case in the future because we are going to have to develop Kim Beazley's Knowledge Nation, an ongoing capacity to retrain people in a variety of occasions throughout their working life. Vocational education and training is therefore fundamental to the nation's future if Australia is to compete on the basis of its skills not low wages and conditions of employment.

R, Q6: Going back to your earlier point. You were talking about people of differing backgrounds and you referred to drugs and obvious barriers of different and disabilities. From your experience and according to the research I have undertaken it appears that a person has to first jump hurdles to make the actual outcome work. In Working Nation did you find that out of the unemployed population of Australia there
was a large percentage that were barrier driven before they could even get the vocational outcome?

R1, Q6: If you trace the history of employment services and the payment of unemployment relief in Australia you will find that from the period when unemployment was initially introduced after the second world war up until the 1980s, when Brian Howe commenced the social security review, unemployment benefits were basically regarded as passive payments because it was generally thought that a person would be unemployed only for a short term. They would then be able to quickly find a job. In the 1980s we discovered we were basically coming up within the unemployment pool with a different variety of people, some of which were young, some of which were middle aged, some of which were middle aged unemployed. With respect to the long-term unemployed there is a special need to basically invest in trying to get them into shape by getting them job ready. It was amongst those people especially those who had been long unemployed we found special barriers. There was one (say) person who has been unemployed for an extended period, a person who intends to get into what is described as socially unacceptable behaviour patterns, being an unwillingness to get up in the morning to go and search for jobs alternatively because of a sense of desperation they have to rely on drugs or get into bad habits relating to domestic violence or they just don't have the skills such as literacy and numeracy. They finished school at an age that could have been acceptable in days gone by but in this day and age are not acceptable because you actually have to acquire those fundamentals for the purposes of employment and ongoing training. So that took us in Working Nation to the very important issue of case management. Actually assessing the individual needs and weaknesses of particular people, trying to tailor programmes that overcome their barriers and having invested in overcoming their barriers, the building on that success and trying to get them into proper skills development and employment. You can't separate case management in some instances from vocational education and training and skills development.

R, Q7: Do you have any evidence, data or other sources to which you may wish to refer the researchers; to support your views or statements made in this interview? If so name the sources.

R1, Q7: The starting point for this is Working Nation and the White Paper considered by cabinet, which lead to the announcements going to Working Nation and the ongoing review. In that context I would remind you that the issue of so-called 'mutual obligation' is really the Labor Party concept of reciprocal obligation, which was in essence a sense of discipline. If you did not face up to your responsibilities you would be breached. The Labor Party chose not to call it 'work for the dole'. Because whilst the Liberal Party see it as attractive electorally, we actually erred on the side of putting the pressure on the people rather than humiliating by painting the concept of "you are in essence working for the dole because you are useless and we are going
to get brownie points by being seen to basically threaten you that you will not get benefits unless you do what you are told”.

The discipline was always there under Working Nation. We had a different approach that was implemented and how it was described for public purposes. Here, take these.

The researcher records that at this point in the interview Respondent 1 provided the following hard copy references, which were returned them to Parliament House Canberra, six weeks later.


R, Q8: Should vocational education be mandatorily included?

R1, Q8: Any smart employer should invest in the training of their workforce, which is about vocational education. That skilling of the workforce can actually give an employer the cutting edge in terms of competition, be it in the services or manufacturing industry, or whatever. The better skilled one's workers are, the more competitive one is as a business. I regard it as an imperative. Any employer who is not willing to invest in the training of their workforce is actually holding back the potential of that business.

R, Q9: My reading of the current Job Network system is that the provider decides what level of services they will deliver for the dollars they are given and that things
like vocational education are optional at the insistence of the provider. Do you think that they should be mandatorily in Job Network contracts?

R1, Q9: There is a range of weaknesses of the Job Network. Firstly the Labor Party believes there are actually ought to be an independent organisation monitoring the performance of the Job Network. In terms of competition policy we don't find it acceptable that the seller of the service, namely the Department of Employment, is actually the organisation also monitoring the performance of the service.

Going to the issue of grades of payments made available to Job Network providers depending on one's employability ranges from simple matching to so-called intensive assistance. We find it difficult to accept, especially with respect to the long-term unemployed those who are a little more difficult to find employment for, that the payments are not made by the government on the basis of certain services being made available to the unemployed. We actually think there should be more accountability and a greater requirement for those network providers to actually use that money to get people job ready. That can mean anything from trying to assist them to get to an interview, alternatively it could mean buying them safety boots, if one is able to obtain a job for the purpose of being able to start that work. And in many instances trying to give them the basics in assistance with overcoming a personal problem or alternatively trying to get them into a training programme that helps them get a job.

So the Labor Party was on the side of actually saying there should be more accountability, and a greater requirement for providers to do more for the unemployed.

R, Q10: Is that the only view you have on the present system? Could you refer me to critiques, Hansard or..... (interrupt) ... R1 returned shortly thereafter and continued.

R1, Q10: I think you should start looking at the speeches of Cheryl Kernot. She has made a couple of speeches this year. It is now her responsibility where she has offered up some criticism of the network. The Labor Party was moving towards a competitive model and we had actually put some of our employment assistance programmes out to community organisations. It was always a question of how you did it. There is nothing wrong with the competitive model provided that it works properly and there is proper accountability. We don't think the government's approach at the lowest tender price is necessarily the correct approach and nor do we accept that there shouldn't be an independent organisation monitoring the performance of the network.

R, Q11: In your role of (ibid) have you observed around Australia a patch work quilt effect, where service delivery under the CES not being there anymore, is it fragmented?
R1, Q11: You will find around Australia both in metropolitan Australia and regional Australia that the level of service has varied. For example, operating in a strong labour market obviously they see a greater opportunity to get payments for the purpose of providing the service. Alternatively it is fair to say the government has had to try and create a special opportunity in (what is described as) tough labour markets to get the job network providers to operate there because there is no easy money. So in whatever system operates there is always going to be a requirement that government, in the sluggish labour market, to actually err on the side of an additional investment for the purposes of community service. That is the community service obligation otherwise you will find that network providers are just not interested in those tough labour markets where there is no easy money.

R, Q12: You've used the term `easy money'. Under the old Working Nation system the government paid an average all up fee of $4,200 for a specific type of service. Do you think the Auditor General activity, in looking at what benefits are being obtained, in the current system versus the past, is better or lesser?

R1, Q12: You can't compare apples with oranges. Working Nation is an entirely different approach. It actually erred on the side of treating people as human beings and investing in their special difficulties in trying to make sure they got the skills.

I think in a market in which employment has improved, and I would like to remind you that at the last election the Labor Party said that we would get to five percent unemployed. They're down to about six and a half; we could have done better through the use of such things as proper case management and skills development. You can't necessarily do the comparison because they are entirely different systems and you also have to examine the nature of the labour market at a given time and try and factor in what the real proper comparison is.

R, Q13: The ABS has been criticised, researchers claim that the figures for unemployment are fundamentally incorrect. The hidden unemployment is above ten percent instead of six point five. Do you accept the government's proposition or do you have a feel on the ABS?

R1, 13: To be fair the method of classifying someone as unemployed tends to be consistently applied to the government irrespective of which political party is in power. If you want to change that definition of what is unemployed then that is a debate you should have.

But look. It is fair to say that there are always some in the community who are really unemployed but don't officially register for whatever reason. Some for example give up if they live in an area of very few jobs. I think the biggest problem now is not the definition of unemployment but probably the fact that some areas are not getting the
benefit of the job growth that is seen to have occurred nationally. That goes back to
the need for suburbs and regions to actually do a little bit more. That's where you
actually have programmes similar to that which we had under Working Nation.

R, Q14: Do you employ, in your office, business or department any person/s who
have been recipients of such employment services programmes, or placed as
trainees or recruited from agencies under contract to the government?

R1, 14: Not at the moment. Since I have been a Member of Parliament we have
actually had people work in the office some on a voluntary basis, for the purpose of
getting experience, but not in this job. But in my previous job as xxx we actually had
active programmes such as under Working Nation through xxx picking up people and
employing them within the xxx and other associated xxx.

R, Q15: Obviously they were recipients of vocational education and training as a part
of their programme?

R1, 15: They were encouraged not only to participate in training provided on the job
but also to go beyond that and to take up opportunities in the community to actually
train. The xxx as employers, made a contribution to the cost of that training for
reimbursement on success.

R, Q16: Has vocational education as a support strategy been subsumed or lost in the
reform process of employment services in Australia?

R1, Q16: It is fair to say that in the Job Network, vocational education is not seen as
being as strong as it was under Working Nation. There is also criticism of the state
governments when it goes to the issue of vocational education in Tafe generally that
the government has been unwilling to support the system as much as the previous
Labor government because they have said that growth should come out of so called
'efficiencies.'

If you actually do the costing, the cost of providing a programme does vary from state
to state or territory to state and from region to region. There have been difficulties in
some states with respect to capacity to actually provide additional places because of
the (federal) government's approach to funding. (INTERVIEW END)
Appendix 2.2. Respondent 2.

Respondent 2 is a senior executive in an employer association. It is a registered association and represents thousands of small and medium size businesses across Australia employing well over 100,000 people in a multitude of occupations under federal award conditions. It represents employer interests to both state and federal governments and in formal environments such as the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

Respondent 2 is also a qualified pharmacist and has served on statutory advisory committees. Respondent 2 completed legal studies through the NSW Barristers Admission Board at Sydney University. Respondent 2 has authored professional publications. Respondent 2 has recognised status before the Australian Industrial Relations Commission and was a member of an Industry Training Board. Respondent 2 was also a member of a committee that oversaw the introduction of competency-based training and classifications to particular industry, nation wide.

Researcher (R): Would you please state your name and occupation?

R2: Respondent 2, Industrial Relations and Human Resources Manager.

R, Q1: What association do you have, if any, with the past and present policy making of government in relation to the delivery of employment services or vocational or other education within such services and was this a paid association?

R2, Q1: Well I have had two industry sector involvements. Firstly in the early nineties, 92, 94, actually 93 when I was the xxx representative on an ITAB. Indeed I was the xxx. I was responsible for the provision of training services to people wishing to enter the retail workforce.

I was also responsible for the split up of the ITAB to take its training part away from its policy advising part so that it became retail ITAB in essence, according to what the government required at the time. It had a conflict of interest in that it was not representing all trainers so we took the training responsibilities away, and I was responsible for that. Then we set up with the xxx now xxx, a proper training organisation and the ITAB was left with its core responsibility, which was to advise government on the xxx industry. Switching to my current industry I was involved, from the beginning, with one of the biggest job programmes that had (been) with Department of Education (DEET) Department of Employment Education and Training that they were involved in. And that was a project in which I was the relevant officer for the xxx in co-operating with xxx to provide for many long-term unemployed people.
with training, with a six-month training programme, to enter the workforce. That was a project that cost the government xxx and was one of the most successful run, in that, something, in the order of 63% of the people that were trained in that programme were in a job six months after the completion of training. Which was the guideline used at the time. So yes I had considerable experience and considerable input with the provision of services to the jobless and even training for current workplace participants.

R, Q2: In that project, for the long-term unemployed, was there an element of on the job work experience required as well as the vocational training to make it work?

R2, Q2: Yes there was. In fact without the on the job training the project could not have possibly worked, and we had people, whom I said, long-term unemployed, some of whom had not been part of a workforce in any shape or form for a considerable period of time. And without actually having the work experience at a work place rather than the cold classroom style of training, I suppose, or the 'make work' type of training that can be conducted in isolated academia. It was a practical down to earth work based type of training system whereby the people were placed in (numerous work locations), across the state and I mean right across the state both country and city, so that they mostly, well, the results speak for themselves, 63%, had a good experience at work and were able to continue on with their careers in the xxx (industry). Indeed I found, it came across in my work as the Industrial Relations Manager for xxx that a number of people in that programme were still working in the xxx division of xxx in the xxx and were doing so throughout the Olympic period last year.

R, Q3: Could I infer from your remarks that you are of the opinion that employment services must involve both vocational education and work experience, integrated, or can you separate them?

R2, Q3: Well you can separate them but I mean if you want the ideal system you have to put them together. I mean there is no point in having vocational education in isolation. It certainly has a good introduction, for example, at some of the schools' projects that are going on are very good giving school children (I should say school persons) an insight into industry. In our case, the xxx industry visits to schools, involving people and giving them an idea what the xxx industry is all about. That obviously is a useful background but if you really want to give people vocational education you really do have to give them experience on the job. Now to do that you need the co-operation of employers, fellow employees, trainers, and most essentially, and underwritten by, government

R, Q4: Do you have any documentation, reports or material, sources that you could provide that would underpin your opinions and show for example that your theory of inclusion of what you have just described actually delivers the outcomes? For
example, can you support with documentary evidence your assertion of around 63% success based on that model?

R2, Q4: I don't have the papers I believe that they are with the xxx organisation and with DEET (respondent means DEETYA or now DETYA). I certainly didn't receive other than copies of the reports at the time that they put in the archives. I do not have them.

R, Q5: Should vocational education be mandatorily included within employment services? I am talking about the employment services model that replaced the CES under the federal government's Job Network Programme.

R2, Q5: Well, when you say compulsory, do you mean that anybody entering this programme must do vocational education and training in a workplace? I mean I think if you do that you are rather restricting your options. It should be included in it but it has to be optional. Not everybody is suited to go immediately into a workplace to commence training. You would have to do some preliminary work with these people. So rather than making it mandatory I would certainly make it mandatory that it be part of the services that are given by this particular department but to say that it is mandatory to me conjures up a picture that everyone has to go to work sometime. Now there is nothing wrong with that but it takes away the flexibility. You've got to build in some form of flexibility so that the people concerned can judge a particular individual on their own circumstances.

R, Q6: I am trying to flush out your opinion on the current Job Network system which makes certain services optional at the hands of the provider against your DEETYA programme you referred to, where the Commonwealth dictated that there must be an element of vocational training which was twelve (12) weeks and there must be an element of work experience, and the government said that the provider could indicate what the vocational training would be. They didn't set it, but they mandatorily stated that it had to be there.

R2, Q6: Yes, well that is certainly a better model. I mean when in fact you look at the programme we were involved in it was one of the last that was approved by the then Keating government just before they lost office in March of 1996. Now there had been an awful lot of time, money and energy spent on similar programmes in various industries but I think I can safely say that in the case of the xxx (industry) one, we got it right. We finally achieved what all the other programmes had been looking to do. And it was a nice mix, I have to pay due credit to the xxx organisation who were involved at the time in setting the thing up and will also take some of the credit to my own organisation, the xxx and my involvement. But we got it right.

R, Q7: How did you get it right?
R2, Q7: We got it right by choosing, first of all, (pause) the guaranteeing of funding from the federal government. That was the underpinning thing for the whole lot. We turned what people were receiving as unemployment benefits into a wage. They were actually paid a wage while they were on the programme and in return for that wage they participated in vocational training and they participated in work training, that is they participated in training at work. Now that combination, underpinning government funding, (for example we have work for the dole at the moment, and my observation and my opinion only is that work for the dole is rather a useless means by which people are forced to, quote ‘do something’, unquote) in return for their dole. Well would it not be better to go to what we were doing, and what was achieved with our training course, and pay them the dole in the form of a wage.

It doesn’t become a dole for doing nothing it becomes a wage for actual useful work done while training so that they can enter the workforce and have a job at the end of the period. That surely is what the aim is. You can keep people on the dole, make it very difficult for them to get the dole and you can make them work at cleaning streets or whatever happens to be the latest local project reminiscent of the old, discredited “Red Scheme” of the early seventies. But if you pay your money you should expect people in return to take training, take working and receive a wage. I think it is a far better system.

R, Q8: Some would say that the old Working Nation system allowed employers e.g. your members, to have the federal government underwrite their wage bill using trainees in lieu of part time or permanent employees.

R2, Q9: Well I suppose that is an accusation that can be made and there is obviously a certain truth in it among people. There is no two ways about it. I would be the last to suggest that all our members are only motivated by an attempt to assist ‘out of work’ people to find a job. But that really is overstating that part of the programme. It was never like that. It was never intended, and never was, in the broad terms a system for cheap labour. Yes, it was cheap but no cheaper than trainees are today as the government continues to subsidise trainees. I still have members who employ trainees and the National Training Wage is still in existence. So you could say that, those that say anybody who uses trainees is looking to reduce their wages. Well they are.

R, Q10: Does xxx have an involvement in any employment services placement programme currently with any state or federal government?

R2, Q10: Not at the moment. Not that I am aware of.

R, Q11: Has there literally been no further programme since the Working Nation programme was suspended by....
R2, Q11: No further involvement certainly from our viewpoint. There has been some work done at the federal level I understand but that is more in the area of importing labour from overseas (response modified by researcher: ibid). We have a relationship with the Department of Immigration and the apprentice system of course. We had input into the new apprentice system and that's about as far as it's gone. There are no official programmes that we (we used in lieu of the name of the organisation) are involved in that I am aware of with respect to trainees.

R, Q12: Have you got any feeling for the membership using the Job Network system throughout the state? How many members have you got?

R2, Q12: Well there are xxx locations and we have the bulk of those and that gives you some idea and they would employ about 120,000 people. There is no actual formal programme out there. This office receives calls from members with respect to the employment of apprentices and trainees on a regular basis. We would probably handle in that particular area maybe three or four calls a week. Which isn't huge from that number of members but never the less there is a constant stream of people entering the industry as trainees and some of our members are very active in that area.

R, Q13: Do you have any trainees or employ, in your office, business or department any person/s who have been recipients of such employment services programmes, or placed as trainees or recruited from agencies under contract to the government?

R2, Q13: Yes we do. We usually have one but we have two at the moment who have just joined us. Two trainees just finished their year's traineeship – clerical and administrative traineeship. One has remained on the full time staff, the other one left to seek other opportunities. We've now just put two further administrative trainees on board, one in the training department and one in the accounts department. Yes I'd say we are active in that area.

R, Q14: Do they undertake vocational training as a part of workplace training?

R2, Q14: Well what they do is they do their day at Tafe and they do their training on the job here.

R, Q15: Has vocational education as a support strategy been subsumed or lost in the reform process of employment services in Australia? A number of policy papers and interviews (I have done) focus on the word 'skills' and 'competency', especially in my interview with Respondent 1, on the previous Labor government programme. The word 'skills' crops up continuously and I am interested in your own opinion and experience as to whether you think 'skills training and competency training' adds to employability or there should be a need to broaden that definition and take in a more
general education teaches people as part of their workplace, to communicate, to think, to anticipate and to plan?

R2, Q15: What you are saying is that there is 'vocational education' and 'education.' They are two separate streams of education surely. You are saying that vocational education will give me the pure skills, for example in xxx (industry), starting from scratch I learn how to do xxx properly. I then learn how to xxx. Do xxx. I learn perhaps how to xxx, all those skills that I can achieve through my vocational education. You give no, or have no respect for my general education that allows me to communicate appropriately in the workforce, in coping with my fellow workers. So then you can have someone who is highly skilled in terms of the job they do but absolutely impossible to deal with from an industrial viewpoint. Where they don't understand that they actually have to perhaps expect, well – take a specific example, and I always love the xxx because that is probably the best example of the lot where you have creative people like xxx.

These people are notoriously flighty people, they tend not to accept (for want of a better word) cheeky staff, staff who can't communicate with their boss, who have no social skills, who are very good at their trade. That's recipe for an industrial disaster and I have picked up the pieces on many of those. If the person concerned, as well as getting their vocational skills, had been given a rounded education, perhaps the study of the history of such a trade might assist, a bit of reading on that, perhaps writing skills, things of that nature, social skills, can go along with it. That's an ideal I am pointing out.

Education to me has always been giving the person the power of how to think for themselves. I mean the skills are fine, you have to have the skills, if you can't think for yourself you'll be a drone for the rest of your life. Now, some people like being a drone for the rest of their life but if I want a nice happy workforce, providing a nice happy atmosphere and a nice happy appearance to the outside, I've got a recipe for success in business – its success is people. I think that is very important, I think probably overlooked.

R, Q16: Is there a trend, in your opinion, in your industry sector for employers to say – "I'm only interested in the skill, the competency, the minimum I need to get them to work and that's all I want"? Is there a narrowing down of the job and the requirement? And in your view do ITAB's contribute to that in any way?

R2, Q16: That's a hard question to answer. There's a mixed reaction out there. We have a number of divisions in this organisation. There is a difference in attitude between the divisions.

Your average business owner is not terribly interested in the rounded education of an employee they are more interested in whether they can do the job. Doing the job of
course does involve some social skills. You can't have the best technically skilled
person in Australia but who is very reluctant to talk to people, has no smile on their
face and doesn't do all of the other things that is very necessary for that business. So
that's probably an attitude that is in the smaller country areas.

When you get into the city areas, where the pace is so much greater, again business
owners who employ people in their business wants them to work and work quickly.
Now they're not terribly interested in whether they can read Shakespeare. Is this the
sort of thing you are talking about?

R, Q17: Yes. Can we take that, from your experience, the employer in the interview
doesn't really care if vocational training per se, and the certificate is there, if there are
other factors like experience, attitude, demeanour and personality. Are there other
factors that are going to eliminate or overshadow vocational education as being a
factor which employment generates from?

R2, Q17: Well there is no doubt that if you have a piece of paper that says that you
are competent in certain things, that you are competent to work as a prescribed
person within the federal award, competent in all aspects (modified response, ibid) If
you've got a piece of paper that says that well that's probably the minimum
requirement. Now at interview assuming that there is more than one person being
interviewed for a job, the other things that a good manager looks for are the very
ones that you mentioned, the dress, the appearance and the attitude at interview. So
that's the case with all jobs. Without that basic vocational education, without that
basic bit of paper, you don't get to first base, generally. Well there are some people
who con themselves into jobs and you find out later that they can't do them.
Essentially without that bit of paper you don't get a job.

R, Q18: Do the people, who come to work here, the trainees, do they have to have
any prior vocational training or education before they can apply to you to be a
trainee?

R2, Q18: No, not at all.

R, Q19: Do you have a view on the present Job Network and contracting system, in
comparison the former Commonwealth Employment Service, especially keeping in
mind access to remote services for your members in rural parts of the state.

R2, Q20: Well there are no two ways about it. The old CES was in every town and
city in this state. So that none of our members, with one or two exceptions, in the
very outback were very far away from a CES. People in places like xxx for example.
I recall a case involving a trainee in xxx (location) that we had an industrial problem
with but nevertheless that trainee had been supplied by the local CES. Now xxx is a
town which is, like most of the rural areas, not just in this state, but across Australia
that is shrinking. Obviously the CES is no longer there. Now the contractors, whether they're providing that service they certainly are not providing the service that the CES did. I have to say this, the CES was not always the greatest, certainly it was never an organisation that I thought couldn't be reformed. The problems that I had in originally negotiating with DEET via the CES to have that project up and running back in 1996. The previous two years were a nightmare dealing with a bureaucracy, which was really something that I found it quite difficult to deal with. So I suppose from that viewpoint if you reform the bureaucracy that are actually running the CES one could bring back the CES in another guise ensuring that the services we all want are available to everybody. The withdrawal of the CES from rural areas just compounded the withdrawal of banks, the withdrawal of post offices and the withdrawal of other services in regional areas and we are seeing the effect of that now. A very angry group of people out there, including our members who spend an awful lot of time ringing me and this office seeking extra services.

We are not in position to provide them but we do go out of way to assist country members probably to a greater extent than our city membership who have so much more advantages. To the contractors themselves, I don't know. I haven't dealt with contractors directly so I am not in a position to comment on their carrying out of the job the government has given them via the contract. I am aware of the publicity that has surrounded the chopping and changing that has occurred over the years. I can do no more than regret.

R, Q21: Let's explore that issue. You've had no contact with contractors who, supposedly in the structure of job network, search out clients, and you would think that they would undertake steps to develop their business. Under the old system I am lead to believe that you were constantly approached by organisations like xxx or other training centres seeking to be involved in ventures in training, job employment services and so on. Would that be a valid claim?

R2, Q22: A very valid claim. We were constantly in touch with the actual department because for a number of years, right through the nineties, up until the government changed in '96 and for a little while after that it was phased out. We had an officer of the Department working out of this office.

R, Q23: An officer of DEETYA?

R2, Q23: An officer of DEET, as it was, and then DEETYA, actually worked out of this office seeking training opportunities.

R, Q24: So you have had no contact with the federal department of Employment, Education and Training since this federal government came to power.

R2, Q24: None that I am consciously aware of. I haven't seen anyone.
R, Q25: Since your programme ended?

R2, Q25: Yes. Absolutely none. They haven't bothered.

R, Q26: How do you view that?

R2, Q26: Well it's a disgrace. This organisation is a conduit to small business, the employers, employing approximately 120,000 people across xxx in a key industry.

R, Q27: Does the state department of Employment Education and Training liaise or have contact with you?

R2, Q27: We have access, that's the wrong word, yes we do have liaison with them but the employment for apprentices, we don't have a close relationship but I have all the appropriate numbers on my wall here for referring our members and we do have some contact with them (the state), but the feds, no.

R, Q28: Anything you would like to add?

R2, Q28: No, not really. I would be very pleased to see, given the experience of the last ten years, that I have had in training, certainly in the last year or two, I would like to see the government, be it an incoming Labor government or a Liberal (if one could persuade it to do something, which is doubtful) to recreate the model we had before. (and) try and eliminate the difficulties we had before. That will require a fair bit of work obviously. You can't just slash a pen and get rid of the contractors and reintroduce a CES. That would be a backward step. What you can do is take the current system and take the best bits of the current system and marry it with the best bits of the previous system and come up with something that does underpin proper vocational education and training.

Appendix 2.3  

Respondent 3

Respondent 3 is a senior executive of a major multinational corporation, a global manufacturing conglomerate headquartered in the United States of America. Respondent 3 has 20 years experience directing and managing marketing teams in driving sales of a wide range of products within complex and simple channel structures.

Respondent 3 has driven accelerated growth of products with major successes including product development in overseas plants and global brand acquisitions.
Respondent 3 has set in place a strategy representing a sizeable and profitable category with targets reaching over eighty (80) million dollars in revenue. Respondent 3 has built innovative operational, field teams and paved new directions in financial modelling of product equipment segments.

Prior to this employment engagement Respondent 3 managed diverse and challenging businesses in hardware and leisure segments where team development and management of new product portfolios were fundamental drivers of success.

Respondent 3 holds a Bachelor of Business from Monash University, Melbourne, and has completed international training programmes on staff and product development.

R: Would you please state your name and occupation?

R3: Respondent 3, Manager, Category Development, xxx.

R, Q1: Do you support the formal, directed or optional, inclusion of vocational education training in the delivery of government contracted employment services support as a means of increasing employability of a person?

R3, Q1: No.

R, Q2: Why?

R3, Q2: Whilst I am not, and my peers are not, familiar with the Government policy on vocational education programmes, I have answered no because I feel that the employing organisations should hold the responsibility for vocational training and include recruitment and training as a base entry level role for all functions. Many companies are doing this in conjunction with universities, and I cannot think of reasons why this is not achievable at all levels of education from year 10 upward.

R, Q3: Do you have any evidence, data or other sources to which you may wish to refer the researchers, to support your views or statements made in regard to the value an employer places on the applicant having a vocational or other qualification? You may refer to your company human resources policy or to the experience of your human resources department.

R3, Q3: Based on my experience in marketing & sales, approximately 90% of roles have a pre-requisite of a Bachelor degree in Business, or at least progression toward completion. In addition, I place high value on a candidate's diversity of experience early in career development as this reflects a keenness to develop and establish a career.
R, Q4: Name the source or evidence.

R3, Q4: Personal experience, and opinions of my peers only.

R, Q5: Do you have a view on the success of the past system of employment services operated by the Commonwealth Employment Services?

R3, Q5: Unemployment is high, and we have trouble finding the right people, the system is failing somewhere.

R, Q6: Do you have evidence to support this view?

R3, Q6: Experience.

R, Q7: Do you have a view on the present system known as Job Network? You may refer to the view of persons in your human resources department if you choose to.

R3, Q7: I only know of the Internet based job search, which simply provides simple sorting tools to breakdown various job, location options.

R, Q8: What factor (importance or weighting) when compared to others, such as dress, attitude etc. would you, or your company human resources department and other managers place on the importance of an applicant for a job having vocational education training or higher education, in relation to influencing your decision to employ someone?

R3, Q8: 1. Experience/Qualification, 2. Attitude, 3. Dress

R, Q9: Do you think that the fact that the interviewer (such as yourself) has a qualification themselves influences the factor or the employment decision?

R3, Q9: Yes

R, Q10: Would there be a correlation between you having a higher education and your view on the above question?

R3, Q11: Yes
Respondent 4 is a General Manager in a multidisciplinary organisation delivering nationally accredited training and employment services, operating across a number of states with businesses generating over $100 million dollars annually. Prior to this role Respondent 4 was a senior manager in the Commonwealth Public Service.

R: Please state, your name and occupation.

R4: General Manager, xxx

R,Q1: What association have you had in the past or the present with any employment services programmes operated by DEETYA, CES, Working Nation or the present government’s Job Network?

R4, Q1: Prior to joining xxx I was with the Commonwealth Department of Employment for a number of years, the last position being xxx which had a major responsibility for the implementation of Working Nation initiatives 1994 – 95 and earlier initiatives. I did have some input into policy development as an operator giving some specific advice to the policy developers in Canberra. The main role was implementation of the Working Nation initiatives, similarly in joining xxx, with the implementation of the Job Network. Since May 1998 I have been involved, and that has included input into policy options and developments, mainly through the National Employment Services Association forums. They are a conduit to providing information to the Minister, through the Department of Workplace Relations and in some working groups for same that look at delivery aspects of the Job Network.

R, Q2: Looking back to the old Working Nation, one of the interesting findings that came out of the Senate (I believe) enquiry called the "The Good, the Bad and Everything in Between", done just after the Liberal government came to office.

The findings of that Committee was that, Working Nation, having only been around for three years, hadn’t had enough time to be in place to be tested for, reliability and effectiveness. It could not be assessed as to whether or not it was a very good working infrastructure. Have you got any perceptions of your time there? Whether or not that might be true?
R4, Q2: I think the early days of Working Nation did provide the time to really put it in place. As we know Working Nation was the start of the contracting out of employment services, with the early foray, by the Employment Services Regulatory Authority (ESRA), into the arrangements for contracting out those services for unemployed people. What happened in the early days of Working Nation was that there was a significant amount of jealousy, or resentment, within the CES network to that happening. It was to ESRA and the Department to overcome these major challenges and I guess there were issues in relation to a Department delivering those services at the same time as, having a responsibility to service candidates that were being looked after by the agencies contracted by ESRA. In other words people were basically referred to those arrangements by the CES. A competitor was also delivering the service and managing parts of it as well, ESRA was trying to sort that out. There were structural issues that needed to be addressed in the early days.

R, Q3: ESRA, under Joan Kirner, was put into place as a tool of the Labor government to bring about competition reform in the sector. What do you think is the difference between the ESRA model, where they were trying to bring in private contractors, to the Job Network model? Is it just the domination of the private sector that makes it different?

R4, Q4: I think the model is very similar in many respects. The main difference I guess is that ESRA was a regulatory body, independent of the Department, which undertook policymaking and there are some advantages to that model. It was the forerunner and I think we learned a lot of valuable lessons out of the ESRA experience that were implemented in the Job Network. I think they are probably complementary in many respects from the providers' point of view.

R, Q5: Looking at the operation of the current Job Network, and the comments of Cheryl Kernot and the response from Mal Brough, and the former Minister, and from Minister Tony Abbott, the difference claimed between the previous CES system and the current one, is that this one is incentive based. Under the old system of the CES there was no incentive for performance on either side. How do you view that from your perspective of both worlds?

R4, Q5: Certainly the new Job Network arrangements are very strongly performance incentive based. Both in terms of the star ratings that measure the effectiveness of providers and also financially, because if you don't get results and outcomes, the cash flow and business viability is questionable. There are two key issues there. Under the Working Nation there was the lesser emphasis on performance and outcome but ESRA were moving towards the outcomes of disadvantaged and special groups of candidates. The CES was becoming more performance oriented but it was more in relation as to how you might get outcomes in any public sector environment. It was tied to financial incentives or
whatever for the respective offices rather than the individual people. So it was a performance-based system with no real addressing of those issues apart from measuring in a public service environment, whether or not an officer is achieving certain results. So now with the Job Network agencies must be very responsive on performance.

R, Q6: Working Nation mandated the inclusion of vocational education and training (VET) in the programmes that were contracted out by DEETYA. The current system doesn’t mandate VET and leaves it up to an optional relationship between the client and the provider. Firstly from your view of past and current, the fact that you are also a VET provider Institute, do you have a view on whether or not that has diminished effectiveness, one against the other?

R4, Q6: Working Nation has a very strong emphasis on training and there was a lot of churning where people were put into training for the sake of filling courses, it wasn’t always directly related to the employment opportunities or to a lesser degree, the needs of the individual.

Under the new Job Network it is very much an assessment of individual needs while there are some generic programmes to provide to people, at least initially, job search, job preparation and such. Some agencies do have standard programmes. In terms of vocational training I think there is lesser emphasis now on the training, but in terms of our experience being associated with a training provider we do look very closely at training needs. We do provide a fair bit of support to our candidates for training not only in areas that our college traditionally operates in which are office and hospitality but also quite a bit of training for other technical areas. They might be technical courses in building and construction, warehousing and plant operating and first aid, software operation, that sort of thing. The challenging part I think is assessing the barriers to employment for candidates. Training is definitely one option that must be considered, as is a range of other options that may address the barriers to employment.

In some cases training can provide some people with confidence as well as skills. You quite often find people have been unemployed for quite a time or are returning to the workforce, totally lack any confidence and sometimes motivation. Training can assist that.

At the moment we are achieving pretty good outcomes and we certainly tie training to employment outcomes for a candidate if we think that they have got a good chance of getting employment in the labour market they are in. We will certainly look at training.
R, Q7: Do you support the formal, or directed, inclusion of VET or optional approach?

R4, Q7: I think it should be optional. It will be a significant part of addressing the needs of an individual candidate. It should not be compulsory for every candidate since everybody has individual needs. We are talking about formal VET. Other people just need support measures to help them overcome that barrier. It certainly has to be a significant option in terms of helping long-term unemployed, disadvantaged people back into the workforce.

R, Q8: During the course of the research over the past two years I have been unable to find any formal research that supports the proposition that vocational education actually enhances the likelihood of getting a job. Professor Karmel, in a statement in the Age Newspaper in the year 2000, said that in his opinion, vocational education was overstated and did not deliver outcomes to the Youth Market as was claimed. Do you have any evidence or do you feel that VET does enhance the likelihood of getting a job or is it just another factor in the job interview process acknowledging the fact that there are some jobs where you need it such as in computing and technical processes?

R4, Q8: I think the basic contribution in the Job Network process is to give people some basic skills.

Now what we find generally is, the shorter courses that offer a specific vocational skill, whether it be a computer skill or operating a piece of machinery or first aid, do contribute to an employment outcome. Sometimes it is harder to assess the longer-term employment outcomes for a Diploma or Certificate 4 level course, unless it is associated with a traineeship. That does improve a person’s competitive position in terms of applying for jobs by having qualifications. From our experience the short sharp skills development type programmes are the ones that do contribute towards, well there is direct evidence that they do contribute to employment. As measured by the outcomes we can achieve.

R, Q9: When you say there is direct evidence, do you know where the source of this evidence is?

R4, Q9: Well it would be our internal data, looking at what we have done to assist candidates to get outcomes in employment. How many of those participated in training.

R, Q10: Without going into detail of the performance of any candidate are you able to supply the University with any general statistics to show the link between VET?
R4, Q10: We are analysing at the moment how we are getting outcomes for candidates. What sort of intervention we have done. So we would be able to share some of that with you.

R: Thank you. I will write a letter formally asking you for permission to include it.*

R,Q11: Do you employ in your office, Department or any of your businesses, any of the people who are recipients of employment services or have actually performed in employment services?

R4, Q11: We have employed a number of people through both graduates of the college, a large number of our staff we have recruited, come through the college into our Job Access offices. Many of them start as Associate Consultants and worked their way up. We have employed some candidates who have been unemployed. Some of them have undertaken training with us, generally in the area of computer skills.

R, Q12: looking back over your past professional career do you have a view on the past system versus the current, the benefits of both or whether one is inferior to the other?

R4, Q13: I think one of the big benefits of the new system is that it offers people a choice, particularly the candidate and also employers. People can decide the type of service that they can receive. Unfortunately people don't always understand that, because to get information on Job network assistance services can be difficult and confusing for some people to make an informed choice because of the amount of information that is sometimes thrown to them and sometimes the sheer volume of activity that happens in the Centrelink office. There are measures at the moment to improve that. One of the real advantages is that people have a choice. There are different approaches to it, in terms of assistance, ranging from set courses and a sort of a community type of approach followed by some of the charitable and religious organisations. To a strong focus on employment research, job search and support measures to do that from agencies like us. Then you have the small local community agencies that have that personal feel. People do have that choice. It's a bit more complicated for employers but again they do have a choice. One of the advantages of the new system is that, I think, it is more focused on outcomes, now. Sometimes that can be a bit of a negative as well where people may be forced into outcomes that are not the best for them. The system is, very much, focused on outcomes to the benefit of everyone.

R, Q14: Are you in any ITAB or is your organisation in one?

* At the time of submission of the thesis, that data was not made available for inclusion.
R4, Q14: We are a member of the Business Services ITAB, well the xxx that is associated with us is a member. I have been, as part of the xxx activities, a representative on some committees for training providers. Currently the (I think) National Business Services ITAB is doing a specification for training programmes for the employment services industry. So we are involved in the working group for that, competencies and training standards in the services industry.

Interview End
Author/s:
Beck, Kevin R.

Title:
Vocational education and training, impacts, values, disinterest, prejudice and the politics of employability

Date:
2003

Citation:

Publication Status:
Unpublished

Persistent Link:
http://hdl.handle.net/11343/37922

File Description:
Vocational education and training, impacts, values, disinterest, prejudice and the politics of employability

Terms and Conditions:
Terms and Conditions: Copyright in works deposited in Minerva Access is retained by the copyright owner. The work may not be altered without permission from the copyright owner. Readers may only download, print and save electronic copies of whole works for their own personal non-commercial use. Any use that exceeds these limits requires permission from the copyright owner. Attribution is essential when quoting or paraphrasing from these works.