

# Life Based Learning

*A strength based approach to capability development in vocational and technical education*

**This paper highlights some of the significant outcomes of a national research project investigating professional development for the Knowledge Era. The project was jointly funded by the Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST) and TAFE NSW. The research team was from TAFE NSW International Centre for VET Teaching and Learning (ICVET) Maret Staron, Marie Jasinski and Robby Weatherley**

Professional development can at times seem a restrictive term and it is timely that the concept of professional development is broadened. The preferred term is **capability development** which encompasses professional development and seems to be a better fit for the business context of the Knowledge Era and the broad range of developmental approaches and strategies being proposed.

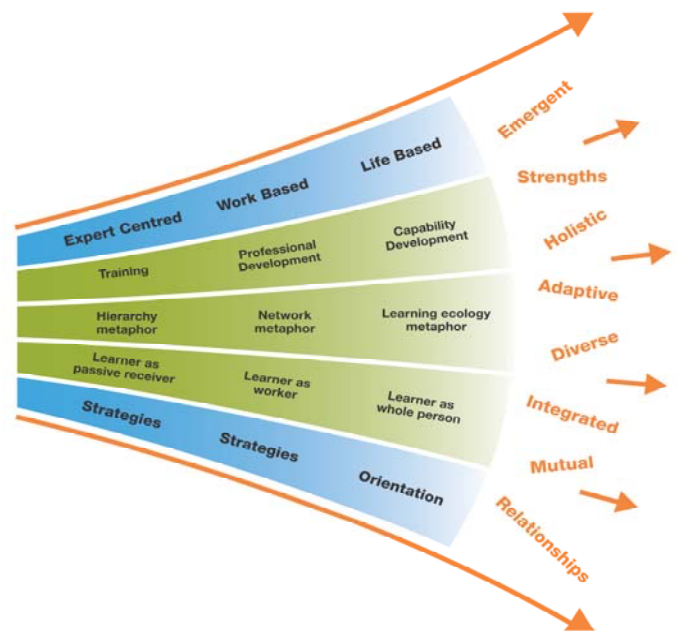
A new model is proposed that supports the development of capability in the Knowledge Era, an era that is increasingly complex, diverse and turbulent. The model, **life based learning**, does not displace expert centred learning and work based learning, but honours their legacy, retains what works and draws out their potential by placing them into a more contemporary framework.

What life based learning proposes is that learning **for** work is not restricted to learning **at** work. The premise underpinning life based learning is that all learning is interrelated, so it is not easy to separate learning at work from the other types of learning adults do. Learning is a multi-dimensional experience and individuals have knowledge, skills and attributes that may not always be visible or recognised by organisation, but that significantly contribute to organisational achievements and relationships. Life based learning acknowledges the importance of personal values and foundation truths and their profound effect on work and culture. (See over page for full model)

Through life based learning, we acknowledge **multiple sources** of learning that open up opportunities for developing our capability. The challenge is how to recognise, capture, support and utilise this more open-ended approach for the benefit of both the individual and the organisation. As boundaries between work and learning increasingly blur, we need to have more positive and holistic approaches in the workplace that provide for a greater balance between creativity and standardisation.

The research has led us to propose that we need to adopt a **strength based (rather than a deficit based) orientation** to capability development in a life based learning context. Strength based approaches displace nothing that has gone before. If established practices are fit enough to adapt to the changing environment they will survive. They will stand and fall on their ability to adapt.

Many **established strategies** are already strength based. The opportunity is to build more mindfully on those strengths. Depending on the baseline practice, this could be a fine adjustment or a significant shift. The advantage of building on established practices is their familiarity and immediacy. With familiar strategies, the investment is not in learning something new, but in deciding to do something new – shifting the orientation to reinforce a strength based approach. With **emerging and future strategies**, a range of new approaches are gaining recognition. They align well with a life based learning model and strength based orientation. The foundation truths and values are presented as the new constants, the bedrock on which established and emerging strategies are built.

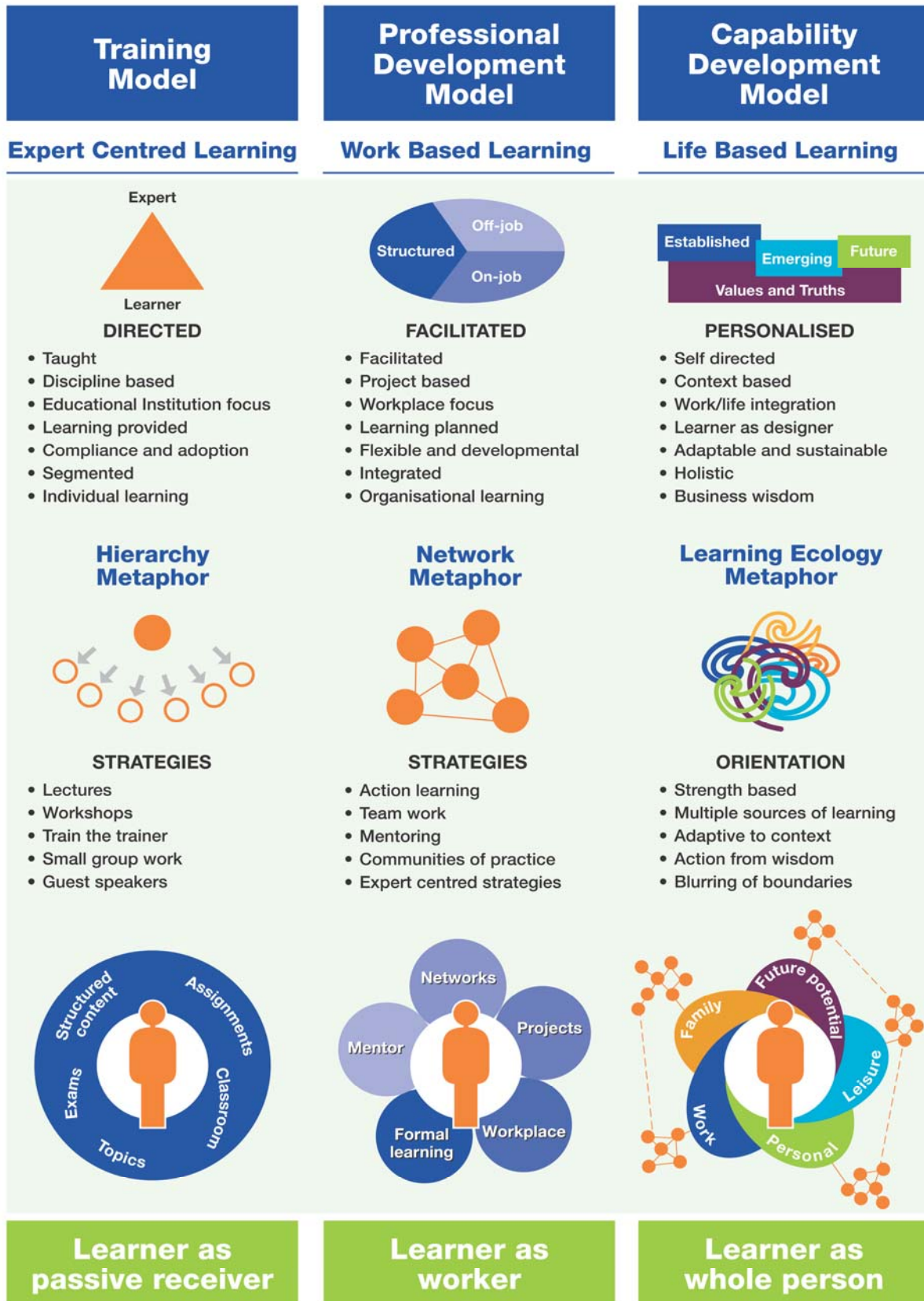


Documents available on the TAFE NSW ICVET website [www.icvet.edu.au](http://www.icvet.edu.au) :

'Life Based Learning: A strength based approach to capability development in vocational and technical education' research report  
'A Business Approach to Capability Development: Considerations and suggestions for applying life based learning' companion document

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Life Based Learning: a model for integration, growth and potentiality. © TAFE NSW ICVET