OCCASIONAL PAPER

A short history of initial VET teacher training

Hugh Guthrie
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The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) is an independent body responsible for collecting, managing and analysing, evaluating and communicating research and statistics about vocational education and training (VET).

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About the research

A short history of initial VET teacher training

Hugh Guthrie, NCVER

This paper examines the history of initial VET teacher training, both through the literature and the author's own experience. It also provides a backdrop to Guthrie and his colleague's examination of current practice in teacher training. Their forthcoming report, *Initial training for VET teachers: a portrait in a larger landscape*, is a clear reminder that initial teacher training is only the first step in ongoing professional development for the sector's teachers.

There is an unprecedented interest in VET teachers, the quality of teaching and teacher training at present. However, as Guthrie points out, this is a road well trodden and, unfortunately, issues identified earlier remain unresolved. But Guthrie is optimistic.

Key messages

- The minimalist regulatory approach of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as the mandated qualification for VET teachers and trainers needs to change and it is time to accept a broader range of qualifications as a suitable foundation for teaching in VET. This should be based on a wider range of issues: the teaching role, the provider profile and the characteristics and needs of their students.
- A more rigorous application of regulatory requirements for staff to maintain vocational competency and develop their teaching skills will ensure that teachers do not remain with minimal qualifications.
- The 'skill set' approach mooted for the new Diploma in Training and Assessment will lead to more formal professional development being taken up by staff. These skill sets need to be based on specific work roles as well as generic teaching and assessment skills.
- More active collaboration between universities and the VET sector will yield better teacher training and professional development.

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

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The beginnings

There is an extensive history and a significant literature on initial vocational education and training (VET) teacher training in Australia. I also had the experience of working in a teacher support unit at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (now RMIT University) in Victoria in the early 1980s before moving to the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development (which became the National Centre for Vocational Education Research) in 1987. Since then VET teacher education has been a periodic, but persistent, research interest for me.

I begin with the earliest work on teacher training in the modern post-Kangan era for three reasons: firstly, because the 1974 Kangan report[1] provided the genesis for the TAFE (technical and further education) system; secondly, to understand how current arrangements have evolved; and, thirdly, to document some of the critical issues confronting the VET sector as well as VET teachers early in their careers.

The first national review of training for beginning TAFE teachers was in 1978, just four years after the Kangan report was published, when the Tertiary Education Commission funded the Fleming report on the formal preparation of TAFE teachers in Australia (Fleming 1978). The report led to a series of recommendations:

- ✧ All beginning TAFE teachers should undertake a formal preparation program to give them the skills and knowledge required to be effective practising teachers.
- ✧ These nationally recognised formal awards should be at 'advanced education level'.
- ✧ The number of advanced education institutions conducting these programs should be restricted (see Coughlan 1979).

Accordingly, one institution in each jurisdiction was designated—usually a college of advanced education—but there were two in New South Wales, given the numbers requiring training.

At around this time the TAFE sector was undergoing significant growth and this meant there was a high demand for new staff. These staff needed to be trained, and as quickly as possible. For the most part, new teaching staff received support and time release for study. Completing a course was mandatory in nearly all jurisdictions. In the 1980s teaching qualifications were generally at the UG2 (diploma) level or PG1 (graduate diploma) for those with a university qualification. Associate diplomas were also available but, at that stage, there were few at bachelor level.

Then, as now, new TAFE staff generally had to have a period of industry experience before becoming a teacher. The role of the teaching qualification was to add to, and complement, this range of vocational skills and knowledge. VET teachers already had vocational skills, but what they needed was guidance on how to impart those skills and knowledge to the best of their ability.

This made TAFE staff different from school teachers, who were generally younger, with less experience of life and work, and whose initial qualification involved not only learning to be 'a

[1] The Kangan Report of 1974 marked an important turning point in the development of TAFE and provided the blueprint that guided many developments to the end of the 1980s. Its predominant thrust was that TAFE's major function was to provide each person with education to meet freely chosen vocational needs, and not solely to supply skilled labour for industry and commerce.

teacher' but also acquiring specific discipline knowledge to teach students. In fact, this latter component made up the major part of their four-year teacher training course.

There was concern that these early VET teaching awards were more suitable for preparing school teachers than TAFE teaching staff. Despite a closer alignment industrially between teachers in the schools and TAFE sectors, it was recognised that teaching in TAFE was unique and required different approaches from those needed for most school teachers. TAFE catered for a student group which in the main was older, studying part-time and employed. Nevertheless, then, as now, TAFE's student groups were very diverse—with a range of learning needs and issues.

Initial components of the model proposed by Fleming's committee included a two-week induction period covering communication skills, basic teaching skills and lesson planning designed to meet their immediate needs as beginning teachers. This was followed by a formal course of two days per week over two years which aimed to develop skills in: teaching, personal communication, evaluating teaching and learning strategies, and in the use of basic educational equipment and materials. It also aimed to provide in-depth understanding of the teaching and learning process, particularly as it related to technical education.

Mentoring and support on the job for initial teachers were also seen as desirable. This initial training was to be followed by a program of continuing professional development. These approaches were significant parts of the role for educational support units at RMIT and other TAFE providers in the early 1980s.

The Fleming report and many of the other early works on initial teacher education made little mention of providers other than TAFE and of teachers other than those who were employed full-time. The growth in private provision and the increased casualisation of the TAFE workforce were in the future, but both became important grist for the policy mill on teacher education in the 1990s. So too did a growing belief in the legitimacy of the workplace as a site of learning, a situation that gave rise to a burgeoning role for the workplace trainer. At the same time, there was an increasing belief by some that the classroom was a less valid site of learning than the workplace.

A number of reviews were conducted in the mid-1980s of initial teacher training in various jurisdictions, for example, Butterworth and Gonczi (1984) and Oliver and Tipper (1989) in New South Wales and Seitz (1985) in Victoria. Somewhat later, in 1993, the Western Australian Department of Vocational Education and Training (DEVET) examined future options for the education of its teaching workforce (1993).

The 1989 New South Wales review (Oliver & Tipper 1989) recommended several changes in TAFE teacher preparation and development in that state:

- ✧ increased uniformity of content in the induction program for beginning teachers
- ✧ more teacher education coordinators to assist beginning teachers
- ✧ a program to ensure that basic skills needed by beginning teachers were taught within the first fortnight of attendance in the formal award program
- ✧ more observation of experienced teachers by beginning teachers
- ✧ a higher priority on development for head teachers in relation to their responsibilities for beginning teachers.

Two projects, both involving staff from the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development, examined the nature of initial teacher training programs and teaching competencies.

The first of these, Krzemionka (1987), summarised and compared the formal TAFE teacher preparation courses available at that time across Australia. The project aimed to compare the structure and content of those courses with the recommendations on the formal preparation of TAFE teachers arising from Fleming's and Coughlan's work. Krzemionka (1987) suggested that TAFE teacher education providers and representatives of TAFE authorities should meet at regular

intervals to coordinate developments in teacher education programs, share information about existing practices and examine areas where cooperation might be feasible. In the 1980s and into the 1990s an active network of those interested in VET teacher education was established, which principally drew from the college of advanced education and, later, the university sector.

As an aside, Krzemionka's work was repeated in the early 1990s (University of South Australia 1992). The University of South Australia report concluded that the generic skills required for TAFE teachers then and in the future were not materially different from those which normally made up teacher education and development courses for school teachers. They suggested that professional development courses offered by TAFE itself therefore needed to concentrate on post-initial, specialist and emerging skills for their teaching staff. Their report proposed that these could also be a focus of graduate and postgraduate courses at universities, including for those undertaking management roles in TAFE. Such university courses could integrate and articulate with the development programs run by TAFE. They suggested universities could provide other services too, including the development of specific training and development programs for staff, as well as research and evaluation services of TAFE programs and services (University of South Australia 1992). Both these projects are the forerunner of the present work NCVER is undertaking on initial VET teacher training (Guthrie, McNaughton & Gamlin forthcoming).

In the second of the two projects, the TAFE National Centre was funded by the Commonwealth and the states and territories to conduct a two-phase national review of TAFE teacher preparation and development in 1990 and 1991. Broadly, the first phase aimed to identify the skills and competencies held by teachers at that time as well as those required by TAFE teachers. In its second phase, it developed strategic models for TAFE teacher training and development, which integrated initial and continuing training. It produced a literature review (Scarfe 1991) and two reports (Hall et al. 1990, 1991). The first report (Hall et al. 1990) identified seven key skill categories for TAFE teacher preparation and ongoing teacher development:

- ✧ teaching
- ✧ curriculum development
- ✧ determining the needs of clients
- ✧ management/administration
- ✧ updating own subject
- ✧ workplace context (for example, college, TAFE, society)
- ✧ general, relevant personal qualities (for example, critical thinking, adaptability, problem-solving).

In terms of how initial teacher training should occur, a model was proposed that incorporated initial periods of induction and the development of basic teaching skills in a short course of up to 20 days duration prior to teaching. In fact, a number of induction programs were developed and run in particular jurisdictions (Hall et al. 1991). For example, South Australia's New Entry Lecturers' Methodology and Induction Course—or NELMIC—was run by the department's staff development team and held in high regard. Queensland also had an equivalent program: CN404, the Instructional Skills Course.

This initial training was followed by a period of concurrent formal teacher training and teaching, or blocks alternating between teacher preparation and teaching. A wide range of consultations revealed considerable support for the concept of mentors for beginning teachers. There was also support for this concept for experienced teachers, especially when they undertook new duties. This approach was consistent with the recommendations of the Fleming committee (Fleming 1978).

Opinion on the length of time required for full initial training was divided almost equally between one year full-time equivalent and two years full-time equivalent for VET teacher preparation programs. Opponents of the former, especially the teacher union, believed this to be too brief to address the range of skills needed immediately by beginning teachers. Opponents of two-year

programs, often those having to fund the approach at jurisdictional or provider level, believed these to be too long and too academic (Hall et al. 1991). Their argument was that a qualification—such as an associate diploma, requiring the equivalent of one year of full-time study—was an appropriate level for an initial teacher training award.

A key issue was that TAFE teachers were—and still are—valued for their vocational qualifications and experience. Those already holding a degree could be fully qualified in one year with a graduate diploma, recognising that they already had graduate-level skills and abilities and were, possibly, better prepared for university-level study in education than those with just VET-level studies. However, it was different for those holding trade and other qualifications and experience, which were not recognised by higher education, but were of great value to TAFE. They appeared—and were considered by some—to be disadvantaged by having to undertake two or possibly three years of equivalent full-time study to obtain their teaching qualification at bachelor level, compared with the one year required for those already tertiary qualified. However, one concern universities had was the extent to which those with trade and other backgrounds possessed the skills required for successful participation in university-level awards. The highest possible level of basic qualification—a bachelor degree—was sought by the union representing TAFE teachers. This minimum, naturally, had strong support from many of the higher education institutions delivering VET teacher training programs. It guaranteed a market for their courses.

An option raised at the time was to establish a series of fully articulated awards with a range of exit points at the end of certificate, associate or graduate diploma, undergraduate diploma and bachelor degree levels. This required good articulation and credit transfer arrangements, as well as strong recognition of prior learning, given the demographic of those seeking to become TAFE teachers. Hall et al. (1991) suggested that subsequent development needed to be in a variety of forms, both formal and informal, according to clear and individually based plans for development and grounded in an effective performance review system.

It was recognised that lengthy and demanding initial teacher training programs used staff development resources which might be deployed better or more equitably elsewhere, while the thorny issue of 'who pays' and relative levels of contribution was also raised. Although most initial teacher training courses were delivered by universities, there was some support in the TAFE sector for a nationally consistent VET teacher preparation program in line with the sector's focus on developing national core curricula. For reasons of autonomy this more uniform approach was not supported by the higher education institutions concerned. The compromise was a network of those involved in teacher preparation to maintain an open dialogue and share thoughts. This network persists in AVTEC—the Australian VET Teacher Education Colloquium—although the group has not been as active in recent years. Nor does it now hold the meetings which characterised its earlier manifestations.

The work we did in the early 1990s was interesting and challenging and took into account the diversity of views on the best approach to initial teacher training, with the main areas of difference being the duration, nature and level of this training. The clearest differences in views were the teaching unions and the universities on the one hand, and a number of senior staff within jurisdictions and TAFE colleges on the other. However, the seeds of change in approach were already being sown, with more significant change being proposed in the findings of another two-phase project which followed hard on the heels of our own work. This considered initial teacher training in the wider context of TAFE staffing and is outlined in the next chapter.

Changing times: the moves to certificates

In 1992 and 1993 a two-phase project, entitled *Staffing TAFE for the 21st century*, was commissioned by the Vocational Education, Employment and Training Advisory Committee's (VEETAC) Working Party on TAFE Staffing Issues. Amongst other things, it addressed teacher training. It noted the need for TAFE to see itself, and be seen, as a key client of those institutions providing TAFE teacher training.

One of the issues identified in this project, as well as in the earlier work (Hall et al. 1991), was that universities were not listening closely to those who controlled the funding allocated to support the release of staff to undertake initial VET teacher education programs. Indeed, the phase 1 report suggested that TAFE's specific needs were not being addressed, and that there was widespread dissatisfaction and frustration with the quality of the available courses (VEETAC Working Party on TAFE Staffing Issues 1992). The courses were seen as 'prolonged, padded out and overweight', while it was also suggested that too little use was made of accelerated progression and recognition of prior learning.

These issues led to increased pressure to look at alternative training options. This report was also one of the first acknowledgments of the need to provide TAFE's non-tenured teaching staff with appropriate teacher preparation and training.

The phase 2 report (VEETAC Working Party on TAFE Staffing Issues 1993) noted the need for more TAFE involvement in teacher preparation through a greater role in the design and delivery of university programs. A more radical approach was also proposed: TAFE taking responsibility for its own teacher development. Amongst other things, this was proposed to make more effective use of available funds. In fact, in 1994 the Canberra Institute of TAFE (now Canberra Institute of Technology) went its own way (see Carroll 1995), and a successor program remains active to this day (see Guthrie, McNaughton & Gamlin forthcoming).

The phase 1 report had already proposed more competitive arrangements for teacher education provision, for more nationally consistent programs and for putting such programs out for tender with or without higher education partners. The phase 2 report proposed a set of competency standards for teachers, building on the skills identified in earlier work (Hall et al. 1990).

At around this time a national curriculum was developed by the Australian Committee for Training Curriculum (ACTRAC) for a short foundational teacher training program. This initiative was either short lived or still born and is often forgotten in the history of VET teacher preparation. In fact, it is hard, if not impossible, to find anyone who recalls much about it. Most likely, it was swallowed up in the move to training packages and the debate over the emerging workplace trainer training programs, subsequently to become the de facto minimum qualification requirement for VET teaching staff.

Until the mid-1990s, VET teacher education really meant TAFE teacher education. More private provision began with the introduction of competitive funding arrangements and the removal of TAFE's virtual monopoly of the sector. This increased competition was driven at a jurisdictional level, with some more active in introducing competitive processes than others. However, accessing nationally funded programs also became more competitive. The increased numbers of providers and increasingly diverse sites of formal delivery began to exert pressure on the nature of

teacher and trainer training, as we shall see shortly. This was coupled with a mantra of 'growth through efficiency'.

It also coincided with industry's increasingly strong role in determining the content of VET programs, cutting VET providers out of the policy debate and leading to a diminished role and influence for vocational educators. Industry's new importance put further pressure on VET teachers' professional standing and may have helped lead to decreasing expectations in some quarters of the skills that VET teachers needed to do their job. At worst, it manifested itself—in my recollection—in the attitude by some that VET courses could almost be 'teacher proofed' if they were specified well enough. The alternative view—also prevalent at the time—was that teachers were those who turned the conceptions of what was good vocational education into reality, and their level of required skills actually needed to increase as the sector moved from national core curricula to training packages (ANTA 2002)

In the early 1990s standards for workplace trainers and assessors were developed and an award implemented to complement formal training available for VET teachers. This coincided with the increased focus on the workplace as a place of significant and more formalised learning. The Workplace Trainer Category 2 Award was nationally endorsed in 1994 (Robertson 2008) and was current until 1999. The award was aimed primarily at those who carried out training and assessment in the workplace rather than at institution-based teachers (Smith & Keating 2003). In 1998, the Workplace Trainer Category 2 competencies were replaced by the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ40198), whose certificate IV level qualification was also adopted as the minimum requirement for VET teachers (Smith & Keating 2003). There was also a diploma program in the package.

In implementation, the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training became known for the variable quality of its delivery and assessment practices (Robertson 2008; Simons & Smith 2008). It could be attained in a relatively short time, with some providers offering it over a weekend, while other providers were far more thorough. It was the type of award open to the use of recognition of prior learning (RPL) to enable people to complete it rapidly, if, in reality, they possessed the underlying skills, and many of those who were already teacher-qualified argued that they did. The real issue, of course, was how many providers played 'fast and loose' with RPL and teaching and learning processes, meaning that actual competence was not rigorously assessed.

Simons and Smith (2008) suggest that the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training showed a lack of attention to the unique demands of learning within particular industries and to ways of embracing the diversity of learners in VET. Such criticisms might also have been directed at a number of the other current programs, irrespective of their qualification level. It is often forgotten that this qualification was designed primarily for workplace trainers. Unfortunately, it was being asked to do a job for which it was not primarily designed; that is, to be the initial teacher training qualification for institution-based VET teaching staff.

In response to this widespread criticism, this qualification was replaced by the Training and Assessment Training Package, which was endorsed in 2004, with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104) then becoming the minimum qualification. Its development and approval was a protracted and difficult process and as a consequence the integrity of its design may have been compromised in the process. The package, like its predecessor, included a diploma-level program.

In reality the certificate IV became the de facto minimum teaching qualification because it—or equivalent qualifications—were mandated in the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). However, it may be that the certificate IV in particular is attempting to fulfil too many purposes (Clayton et al. 2010). Concerns raised about the earlier Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training persisted with the next version (TAA40104), as do concerns over whether either of these qualifications had a sufficiently rigorous underpinning of good teaching and learning theory and practice. Furthermore, the issue of the de-professionalisation of VET teachers raised in the literature in relation to the earlier certificate has not dissipated with the later version.

A further troubling issue and one identified by Robertson (2008) is whether the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment has the potential to develop the content knowledge that differentiates a novice from an expert teaching practitioner and whether it imparts sufficient general pedagogical principles to enable those who undertake it to teach autonomously in diverse and complex learning environments. Robertson also questioned whether this qualification has the capacity to develop appropriate levels of reflection and self-evaluation, suggesting that it provided little more than some basic-level skills to teach in a supported environment. In a subsequent paper Robertson (2009) suggested that the higher-level Diploma in Vocational Education and Training Practice offered in Victoria was more acceptable because it was likely to allow vocational teachers to develop the knowledge bases required of professional educators. This qualification mandates a total of 200 hours of teaching practice, including a requirement for 50 hours to be observed and evaluated by a suitably qualified individual (Robertson 2009). Nevertheless, he noted a range of reservations even about this qualification, principally the extent to which it enables critique of mandated practices. Interestingly, there has been little critique of the diploma qualification (TAA 50104—Diploma in Training and Assessment), which forms part of the Training and Assessment Training Package, in the research literature or elsewhere, nor of other initial teaching programs, particularly those offered by universities.

On the other hand, some positive evidence is available. The qualification was the subject of a strategic audit by the NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board (2008). The audit report noted that the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment was an improvement over the previous qualification and provided a robust framework for trainers and assessors. Some also noted that it had sufficient depth and breadth to be considered a diploma-level qualification (NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board 2008). However, the New South Wales review also expressed concerns about:

- varying degrees of understanding of the TAA40104 qualification and the TAA04 Training and Assessment Training Package itself
- whether the recognition-only pathway met the requirements of the training package
- the paucity of evidence of customisation of purchased training and assessment materials to meet the needs of specific target groups and modes of delivery
- whether advertisements for training in the TAA40104 always conveyed accurate information to prospective students
- the ability of registered training organisations that offered an educationally sound training program to compete with training organisations offering short, cheap courses
- how well initial learning and assessment strategies met the needs of emerging client groups
- the failure of assessment tools to comply with training package assessment guidelines and specific evidence requirements (NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board 2008).

In addition, the workload for delivery was seen by some providers in the New South Wales audit as being 'daunting', 'demanding', or 'onerous'. It appeared to be a qualification whose fidelity of implementation was dependent on providers. It was also clear that its quality had been compromised by some, but certainly not all, of those providers delivering it.

The dependence of the sector on a diverse teaching workforce, some of whom see themselves as vocational practitioners who also teach, while others see themselves primarily as teachers, continues to be an issue. There are no indications of the majority view, or the significance of the minority one. Nevertheless, each category of VET teacher—the vocational practitioner or the teacher—probably requires a different approach, not only in the level and nature of initial training but also for ongoing professional development and support.

This is further complicated by the historical issue of the competing priorities of developing, maintaining and enhancing their skills and knowledge as teachers, while also keeping currency in their original vocation to ensure credibility both with their students and the industry sectors their

training supports. This suggests that a single concept of a VET teacher is no longer viable, even if the need simply to differentiate between those who 'train' from those who 'teach' is accepted.

What seems to be required is a typology of VET practitioners, one based around their level of vocational skills and qualifications as well as the differing levels of teaching and specialist skills needed—depending on job role. On top of this sits a dimension which identifies each individual's level of connectedness to the VET sector and VET teaching as their professional vocation. The notion of a multilayered typology to express what it means to be a VET teacher indicates that the sector and its variety of teaching staff need to have a wider conception of their professional identity than school teachers on the one hand and university academics on the other. This factor complicates any determination of the exact nature and level of teaching skills and abilities required initially and throughout their careers. The easiest part of the task, perhaps, is to consider the skills needed of those in foundational teaching roles.

Meanwhile, a range of other qualifications for VET teachers continues to be offered at diploma level and above by a range of university providers as well as TAFE institutions themselves. These qualifications have received little attention in the research and policy literature. Most research effort and critical comment has been on the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. This is unfortunate since it has directed attention away from other—and possibly equally critical—issues in initial and ongoing formal teacher preparation and development.

A number of universities continue to offer VET teaching qualifications at a variety of levels, but principally they have been bachelor degrees and graduate diplomas, although, of late, associate degrees and graduate certificates have gone on the books. If we compare the statistics on course enrolments when we began this research in 2008 with the latest data available in 2010, it is clear that some higher education institutions are leaving this market and that student numbers are relatively low and have been falling in recent years (Guthrie, McNaughton & Gamlin forthcoming).

It is hard to understand the rationale for the move during the 1990s from a higher level of mandated qualification to a minimalist one, with apparently no single reason for the reduction in qualification requirements for VET teachers. Most likely it was influenced by a range of factors, including:

- ✧ dissatisfaction with some of the university offerings in initial teacher training
- ✧ the cost of initial training to the TAFE system, and subsequently relatively low levels of investment in ongoing workforce development by many VET staff, providers and a number of systems
- ✧ broader requirements by governments to contain and reduce the costs of delivery and provider operations (including what was termed 'growth through efficiency') as well as the introduction of contestable funding
- ✧ the casualisation of the TAFE and broader VET workforce, and their level of access both to funded formal training and ongoing professional development
- ✧ the greater focus on the workplace, rather than the classroom or training institution, as a site of learning
- ✧ an environment which downplayed the importance and value of teaching and of teachers in decision-making processes in formulating both policy and practice
- ✧ the progressive removal—or reduction—of promotional barriers based on level of teaching qualification held
- ✧ the mandating of a relatively low level of qualification as 'the one' needed by all those delivering training in registered providers.

A new future?

There has been a new or reinvigorated interest in the VET workforce in general, and teacher training more specifically, with the debate over the quality and nature of VET teacher training a hot issue in 2010. Those interested include Skills Australia (2010), the Productivity Commission (2010[2]), the Australian College of Educators (Wheelahan 2010; Wheelahan & Curtin 2010; Wheelahan & Moodie 2010), the National Quality Council (Mitchell & Ward 2010) and the Australian Education Union (Forward 2010). NCVER has also recognised the importance of the topic through its own or commissioned work (Clayton 2009; Clayton et al. 2010; Walker 2010; Guthrie 2010a, 2010b; Guthrie, McNaughton & Gamlin forthcoming). The interest is tied to concerns over professionalism, the range and quality of available awards, and issues over what is offered to VET staff to support them professionally at the beginning of—and throughout—their careers.

It is interesting to speculate what the future may hold. I get a strong sense both of déjà vu and that we have not learned or implemented all we could from the past. I also have a strong sense of optimism—I hope, not ill founded—that some good may come out of this renewed focus on the VET workforce, its training and ongoing professional development. But, as was once said, the fear is that: 'No matter how much you push the envelope, it'll still be stationary'.

This renewed interest in Australia mirrors what is happening in Europe. Harris, Simons and Maher (2009, p.9) note that:

> Rather than being seen as messengers, VET teachers and trainers are now viewed as co-writers or change agents. As such, they are important actors in economic and social development: only if teachers and trainers are up to this professional challenge can modern education and training respond adequately to the needs of societies … This increased emphasis on the broader (and changed) functions of VET teachers is seen as critical to altering perceptions about the prestige and attractiveness of the occupation and contributing to strategies to sustain the skill base of the profession.

Further, they point out that the work of VET teachers and trainers is increasingly being subject to examination and there is a growing interest in raising entry requirements and establishing standards to guide their work. I want to look at these issues from a number of points of view, including:

- how practitioners see themselves: their perceptions and identities
- what might change and how we might ring out the old and 'bring' in the new
- what the role of VET's regulators and employers might be.

Practitioner perceptions and identities: they are many and various

One issue is how the VET sector and its teaching staff perceive themselves. The traditional view has been to look to the schools sector for comparison. The Bradley Review (Bradley et al. 2008) has refocused attention onto a sector which it perceives as more related to the tertiary than the schools

[2] and the various submissions to their issues paper which can be found on their project's website.

sector. Until fairly recently, with the introduction of Graduate Certificates and Diplomas in Tertiary Teaching, the university sector has not had a focus on formal training for its lecturers. Where VET sits is not easy to define. In fact it straddles upper secondary, its traditional areas and higher education. Perhaps it is now time to accept two things. First, VET is now part of the tertiary system and needs to stop looking to the school sector primarily for comparisons on teaching qualifications. Second, a diversity of initial and other practitioner training qualifications is required to allow VET practitioners and providers to do their job properly, not just one qualification. Work role and client group(s) would help determine what qualification is most suitable for each teacher initially and as they develop professionally, and these factors affect what mix of both teaching and vocational qualifications might be appropriate at provider level.

Demands by some commentators for high levels of initial VET teaching qualifications presume that the great majority of new practitioners identify themselves predominantly as teachers. Undoubtedly, many do. However, others identify most with their substantive vocational discipline and see themselves having a role in teaching others their particular vocation; this group do not see themselves as vocational teachers. These differences in world view highlight the professional dichotomy for many VET practitioners: current vocational expert and expert educator. It is where the perceived balance sits that is important for each individual, not least in terms of where precious time and effort will be likely spent in gaining experience and enhancing skills and knowledge, both initially and subsequently.

Looming VET teacher shortages are a pressing issue both in Australia and in some European Union countries. These trends are exacerbated if there are problems in recruiting and retaining high-quality teachers and trainers (Harris, Simons & Maher 2009). Good initial teacher training, sound induction and strong institutional support are also required for those starting in a teaching role. These features need to be seen in the broader context of access to appropriate ongoing professional development, access to further formal qualifications, and both workplace and professional cultures that encourage excellence. The Australian Education Union (2010) has developed a sound set of principles for teacher education and suggests a phased approach to developing teacher capabilities, arguing that the new Diploma in Training and Assessment might be useful in this context when coupled with other initiatives. It is considered because it is being designed to take a 'skill set' approach, one which will enable the progressive gathering of formal training related to specific work roles as well as advanced generic teaching and assessment skills. The debate must therefore not be just over the level of an initial teacher qualification. This is pointless unless it occurs in a broader perspective of the support and ongoing opportunities for professional development and higher levels of qualification that initial teachers have. A holistic but flexible approach is what is needed.

Ring out the old, 'bring' in the new

Evidence from other research suggests that the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment appears to be a sound foundational qualification if taught well, and with appropriate support and experience for those undertaking it (Clayton et al. 2010). However, poor induction and lack of local support for individual teaching staff will affect how well initial teachers are able to do their job—no matter how well they are qualified. This means that initial and ongoing teacher training needs to be seen in the context of the structures and cultures in place in the providers that employ VET teachers; the extent to which the providers support good teaching practice, both initially and in the longer-term is also an influencing factor. In turn, it also depends on whether the prevailing jurisdictional and national policies on VET workforce development are supportive and whether the industrial relations climate and approaches to human resource management encourage high-quality teacher training and good teaching practice (Guthrie & Clayton 2010).

The challenge for the new Certificate IV in Training and Education (Certificate IV TAE) will be to overcome the issues that have dogged its predecessors. Not the least of these is the ubiquitous

nature of the previous qualifications and the very diverse market they served. Crucially, the latest version of the certificate needs to be the qualification that underpins and develops the foundational skills of VET's teaching workforce. One way forward would be to use the introduction of the new certificate IV as an opportunity to impose stricter requirements and audit regimes on those offering initial VET teacher qualifications, including the qualification and experience levels of those providing training in the Certificate IV in Training and Education. A scheme that recognises those providers offering high-quality programs could also be considered—a sort of 'gold star' scheme to enable the best providers to be identified more readily (Guthrie 2010a).

The best solution to ensuring appropriate and high-quality initial teacher training is to acknowledge the diversity of practitioner work roles and accept that a parallel diversity of relevant qualifications is needed if a provider is to perform well. Perhaps this is what needs to be looked at in an audit: does a provider have—or is the provider working towards developing—people with the range of vocational and education qualifications required to run its business effectively?

At present the Diploma in Training and Assessment has relatively few enrolments nationally, certainly by comparison with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (Guthrie, McNaughton & Gamlin forthcoming). Its major competitor, the Diploma of VET Practice, is a Victorian qualification whose take-up is driven by salary bar requirements in the public VET system there. The proposed new Diploma in Training and Assessment, with its focus on skill sets, has considerable potential for driving sound continuing professional development. However, a wider range of skill sets than those presently proposed needs to be available. The skill set approach also means that the qualification can be acquired progressively, which may suit many staff, as it involves a less significant investment at any one time. This approach may also open up a wider and higher-quality internal training market for VET, with specialised providers emerging to provide appropriate training which develops not only skill sets related to work roles but also fosters reflective practice.

In addition, other research (Guthrie, McNaughton & Gamlin forthcoming) shows that, while a number of universities—around 14—are active in VET teacher education, they are probably no longer providing initial training. It is likely that their qualifications are viewed by VET practitioners now as very much post-initial. As indicated earlier in this paper, there is evidence that a number of universities, including some traditional providers, have now withdrawn from the market, with those remaining having relatively small student numbers. It seems timely for universities to reconsider the role their teaching qualifications play in this market, as well as their level, form and format, and in this context examine the relationship between their qualifications and others available. Reappraising their roles as providers of VET teacher education also offers universities an opportunity to identify areas for greater collaboration as well as partnerships between themselves and VET, thereby ensuring seamless pathways and a range of suitable and flexible formal programs. Perhaps now is also the time to re-invigorate networks such as the Australian VET Teacher Education Colloquium, but with a broader tertiary focus.

What roles for individuals, employers and regulators?

This leads to questions about where responsibility for maintenance of the professional skills of VET practitioners resides. Some see this as the prerogative of the individual teacher. As professionals, or to be recognised as such, teachers have to take responsibility for maintaining and building their professional skills. A variety of authors (Wheelahan 2010; Wheelahan & Curtin 2010; Mitchell & Ward 2010; Guthrie 2010a, 2010b) canvass the issue of teacher registration as one mechanism for enhancing individual professionalism. Registration might first occur once an individual had attained the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or an equivalent qualification.

There seem to be varying levels of support for such an approach, but it is perhaps to be avoided unless it brings benefits to individual staff, providers and the quality of VET overall that will be greater than the burden and complexity its administration may require. While I do not rule it out as

an option, I urge caution. The danger is that it will act as a disincentive, particularly of casual staff. Moreover, it is only of real value if it carries mandatory requirements for ongoing professional development, monitored by the registering body. Some are also pushing hard for a professional body for VET practitioners. An alternative is to become a 'chapter' of an existing professional educator group.

Employers have a role to play in initial training and in ongoing development. However, some practitioners are 'portfolio workers' and may have several employers in any one year. These staff have a marginal attachment to providers, and their employers have to balance expenditure on them against that on their permanent or long-term contract staff.

This all points to the need to understand better the nature of employment in the sector, and how practitioners and other staff move into, out of and within it. We need better data on the personal characteristics, qualifications and dynamics of the VET workforce. The lack of high-quality national and consistent VET workforce data is one of the factors hampering efforts to improve the quality of teaching and teacher training. What is known, however, is that casual staff are generally not well supported, nor do they have ready access to many of the professional development activities conducted within the sector (Guthrie & Clayton 2010).

Regulators can play a more active role in the new landscape, although this will depend on the approach adopted by the emerging national regulator. One immediate step is to consider how element 1.4 of AQTF 2010 will be interpreted and used to encourage improved approaches to professional and workforce development: two of the subclauses of this element, (c) and (d), relate to monitoring ongoing professional development, both in vocational currency and developing as a teacher and trainer. How these two subclauses will be used to help improve the quality and quantity of VET teacher training and development remains to be seen. But it is potentially a potent stick to drive employer-sponsored professional development as registration is to drive that for individual practitioners. It could be agued that it is a bigger and better stick than teacher registration for VET. The question is, do we need both? A more important question might be: what incentives could be offered by the Commonwealth and the jurisdictions to sustain and improve practitioner quality? Many believe that VET practitioners were ignored while significant funds were being devoted to improving the quality of teaching practice both in schools and higher education. Does VET now deserve a place in the sun and what other ongoing professional development carrots can be offered if the quality of VET teachers and teaching is to be maintained and improved?

A comprehensive, national and well-supported VET workforce strategy is required. It needs to encompass both entry-level training and ongoing professional and workforce development. The strategy should be aimed firmly at enabling staff to critically reflect on practice and ensure improvement where appropriate. Such an approach will certainly require greater investment by both the Commonwealth and states and territories, and probably by individual providers as well. Individuals need more encouragement, and rewards, for contributing their time and other personal resources to developing their initial teaching skills and then continuing to develop them.

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