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General Overview

Thanks for the opportunity to participate in this study of quality teaching in VET. I forgot about it for some time and eventually found it saved on my desktop so I am responding to as much as I can, sorry about that.

In the introduction it is mentioned that VET is expected to grow significantly to meet the Australian Government's targets for the future and to increase the proportion of certificate III levels and beyond. At Helensvale we are approved to teach certificate III and IV in retail, however it is difficult getting the guidance officers to suggest suitable students. I have had students who were doing 5 board subjects and were told time and again that they should do a sixth board rather than the certificate III. Unless the guidance officers and those making recommendations to students about their senior subjects change their mindset and accept the fact that the higher level certificates are a valuable asset to students, VET will still be treated with an in amount of disdain.

Since I have been teaching in a high school I have found that VET in general is treated as a dumping ground for students who are either not doing well in another subject or has behaviour problems. Often the teachers of VET are left to do what they can as most are not trained to deal with this type of course, especially allowing students to generally go along at their own pace. If industry based teachers are to be encouraged to change into VET teaching, their Industry experience must be acknowledged. Using myself as an example; I had 30 odd years in wholesale and retail but when I completed my Bach of Adult and Vocational Teaching and Human Resource Development I was started as a first year teacher and my specialisation was and isn't now recognised.

In the element; Continuing Professional Development, Stage 2, CPD of a teacher's specialisation being developed is mentioned. Care will need to be taken as a teacher's specialisation is not always what they teach in school and VET isn't any different. This is due to administration only being able to have so many bodies for so many students enrolled by day 8. This causes problems every year. Another element relates to pedagogy and models of teaching, which is fine but as we are also discussing VET more broadly, I believe Andragogy should also be taken into account. Many of my students are already working maximum hours a week and all the holidays. Some students are living away from family so they have quite different life experiences than a student who lives with parent/s and are not holding down a job. Michael Tovey discusses the way children and adults learn in his book, "Training in Australia" and mentions that it is really the stages of human life that impact on the teaching and learning process.

Options for the structure of the VET teaching workforce

I agree with the favoured option this paper proposes and I would like to see a mandatory process of registration for VET teachers similar to the schools' model unless those proposed teachers have had extensive training experience. The school's administration as it stands now makes it difficult for a specialist teacher to be only teaching their specialist subject. Depending on the teacher's specialisation, the teacher may have to write most of their own theory notes/workbooks for the students to learn from. The allowed time for this to happen in a school environment just does not exist within the current climate, most of the writing time falls over into private, unpaid time. With this in mind "Programme Writing" (*Human Resource Development*) could also be recognised as a speciality area. It would also be good to see those teachers/trainers who are also qualified to be Workplace Assessors registered so when they assess a student, in a learning facility or on the job they are required to write their Assessors number on the sign off sheets. This may make for a higher degree of professionalism amongst teachers/trainers and improve recognition by industry. I would say I lean towards **Option 3**. Recently the schools have started a "Senior Teacher" category, however they have also made the task to apply for it fairly onerous.

Recruiting and Retaining Teachers

Vet teachers in schools are few and far between, however allowing ex-industry people to train/teach students in school may be a way of ensuring that students are kept abreast of industry changes. The education system is struggling to retain general teachers as they exit the universities, not mentioning those who are thrown into VET situations. In general discussions with other staff members at my current school, there seems to be a consensus newly graduated teachers seem to have to take on short term and long term contracts for about two years before they are appointed permanent to a school. This offers no security to the young teachers so they often leave teaching entirely to get a job where they can be classed as permanent.

Developing New "Master Practitioner" Roles

Teachers have a "Board of Teachers Registration" they must join every year providing evidence of PD to ensure currency. I believe that VET teachers should be registered with "The Board" so the costs of registration are not increased. That would also ensure that there is a central location that holds all the information about a teacher and their areas of expertise. This would allow the teacher's/trainer's registration number/s to be cross checked easily when and if necessary. By creating a "Master Practitioner" title, assurance needs to be made so that the (MP) keeps abreast of new and emerging teaching practices. Option 3 suggests the creation of new teaching streams within the industries involved in collaboration with employer bodies and unions. That is fine, however those at the coal face are sometimes better able to provide current data and make recommendations to improve courses.

In option 2, the third option I believe would work best. One would assume that a Skills council would be the most likely to represent their industry and what the industry needs from those exiting industry based courses.

Developing New Cross-Sectoral teaching Roles

Cross-sectoral opportunities for teachers of VET would be an excellent idea as currently most VET teachers in schools would not necessarily be aware of the specific needs students may need to continue with higher education. I did find that by doing the Bach. Adult & Voc. Teaching combined with the HRD I was able to teach in the high school environment as the course is about HOW to teach rather than showing one how to teach particular subject matter. Of course those teachers who complete their Grad Dip Ed are taught to teach, however they really do focus on their teaching area.

The proposed new category of teacher is not necessary as it already exists and I am an example of how it operates. The part that would be great is to have those higher trained teachers (BAVT:HRD) used more effectively and provide opportunities to them to be recognised as valid teachers who provide a very specific role within the school education system. Funding is always an area that creates problems for schools to employ specialist teachers. An example of this is how I became a full-time teacher. I was initially employed as a contract teacher for 7 months. At the end of that contract I was offered more work so I could be kept at the school. Right from the start I was teaching outside my speciality.

In the two years I was a contract teacher the subjects I taught in the school are listed below:

1. Business Communication & Technologies (*BCT*)
2. Business Management (*BPR*)
3. Retail Certificates I and II – a class of 16 students, combined Years 11 & 12
4. Studies of Society and the Environment (*SOSE*) Years 8, 9, 10
5. English Years 10, 11
6. Film and TV studies year 11
7. Japanese year 8
8. Certificate II in Small Business Management (*this was later changed to a Cert IV*)

I now teach only Retail Services *Cert I* and Retail *Cert II* and *III* and *Cert II* Business (*Office Administration*). I am approved to teach the *Cert IV* in Retail as well but no students have been able to take advantage of this offering and very few even take advantage of the *Cert. III* level. I believe this is mainly due to the mixed information students and their parents are given about student's post secondary education plans. As most people, at some stage in their lives work in the retail/wholesale sector this subject should be one that guidance officers are suggesting to students who want to do a Bach of Business or one relating to business and the same goes for Office Admin and Hospitality.

Creating a Staff Collection

If the Board of Teachers Registration is used to gather the desired information about teachers and their PD, duplication of this information would be avoided. The My Skills website would be a great way for teachers to keep track of their PD and it could be used for planning future PD as needed. This could easily be achieved by placing a link on the Board of Teachers website, along with any other links that may be useful, such as continuing higher education courses and Blackboard. The inclusion of these links makes for one stop shopping for staff writing up their planned PD and the PD already completed. I am concerned that teachers of VET will end up with duplication of extensive data input. If a teacher has worked in an industry for a specified time (*over ? 10 years*) it is expected that their knowledge has achieved a deep level of understanding and that should be acknowledged by the board. All teachers who are currently teaching in Qld have to be registered with The Board of Teacher Registration. Allowing this site to be used more broadly (*including VET teachers*) will save time and money.

VET Teacher Preparation and Development

Who would be creating and delivering the induction programme, and what would be included?

What does "basic entry level" mean and who assess its meaning?

Does this mean that remuneration will be attached to successful completion of higher level education?

In the Degree course, students are required to complete two teaching Practicums, I believe that these are vital to the teacher in training.

Entry Level Teacher Qualifications

Even if a teacher obtains higher level qualifications, and they want to teach in schools it is very important to provide them with at least a basic understanding of what is expected of them in the school environment. In the course that I completed nothing at all was included on Pedagogy strategies needed by teachers as the focus was on Andragogy alone. This in itself was a bit of a problem as many of the trainers/teachers said they were teaching teenagers, and not because the teenagers wanted to improve their skills, often because they had to do so to continue to get the dole.

Teachers are writing programmes, lesson plans and matching their plans to required curriculum as part of their class work I think that duplicating that in the Cert IV is a waste of time and energy. Behaviour management strategies need to be improved and teachers introduced to several models to allow them to choose the one/s they will feel most confident using in the class-room.

There are parts of the Grad Dip Ed currently taught that appears to be useless as it does not provide any real educational advantage. I say this as one of my sons recently completed his Grad Dip Ed after working in industry for 12 years and graduated with Honours. I asked him for feedback on the course he completed. He suggested that some of the work that was required, and were arduous and time consuming were totally irrelevant when he applied for jobs.

Due to his background and studies he had no problem obtaining work, however most of his peers were still unemployed after 6 months. Perhaps if some VET/CBT training were added to their course they may have been able to apply for jobs in industry and be practising the skills they learned at university. The proposed Cert IV may have components that could be nested in the teaching course. This would also provide teachers with hours that could be acknowledged as teaching practise. The hours could be maintained in My Skills attached to the Board of Teacher Registration. I believe Option 2, parts one and two is the best of the options provided. However, I also think that teachers be required to obtain a higher education qualification if they are going to teach in schools on a full-time basis (*part of option 3*). This is entirely due to my earlier comment that once in a school situation they may have to teach out of their area of expertise.

Mentoring and Institutional Strategies to Support New Teachers

I agree that mentoring be offered to new teachers so they completely understand the institutional strategies that are applied across the campus. This doesn't mean it has to be an expensive strategy that will necessarily weigh heavily on the institution's budget. If an institution/school has competent VET teachers employed, they may also receive extra funding to support the operational costs. I understand that a first year teacher is supposed to have more than one line away from students in the F2F classes. This policy needs to be implemented for VETs because the differences in reporting and tracking of VET subjects and general courses being studied are different.

Example; In a school class of 25 students some will have learning/behavioural problems, some will just be slow learners and some are ravenous to complete the course and move on to the next level. To make it possible for students to advance through the course at their own pace the teacher must run a very tight method of recording who is up to what. This should be available to the students so they can see where they are up to at any given time.

If no mentoring is available those new teachers become overly stressed about this variation to their teaching role. Option 2, using the quality skills fund to ensure support for new teachers I believe is important because this support should be available to the teacher if there is one or 50 employed in the organisation. This could be tracked through the "My Skills" web-site and allow senior teachers to gain credits/rank by mentoring new teachers to their organisation. Another option could be that teachers apply to provide a mentoring role to new teachers after they have been in a teaching role over ??? many years, just to ensure that the mentoring being done is relevant, current and flexible. This will also ensure that the new teacher is allowed to use their own teaching style with mentoring support and not instruction. This could work as an online mentoring activity. When I completed a Dip of E-learning online the mentoring I received was valid, timely and useful.

Continuing VET Teacher Education Qualifications

All VETis teachers will teach a variety of students using a range of methods that suit the student, the subject and the organisation. This is a reason why VETis teachers need to learn a range of skills specifically related to teaching and not really related to their particular speciality. This will be especially important for those disengaged students that every school has enrolled. Even in the workplace some workers feel if they have been on the job for more than a few years, they do not need to update their skills. Teachers will, I think need to complete the Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Teaching if they want to be viewed as specialist professionals in their own right; Master Teachers, and of course be paid accordingly.

Option 2 discusses similar qualifications as teachers' and I believe that may be what is needed in the end because if the VETis teachers are to be full time teachers the requirements of the Qld Education will need to change.

Continuing Professional Development

I agree that teachers of VET really need to create their own teaching material or at least have an input into it so they take ownership of the course they are teaching. I agree that collaboration with other VET teachers can provide an excellent resource for ideas and a sounding board to ensure there is quality in the material and consistency in its delivery. Of course, if online mentors are available teachers will be able to use them as a sounding board when necessary. Option 3 mentions a new model of CPD that retains its focus on what teachers have to know and teach. Networking, conferences and seminars may be needed to ensure everyone is working from the same page. I agree that to do this properly there will need to be wide collaboration between stakeholders.

In regard to VETis, the CPD problem appears to be about time off from the school combined with the cost of a replacement teacher. Teachers and mentors could pool their resources in workshops that operate from schools??

Maintaining and Extending Industry Currency

Placing teachers into a workforce for one day a year is just an inconvenience to the business. However, the teacher/workplace assessor could use this time to gather information and use that data to ensure the teaching material being used is current and correct, such as you mention it on page 24. Financial incentives would obviously be helpful for organisations to support a teachers release into industry.

In option 3 you mention that teachers could develop a range of materials etc and it could be approved by the RTO and the enterprise where placement is planned. However, some enterprises may be operated by inexperienced/untrained managers and will not necessarily provide good feedback to the teacher about the teaching materials. This could be used at a area round table conference.

Developing VET Pedagogy and Models of Teaching

Just as further research about Pedagogy and VET is needed, further research could be included about Andragogy. I believe this is necessary due to the changing type of workforce and the variety of students wanting to engage in certificate subjects. This is especially obvious with the senior certificate requiring 20 credit points. For many students the 20 credit points are not difficult, however some students struggle to reach that level.

Accrediting Teacher Education Qualifications

Option 3 discusses how qualifications of VET teachers are recognised and accredited. The idea of accreditation as per the schools model is not, I believe a system that is suitable for the fast changes required to keep the currency needed in VET. Of course many VET subjects have a range of general knowledge that must be learned for higher levels of learning to take place.

Registering VET Teachers

I would argue that registration of VET teachers is established as per the schools model. As mentioned earlier to keep the costs down the Board of Teachers Registration could be used. By using this method teachers of VETis or in industry situations will not need to be registered with both bodies. VET teachers, I believe also need to have a registration number assigned to them and that would also be used if the teacher is also a workplace assessor.

The My Skills website can also be used to record PD and as the teachers increases their levels of experience and education this will be easily identified by visiting the site.

Evaluating the Quality of Teaching in VET

Option 2 – If student's satisfaction data is published it may be of assistance when evaluating the consistency of standards being used across a range of VET industries. Satisfaction surveys would also need to be standardised to some degree to ensure consistency of results. However, VETis, on the job training and VET through higher education would most likely require a different range of questions. I agree that further research will be needed. An increase in funding for further research would be beneficial to VET results.

Questions for Consultation

1. No, I think current arrangements are far from satisfactory. I have had students come to me with a workbook with half of it crossed out and incomplete, but they are signed off for the work. On questioning the student I found that no other work took place to cover the sections crossed out.
2. In a broad sense teachers are constantly building processes to teach VET, however there is not a lot of consistency across teaching areas. That is to say that VETis is very closely monitored, while VET training in a workplace may have different pressures forced upon it. Pressures can alter outcomes quite markedly.
3. Yes, the options provide a focus to each part of the paper.
4. Yes, the elements presented in this way were easy to read, and made discussion on the papers information pertinent.

5. Some elements could be combined now that this paper has teased out concepts and questions relevant to VET's ongoing credibility and an upgrading/standardising of professional standards needed by VET teachers. Even though Andragogy is said to be about how adults learn I think it is a mistake to not introduce it to current teachers of VET. It is true that adults learn for differing reasons, however it is becoming more usual for teenagers to have jobs that require them to take on managerial roles with no training. This is where VETis makes so much sense. Students can use real issues they have had to deal with in a workplace and match it up with theoretical information they need to learn.
6. The timeframe for standardised systems to come into VET is an area that was not touched on. As with everything funding must raise its ugly head. Funding for the registration process of VET teachers with an appropriate body such as the Board of Teachers Registration to take place would be a giant first step to formalise VET teachers as professionals in their industry.

Thank you the opportunity to comment on this research paper. If I can be of any further assistance don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind regards

Sophia Rogers