How can VET teacher education and development be improved?

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Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

LH Martin Institute | How can VET teacher education and development be improved?

Page 3 of 16

Introduction

The *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015* updated the qualifications required for delivering and assessing training in the vocational education and training sector ending sixteen years of controversial dependence on Certificate IV level qualifications to prepare most vocational education teachers for their teaching practice[1]. From the beginning of 2016, the mandated qualifications were broadened to include the Certificate IV or diploma or higher-level qualifications in adult education. Importantly, these latter include higher level qualifications in language, literacy and numeracy. From 31 March 2019 the new standards will offer qualification choices including the latest version of the Certificate IV TAE (TAE16), the former TAE10 with additional units of competency in LLN and assessment as well as diploma qualifications and above including postgraduate qualifications in adult education (ASQA 2017a). These changes address a number of the problems that have beset the Certificate IV. They offer all of us stakeholders in vocational education the opportunity to reconsider what we have learned during the years in which a specific Certificate IV qualification was mandated for all VET teachers except those working in limited roles such as enterprise trainers. Since our insights have been shaped by Certificate IV failures as much as successes, we will look at history to understand what research, enquiries and audits during the Certificate IV era and before can tell us about the formal qualification needs of vocational education teachers. We will then go on to discuss the future: what formal qualifications could better support the initial and continuing education of VET teachers; who should deliver them and how.

The range of qualifications undertaken by vocational education teachers and the impact of these on the quality of teaching and learning in the sector have been contested amongst vocational educators, teacher unions, teacher educators, government, industry and other stakeholders for over fifty years; long before the Certificate IV appeared. Largely, this reflects the continuing unsettled status of vocational education and its teaching and assessment practices in the educational spectrum. More recently, tensions around costs and returns on investment associated with training VET teachers in a large-scale, marketised sector have affected employer, government and individual investment in VET teacher education, intensifying the debate. Towards the end of the paper we look briefly at higher level qualifications, their architectures and roles before drawing some conclusions and posing some ways forward to address the challenges facing the effective initial and ongoing education and training of VET's teachers. Finally, although this paper concentrates on formal qualifications, we acknowledge that other and less formal forms of professional development make very important contributions to the improvement of VET practice.

The VET teaching workforce and how it has changed

Until the mid 1990s the VET sector was dominated by public providers, principally TAFEs. While there were private providers, these offered education and training in a limited range of fields. The VET workforce was characterised by teaching staff pursuing a second or subsequent career and tending to be permanent or long-term employed. There was significant growth in the teaching workforce through the 1980s, mainly through the expansion of the public system. The development needs of this workforce were supported through the then more ample institutional funding and a series of federal and state/territory programs established to improve the quality of VET teaching.

The early 1990s saw an increasing focus on workplace training, and hence growth in the number of workplace trainers. Increasingly private providers and schools also required teachers. Thus, the VET workforce grew significantly and diversified from the 1980s onwards. Since that time VET provision has expanded to encompass a wider range of disciplines and vocational qualifications from AQF 1-8. In addition, many VET providers, including TAFE institutes, now offer secondary, vocational and higher education (up to masters level).

From the late 1990s VET providers came under increasing financial pressures which changed the nature of the workforce, increasing the levels of part-time and casual employees[2]. These pressures also affected the work roles and qualifications held within the VET workforce. In 2004 Dickie et al. characterised TAFE's teaching workforce as older, mainly part-time and employed on a non-permanent basis. The characteristics of teaching staff in other types of VET providers were less known. Most VET teachers held a post-school qualification, however these were not *"…*

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[1] https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/F2017C00663
[2] This was sometimes characterised as 'growth through efficiency'. Cost-efficiency demands have been a significant driver in the reconstitution of the VET workforce along core/periphery lines (Dickie et al. 2004)

qualifications in education or training - a situation which is being remedied, for permanent staff at least, in some jurisdictions" (Dickie et al., 2004 p. 52).

Consequently, the teaching workforce moved to a core/periphery model characterised by a significant and growing group of part-time staff employed on a casual or sessional basis and supervised by a smaller core group of full-time highly skilled staff (Dickie et al., 2004). These peripheral staff may work at multiple providers across the sector, and/or in industry. The proportion of core to peripheral staff varies across jurisdictions for TAFEs and is, at least in part, a function of the relevant industrial awards. Again, sound information on other provider types is lacking.

Dickie et al. (2004) found that VET trainers employed within enterprises spent relatively little time in the direct provision of teaching or training. The nature and complexity of the VET teachers' work has therefore become increasingly diverse. Some teachers move into and out of the sector and while some see it as a long-term career, others do not.

Finally, Dickie and her colleagues reported that it was problematic to obtain data on the number and characteristics of VET staff, proposing that better data would assist workforce planning. They emphasised that estimates of the size of its professional workforce (of which the majority were teachers) were disparate, ranging from 17,400 to 71,300 for TAFE alone. Later studies (Mlotkowski & Guthrie 2008, Productivity Commission 2011) have supported Dickie and colleagues' findings. The Productivity Commission (2011) estimated that there were about 73 400 TAFE employees, of which about 2/3rds are teachers. It estimated that about another 150 000 workers were involved in VET delivery by non-TAFE providers, but pointed out that higher numbers had been suggested by others:

> *"The lack of precision of workforce estimates for the non-TAFE sector partly reflects the fact that, currently, there is no agreed standard or national system of data collection for the VET workforce"* (Productivity Commission 2011, p. 38)

A set of descriptors enabling the collection of uniform VET workforce data was developed by NCVER some time ago but not used until recently[3]. As so often happens data collection floundered on the rocks of 'who pays'.

The nature of VET teachers' work is variable and, at least for teachers and trainers in institutional VET settings, has changed considerably over time (NCVER 2004). These changes continue to impact on the ways in which they understand their professional identities and their relationships with other parts of the VET sector. VET teachers are required to work in an increasing range of contexts—institutes, private RTOs, schools, online and in a wide variety of workplaces and with different student cohorts, including school children, the disadvantaged, international students both in-country and onshore and older people. They are also called on to develop relationships and work collaboratively with a range of specialist service providers, to develop skills in career advice and work placement, and to take greater responsibility for administrative functions. They are now learning managers, brokers and facilitators, requiring effective communication skills, relevant and up-to- date content knowledge in their vocational area and the knowledge and skills to deliver and assess in a wide range of contexts. They can be 'consultants' as well as 'teachers'. This requires greater flexibility on their part, and a strong focus on an increasingly diverse set of clients and client needs.

VET practitioners need a wide-ranging set of capabilities. They need to understand the theory and practice of learning, and curriculum design and evaluation; know how to teach creatively and imaginatively to engage learners; assess effectively; understand how the VET system works and critically reflect on their own and their colleagues' practice. They must maintain digital currency in technologies used in teaching as well as in their industrial practice. They need to maintain their occupational expertise and hone their personal attributes, including professionalism, and strong skills in the relational and dispositional aspects of their work that makes them great teachers (Smith & Yasukawa 2017).

A 2017 study into the relationship between VET teacher qualifications and quality problems in the sector, found that:

> *"Good teachers were described as open to new knowledge and professional development, with the ability to help and inspire others to learn. In terms of teaching and learning, it was said that good teachers had the skills to communicate with a diverse range of students. Extensive industry experience and the skills to transfer knowledge, theory and practice to learners were also mentioned."* (Tuck & Smith 2017 p.2).

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[3] NCVER is currently undertaking a project to survey VET providers and obtain workforce data. It is due to be completed in mid 2019

LH Martin Institute | How can VET teacher education and development be improved?

Page 5 of 16

The Certificate IV does not, and cannot, develop all these capabilities. At best it initiates a professional journey. Addressing the needs of VET teachers and trainers is a complex business, and no one teaching qualification is fit for purpose. What is needed is a diverse range of qualifications, experiential opportunities and on-going professional development. And, indisputably ongoing CPD, formal and less formal, must follow completion of the Certificate IV.

So, having looked at the VET teaching workforce, how it has changed and briefly at the nature and diversity of its work and the capabilities required, let us turn our attention to the changing nature of VET teachers' qualifications over time and issues related to their quality, and focus especially on the various versions of the Certificate IV.

VET teaching qualifications before the mandated Certificate IV

To better understand the controversy and the reasons for mandating a Certificate IV level qualification we found it useful to go back to the 1970s to follow the research and policy paths that led to a mandated Certificate IV qualification. Fortunately, VET historians have made this easy (e.g. Batrouney 1985; Chappell, Gonczi & Hager 1994; Guthrie 2010; Clayton & Guthrie 2013; Harris, 2017). Prior to the late 1970s, post-secondary technical teacher preparation was poorly funded and inconsistently structured with no formal teaching courses in Queensland and Tasmania and short non-award courses available in NSW, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia (Chappell et al., 1994). Concerned with the poor quality of technical teacher preparation, the 1974 Kangan report prioritised the development of a well-prepared teaching workforce, recommending an inquiry into TAFE teaching[4]. The resulting Fleming report (1978) proposed a formal initial preparation program recognising the distinctive nature of TAFE teaching. This program was intended for completion within the first three years of employment and would lead to an advanced education award[5]. In response at least one college of advanced education in each state offered diploma level courses tailored to local jurisdictional needs. Coinciding with the demise of colleges of advanced education, a range of universities offered degree level courses for TAFE teachers. Throughout this period time release and mentoring were generously funded (Chappell et al., 1994; Guthrie 2010; Harris 2017). For example, in 1981 one of us was given two days' paid time release for a year to undertake a Graduate Diploma in Education. The other one was in a teacher support unit in a Victorian dual sector institution, where one of its roles was to provide support for those undertaking such training. This included a short but intensive introduction to VET teaching to help support them in this role while they gained their formal teaching qualification[6].

Despite the enviable funding, TAFE stakeholders - teachers, their unions and colleges - remained justifiably dissatisfied with the content and structure of higher education qualifications provided to their sector (George 1979, Batrouney 1985; Hall et al., 1991; VEETAC Working Party 1992 & 1993). Concerns included lack of knowledge of TAFE on the part of many teacher educators, inclusion of subjects designed for school teachers and general education subjects designed to broaden TAFE teachers who had not previously studied at tertiary level (Batrouney 1985). Other early concerns aligned closely with current debates, including differing views on the distinctive nature of vocational education teaching, its complexity and the level of qualification required for initial preparation of VET teachers. Consequently from at least the early 1990s there was growing support for a nationally consistent teacher preparation program offered by the VET sector itself (Hall et al., 1991; VEETAC Working Party 1992 & 1993; Guthrie 2010).

The move to Certificate IVs

Continuing concerns led to a decade of reviews of TAFE teacher training culminating in the 1992 workplace trainer standards developed to ensure that unqualified workplace trainers had sufficient training skills for that purpose (Workplace trainer competency standards 1992). These were not intended to replace conventional VET teacher training but became popular with institutions which used them as the basis of professional development for teachers unused to workplace delivery.

With the introduction of Training Packages in 1996 the workplace trainer standards were reviewed and broadened in scope and, in 1998, endorsed as the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ40198). This

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[4] TAFE represented the formal technical and further education sector and its work until the expansion of private provider participation from the mid 1990s
[5] Colleges of Advanced Education were part of the Australian tertiary education system from 1967 to the early 1990s
[6] Such programs were offered in a range of TAFE institutions and jurisdictions at that time

development coincided with considerable growth in VET provider numbers, mainly private providers and schools and increasing casualisation of the TAFE/VET workforce though funding and other pressures (Korbel & Misko 2016). The confluence of these forces led to widening recognition and eventual prescription of this Certificate IV qualification as the required qualification for vocational education teachers as well as trainers (Clayton et al., 2010).

Subsequently, in 2001 the inaugural Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) standards also endorsed the Certificate IV requiring that the person delivering training "*has all the competencies in the Certificate IV from the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (or has demonstrated the equivalent competencies) or who is under the direct supervision of a person with these competencies; and … is able to demonstrate vocational competencies at least to the level of those being delivered.*" (ANTA 2001, p.17). This form of words continued until recently, being incorporated into the Standards for Registered Training Organisations when these became part of the National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011.

Since 2001 some, especially more highly qualified TAFE and school-based VET teachers, have resented the requirement to hold a Certificate IV qualification perceiving the change as devaluing their existing qualification and teaching capabilities. The Australian Education Union, like its predecessor organisations, has been steadfast in its support for higher level teaching qualifications for TAFE teachers (Corbel et al., 2014). Many TAFE leaders have concurred and TAFE industrial agreements have often required qualifications higher than the Certificate IV to cross salary bars or access more senior roles. For example, the Victorian TAFE award specifies in addition to the current Certificate IV that "*progression beyond the fourth incremental point of the Teacher classification is subject to the Employee completing a course of teacher training accredited at diploma (Australian Qualifications Framework Level 5) which includes supervised teaching practice and studies in teaching methodology, or equivalent.*" The current Training Package in Education and Assessment consists of six qualifications: one Certificate IV, two Diplomas and three Graduate Certificates. Provider numbers for qualifications other than the Certificate IV are relatively small (see figure 2 below). The most significant of these are the Diploma of Vocational Education and Training and Diploma of Training Design and Development.

Individual TAFE institutes and some private RTOs have continued to support staff to achieve higher level qualifications including Master of Education degrees delivered by universities but this activity has declined (Guthrie et al., 2011; Guthrie & Every 2013). For the majority of VET teachers, working for private VET providers and covered by the Federal award, the Certificate IV is their only teaching qualification (Guthrie & Every 2013).

Concerns about the Certificate IV flagged in quality audits and research

From the beginning, audits and research have exposed significant problems with the quality of the BSZ and its successors (TAA04 and TAE10). Indeed, the Productivity Commission (2011), ASQA and others have come to see the Certificate IV as a high-risk course. Reports have repeatedly identified poor quality outcomes from Certificate IV delivery, poor teaching by Certificate IV teachers and have expressed concern at the use of the qualification as the sole, rather than the initial development of VET teachers (Bateman & Dyson 2003; New South Wales Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board 2008; Clayton et al., 2010; Allen 2011; NQC 2011; ASQA 2017b). For example, Bateman & Dyson found that "*the providers reviewed … seldom modelled good practice in terms of training delivery and assessment,*" struggling to meet the AQTF standards for RTOs through a lack of knowledge and adequate documentation (Bateman & Dyson 2003, p.7). Clayton and colleagues found clear evidence from several sources that, like its predecessor the Certificate IV BSZ, the Certificate IV TAA qualification did not seem to provide the essential 'toolkit' required by new practitioners (Clayton et al., 2010; IBSA 2009; Precision Consulting 2008; Robertson 2008). However, one of Clayton's key messages was that:

> "*When taught well, the certificate provides some if not all of the essential skills required of new practitioners, particularly if they already have some experience of training if they are supported by mentors and if they undertake further developmental activities after they graduate*' (Clayton et al., 2010 p.33)

These researchers emphasised the importance of support during initial education and training as well as access to significant ongoing professional development. They also emphasised the need for a more flexible TAA program structure to accommodate the diverse job roles, responsibilities and levels of VET experience of beginning VET practitioners. The study recommended this be addressed through the introduction of differentiated qualifications, skill sets and an orientation program for those unfamiliar with VET when they commence the Certificate IV. Finally, they stressed the need for those delivering the Certificate IV TAA to be appropriately experienced and qualified and capable of modelling good practice (Clayton et al., 2010): a view supported by Wheelahan & Moodie (2011).

Recent strategic audits of the Certificate IV TAA found that while there was evidence of good practice (VETAB 2008; TAC 2010; Allen 2011; NQC 2011):

- RTOs offering educationally sound programs found it hard to compete with RTOs offering short, cheap courses

- assessment tools were often non-compliant with 50% of providers demonstrating issues with learning and assessment strategies, evidence gathering tools and record keeping. There was evident lack of systematic collection, analysis and implementation of information to improve training and assessment (VETAB 2008; TAC 2010), and

- there was substantial variation in the duration of the TAA (TAC 2010).

The 2010 WA audit made a series of recommendations including that: RTOs wishing to deliver the qualification should provide a business case, those approved to deliver should 'use it or lose it' and finally that the [WA] Department of Training and Workplace Development should develop and implement strategies aimed at continuous professional development of teachers and trainers (TAC 2010).

The NQC audit reinforced the issue of assessment quality, cost sensitivity and qualification design especially for those providers, in their words: "*seeking to develop their product faster, quicker, cheaper and at a profit*" (Allen 2011, p.25). The National Quality Council proposed a staged plan of corrective actions, including regulation through detection, deterrence or the threat of deregistration and persuasion and professional development including NQC (2011a):

- supporting RTOs to improve the validity of their assessments

- improving the risk assessment for RTOs delivering the qualification

- professional development in assessment offered by those seen to have the requisite expertise

- benchmarking assessment practices

- using auditors with strong assessment expertise

- refining the training package itself and diversifying available qualifications and skills sets

- designing and implementing an effective moderation system, and finally

- ensuring that the relevant audit reports were made available to prospective clients.

Significantly, the detail above demonstrates that despite ten years' experience with reviewing and redesigning this entry level qualification and including assessment units as a core requirement those teaching assessment continue to lack assessment skills.

Further insights from key reviews of VET teacher education and training

Two more recent major reviews of VET teaching and the teaching workforce merit attention: Productivity Commission (2011), and Wheelahan & Moodie (2011). Both these, like their predecessors, made significant recommendations regarding VE teaching qualifications including:

- requiring RTOs offering the Certificate IV to meet higher regulatory standards and be taught by staff with a higher-level teaching qualification and demonstrated experience (Wheelahan & Moodie 2011) and incentivising providers to focus on quality training and its assessment (Productivity Commission 2011)

- requiring better national coordination, targeting and support (including funding) of professional development (Productivity Commission 2011). Wheelahan & Moodie (2011) proposed the development of a national CPD strategy to support teachers and their specialisations, with access available to all teachers and provider types

- establishing a national VET professional body with responsibility for VET professional standards, accrediting VET teaching/training qualifications and registering VET teachers (Wheelahan & Moodie 2011).

In response to this consistent identification and documentation of enduring problems through audits and reviews, governments and other responsible agencies have achieved little effective rectification:

> "*the same issues [of VET teacher training and development] emerged time and time again with no apparent progress. In short the issues, whilst recognised, never seem to be really resolved. One of the reasons for this is*

LH Martin Institute | How can VET teacher education and development be improved?

Page 8 of 16

that no one body or group has the power to make things happen, or to enact comprehensive solutions. Rather, any attempted solutions have been piecemeal, or have turned into battles between jurisdictions or a variety of interest groups over whom, precisely, has responsibility for carriage of the issue" (Clayton & Guthrie 2013, p. 8)

Most recently ASQA has examined a range of qualifications with unduly short durations. In relation to the Certificate IV TAE they found:

"47 per cent of RTOs with the qualification on their scope of registration advertise it with course duration of seventeen weeks or less and 31 per cent of RTOs advertised course duration of less than eight weeks" (ASQA 2017b, p. 96)

They found similar, although less severe, problems with the Diploma of Vocational Education and Training. As a result, ASQA implemented a targeted regulatory strategy which is described later in this paper.
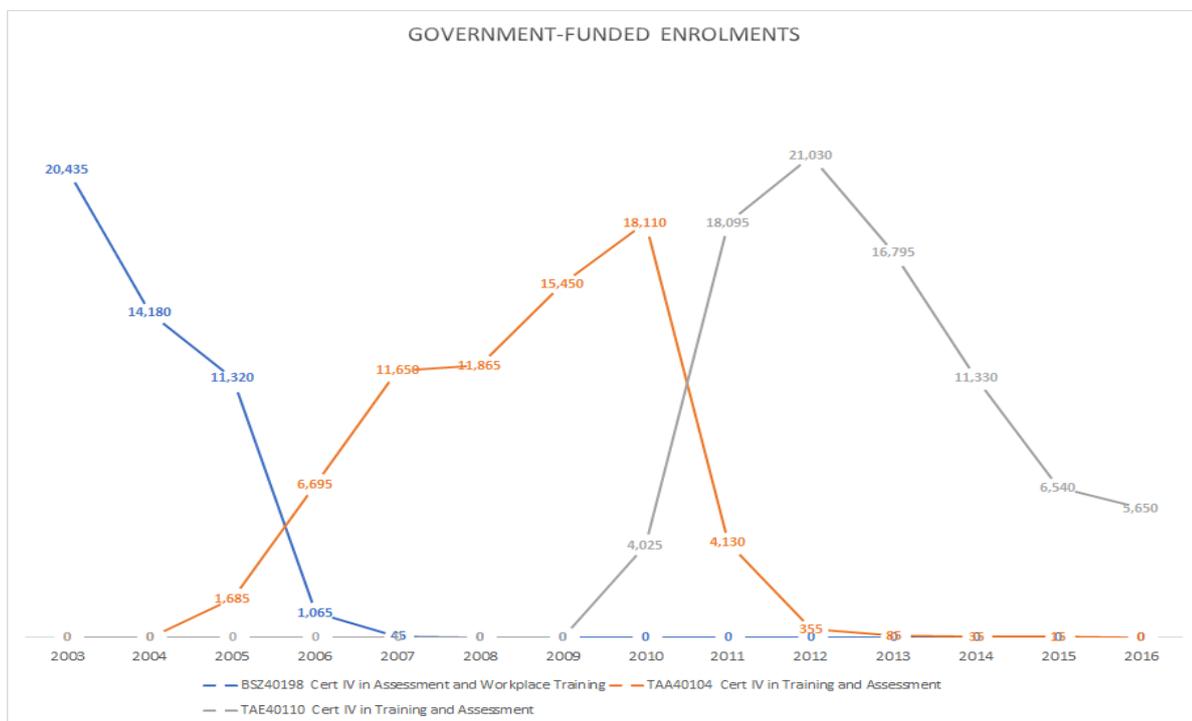
The Certificate IV market

Analysis of NCVER data reveal further problems with the Certificate IV delivery linked to unexpected market consequences and poor control over delivery quality.

The Certificate IV BSZ, TAA and TAE have always had high student numbers (Figure 1).

Figure 1 shows changes in government-funded enrolments in the BSZ, TAA and TAE from 2008 to 2016. The ebbs and flows reflect the progressive replacements of each qualification by its successor. At their peak, each had significant government-funded enrolments. Unfortunately, fee-for-service numbers were not captured until total VET effort data became available in 2014. Therefore, total enrolments across the years are probably significantly understated.

Figure 1: Government-funded enrolment numbers in Certificate IV BSZ98, TAA04 and TAE10 (NCVER data)

NCVER data on total VET activity available from 2014 to 2016 for the Certificate IV TAE10 and data on provider numbers (Figure 2) show that:

1. total student enrolments were very high but declined from 69,500 in 2014 to just over 45,200 in 2016;[7] with a 21% fall in enrolments between 2015 and 2016

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[7] Note, though, that the proportions of government-funded enrolments were low in both 2014 and 2016.

LH Martin Institute | How can VET teacher education and development be improved?

Page 9 of 16

2. in 2016 private providers delivered most provision; significantly, specialist providers for TAE qualifications delivered a higher percentage of delivery hours as fee-for-service compared with non-specialised providers (95% of hours compared with 83%) (Korbel 2018).

3. provider numbers were comparatively low for BSZ98, peaking at nearly 290 in 2002; provider numbers for TAA04 grew rapidly after its introduction and peaked at between 650 to 700 in 2010 and 2011 respectively; provider numbers were high for the TAE10, peaking at around 850 in 2013, and coinciding with unprecedented growth in the sector nationally.

These provider and student enrolment data demonstrate how much the Certificate IV became a 'cash cow'; its attractiveness increased by a 2010 National Quality Council determination (NQC 2010) which gave added impetus to a market for 'quick and dirty' provision.

The determination concerning transition from TAA04 to its successor TAE10 required individuals to either hold the new qualification or demonstrate equivalent competencies. Many individuals found it easier to obtain the new qualification through fast-tracked provision than to demonstrate equivalence. This occurred despite the relevant Industry Skills Council, Innovation and Business Skills Australia's (IBSA 2010) assurance that "… *the newly revised Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification (TAE40110) is equivalent in content and outcome to the existing qualification TAA40104.*"

Figure 2: Provider numbers offering qualifications at Certificate and diploma levels from the BSZ, TAA and TAE training packages
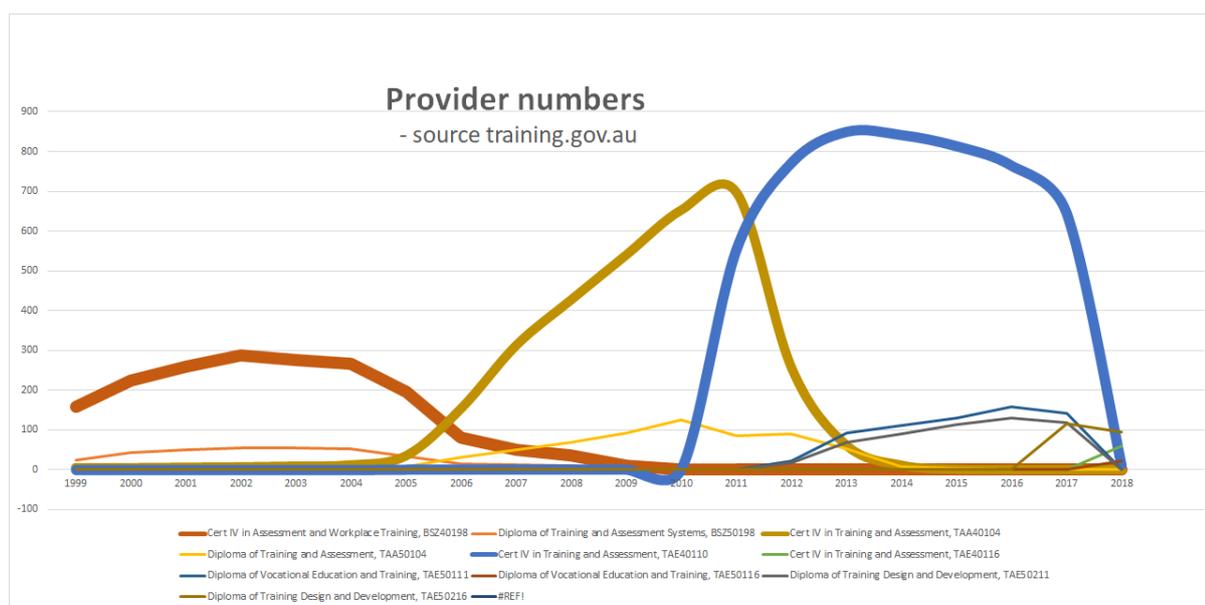
Guthrie & Every (2013) argued that an NQC determination that the Certificate IV TAA10 was equivalent to the TAA04 would have destroyed at a stroke a large proportion of the 'quickie' qualification/requalification market which resulted. There was strong anecdotal evidence that the NQC determination contributed to the continuation of a distorted market for the Certificate IV whilst achieving little significant improvement in the quality of Certificate IV.

We can only conclude that the high level of attention paid to the various versions of the Certificate IV in terms of reviews, audits and research has had a perverse impact on teaching and teacher quality. On the one hand we know a great deal about it. On the other, this distorted focus on form, content and delivery has distracted the attention of policy makers away from how best to provide, fund and manage significant levels of on-going professional and workforce development; including provision of formal qualifications at Diploma level and above.

ASQA implements a targeted regulatory strategy to address issues with the Certificate IV

In a disruptive response to the continuing damning audits and reviews, on 1 April 2016 ASQA issued a media release (ASQA 2016) which stated that:

> ''All registered training organisations, whether currently delivering the old Cert IV TAE qualification (TAE40110) or not, will need to apply to ASQA should they wish to offer the updated [2016] qualification".

This resulted in an almost overnight drop in Certificate IV TAE provider numbers from just over 500 in 2016 to zero. According to training.gov.au, in mid-July 2018 only 86 providers were approved to deliver this new qualification, twenty of these being TAFE or university providers. Sudden action, following years of relative inaction on the prevalent poor provision, has resulted in confusion and revenue loss for many providers. As with VET FEE-HELP and the Victorian Training Guarantee, good providers, as well as poor ones, suffer from, and resent blunt approaches used to solve significant issues (Saccaro & Wright 2018; Guthrie et al., 2014). In this case, however, significant action was necessary and taken – albeit after well-known problems with the successive Certificate IV qualifications had not been substantively addressed for over ten years.

Other actions to improve VET teacher quality and capabilities

There is no doubt that governmental and bureaucratic over reliance on regulation and specification to solve VET teaching and assessment quality problems has not been effective. As this paper was being written the Australian Government announced its latest attempt to remedy VET's ongoing quality issues. In its response to the January 2018 Braithwaite report on the *National Vocational Education and Training Regulator Act 2011* (Australian Government, June 2018) the Government has accepted two out of three of Braithwaite's recommendations relating to VET teaching practice:

- Recommendation 7: The legislative framework be revised to require an RTO to assess the quality of its teaching workforce and develop teacher quality improvement actions, which must be submitted to ASQA annually as a part of the Quality Indicator Annual Summary report (Braithwaite 2018 p. 67)

- Recommendation 8: The Training and Education Training Package be reviewed with the purpose of creating a career path for teaching excellence in vocational education and training (Braithwaite 2018 p. 70).

The Government's response asks the Department of Education and Training to determine the feasibility of implementing these recommendations (Australian Government 2018). The effectiveness of recommendation 7, in particular, will depend on the quality of the dialogue between ASQA and individual RTOs, and on their reaching a mutual understanding of the value of the 'quality improvement actions' proposed. ASQA will need to be attentive to individual provider needs and priorities and therefore flexible in its views of what constitutes quality improvement. Likewise, this will force RTOs to be more mindful about development needs and opportunities and how they can best support these. One limiting issue may be the availability and cost of high quality, relevant and timely professional development opportunities, whether formal or less so.

The nature and role of higher education qualifications

In 2011 Guthrie and his colleagues investigated initial VET teacher training (Guthrie et al., 2011). They found that there were around 22 higher education institutions offering relevant VET teacher or adult educator qualifications although, strictly, they were no longer 'initial' given the mandated Certificate IV. Guthrie & Every repeated this work in 2013 finding then that only 14 higher education institutions were offering such qualifications. Those available in 2013 included associate degrees, bachelor degrees, graduate certificates, graduate diplomas and masters degrees. Since then the number of institutions offering VET and adult education qualifications and their enrolment levels have fallen further, leading to significant loss of experienced VET teacher educators and researchers from the higher education sector.

University-delivered qualifications have survived despite at least two decades of concern with their quality, duration and relevance. This is due to continuing commitment by jurisdictions, providers and individuals to the value of higher education qualifications for enhancing the skills of VET teaching staff. Researchers have also argued for the value of

these qualifications. Smith and her colleagues (2015) gathered the opinions of participating teachers studying higher education VET teaching qualification and found that:

> *"university-level VET teacher education studies help practitioners develop the high level of knowledge and skills required for the complex work of VET teaching, as well as suggesting some further benefits resulting from the dialogue between practitioners and academics."* (Smith et al., 2015 p. 1)

More recent work, which asked the question "Would more highly-qualified teachers and trainers help to address quality problems in the Australian vocational education and training system?" concluded that:

> *"While any type of higher level qualification was helpful, VET pedagogy qualifications had specific utility in pedagogical and assessment matters. The Diploma of VET qualification made a difference here; but the significant difference was at degree level"* (Federation University 2018, p.2)

Associated research has identified lack of time and cost as the most significant barriers to CPD for VET teachers (Tuck & Smith 2017). Additional factors include the nature of the present VET workforce and its career pathways and the attitudes and priorities of members of the VET teaching workforce to their own qualifications and professional development. However, Smith and her colleagues (2015) also identified that the current structure of university teaching qualifications for the VET teaching workforce was considered problematic by some. So, what might change?

We believe there are a number of potential solutions. First, institutions educating VET teachers should understand that they are educating adult career changers and offer credentials at an appropriate level. This means focusing on learning at AQF levels 6 and 8-9, with academic skills development for those who need it. Second, providers must break away from a focus on qualifications and develop programs and other offerings that are both 'tactical' and 'strategic'. By this we mean their offerings are focused on areas of key and immediate interest to VET teachers and their institutions. In this way what they offer addresses relevant topic areas in a specific and timely manner; utilising integrated programs of micro credentials and qualifications as needed. On the other hand, they are strategic in that these tactical offerings could be accumulated towards the attainment of a substantive qualification. In addition, learning experiences could better support multi-directional learning pathways rather than simple hierarchical ones and explore ways to give credit for 'non-standard' learning experiences, including appropriate professional development, in line with possible outcomes of the current review of the Australian Qualifications Framework and the paper developed by Phillips KPA (2018).

For effective delivery, there is now potential for universities, TAFEs and other large higher education providers to work independently or through inter-institutional collaborations to develop and offer programs. There is potential for new collaborative approaches to research into vocational education and its pedagogies to ensure a bright future for applied learning and other vocational pedagogies. It will be important for VET institutions and the sector to continue to work with universities to access research training including at doctoral level. More thought and resourcing are needed to ensure that high quality vocational education research is conducted in universities and in large RTOs.

Where to from here?

In this final section of the paper we look forward from where VET teacher education and development has been for at least the last five decades. There are lessons to be learnt from this history, but we also propose a number of ways forward that need to be considered by our readers. Most especially they need to be considered by those with the power and influence to effect much needed change.

In summary, we have identified issues with initial and continuing VET teacher education and suggested that these relate to sector-wide issues including:

- the real and long-term decline in funding levels, affecting the resources available to support teacher development at jurisdictional and provider levels

- problems arising from market-based VET and its impact on the nature and quality of provision, including adverse effects on the ways in which programs have to be taught and assessed

- a recognition that improved regulation is part of the solution, but not THE solution

- lack of clarity over the sector's missions and focus, which affect the nature and range of teaching staff needed to give effect to VET's variety of missions

- evidence of poor-quality delivery of the mandated Certificate IV, which have hopefully been rectified by ASQA's recent interventions

- evidence of inadequate VET teaching skills in competency assessment, including amongst those teaching the Certificate IV, and

- lack of agreement both about the capabilities and attributes needed by VET teachers and trainers and the initial qualification and subsequent development and support needed to attain these.

We have shown there are also specific and enduring issues in relation to VET's teaching workforce, the qualifications its members hold and their professional development including:

- the lack of comprehensive and consistent workforce planning data. These data, now fortunately being gathered by NCVER, are needed to enable reasoned decisions to be made to assist workforce planning at national, jurisdictional and individual RTO levels, and

- the failure of providers or government to implement long-term strategic VET teaching workforce plans.

Some ways forward are proposed below.

VET needs to be better recognised as a field of education with distinct pedagogical approaches. This view must underpin future planning for VET teacher development.

VET and its teaching workforce need to be acknowledged as a legitimate industry and workforce in their own right. VET and its teachers should not just continue to be seen just as a support to the other sectors of the Australian workforce.

There is no simple fix or 'silver bullet'. The piecemeal approaches adopted in the past have not, and will not, effect substantive change and improvement Rather, the effective solutions needed require sustained, comprehensive and well supported actions. So, the one question we pose is:

> Do we need to authoritative taskforce with considerable powers and influence to look at the issues directly related to, and surrounding, VET teacher education and development to propose a comprehensive set of actions which will actually be implemented?

VET teachers and teacher educators need to be part of the solution. Current expert VET practitioners should be consulted in planning the ways forward. In addition, teachers see themselves as time-poor, burdened by 'administrivia' and adversely affected by unrelenting change. Ways need to be found for teachers to feel they have the time and space to reflect on and improve their teaching practices and maintain their vocational currency and other expertise. All teachers, no matter their employment arrangements, need to be involved.

Further, the range of recognised qualifications for the VET teaching workforce must expand. As we stated at the outset, the expanded rules for mandated qualifications is a step forward, allowing a range of higher AQF level adult education qualifications to be recognised. Importantly, the new rules recognise the diverse roles that many VET teachers undertake, including teaching language, literacy and numeracy to adults, and could be further expanded to recognise fulfilling other important roles - including providing counselling support. It is now up to providers to offer programs that match the need.

VET teacher education and development must be adequately funded. The responsibility for improving VET practitioner development needs to be shared between providers and governments. However, variation in provider size and type means that some providers are better able to manage and support workforce development than others. VET teachers, as professionals, also need to play their part by committing time and even contributing financially to the development and maintenance of their skills. This investment needs to be 'incentivised' in various ways, however. In addition, the Commonwealth should work with jurisdictions and others to ensure that developmental opportunities are available for a range of teaching issues of national significance.

A good starting point would be supporting significant development in teachers' capabilities to assess effectively. In summary, more resources and funding are needed and responsibilities to develop and maintain skills need to be shared fairly.

LH Martin Institute | How can VET teacher education and development be improved?

Page 13 of 16

Provider workplace cultures must enable them quality staff development. Individual RTOs need to play their part. This means paying attention to the quality of leaders and managers and to active support of teaching staff to develop, grow and qualify. At heart of this is a culture and human resource management issue.

The nature and delivery of teaching qualifications beyond the Certificate IV needs attention. Higher education providers, including universities and TAFEs, will play important roles in VET teacher education; however, we believe they must move beyond arguing for their intrinsic worth and instead understand how to make their offerings more relevant and available to a wider pool of potential participants. Some ways forward were proposed in the penultimate section of this paper above.

A range of comprehensive and high-quality professional development experiences and opportunities must be accessible to providers and individual teachers. At present, regretfully, professional development continues to be largely focused on immediate imperatives rather than on pathways to improved practices and lasting change. Available professional development opportunities must include proper induction, support while undertaking initial and subsequent teaching qualifications, support for maintaining vocational and research currency, mentoring support as well as planned and serendipitous access to high quality non- and informal professional development opportunities.

Afterword

As Walker has emphasised VET teachers are the sector's "*most valuable asset and arguably least cared for resource … the quality of the service provided to learners is entirely dependent on the quality and performance of the trainer*" (Walker 2012 p. 1). Sadly, initial and ongoing VET teacher development continues to be relatively ad hoc and focused on those who are more institutionally attached. To remedy this the sector needs institutional and political cultures that value and commit to real professional development rather than merely ensuring compliance through regulation. Key stakeholders must understand that continuing neglect of initial and continuing professional development of VET's teaching workforce will do further reputational damage to the sector and the quality of the education it offers, and at worst may contribute to its eventual demise. Now, more than ever, VET teachers must be highly capable industry practitioners and educators, able to deftly navigate changing the needs of learners amidst societal and industrial disruption. This is particularly the case where technological change demands higher level VET qualifications such as the degree level apprenticeships emerging in Australia.

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LH Martin Institute | How can VET teacher education and development be improved?

Page 15 of 16

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LH Martin Institute | How can VET teacher education and development be improved?

Page 16 of 16