

QUESTIONS FOR CONSULTATION

1. Do you believe the current arrangements for assuring the quality of VET teaching are satisfactory?

We would argue that the starting point for this discussion is to define the role of the VET teacher. We believe that your paper has narrowly defined a VET teacher through the qualification structure, which we believe is the end point in the process. As such we believe a definition based on inputs is far more important. The definition should concentrate on how to develop the individual teacher, and their particular needs, based on the curriculum and pedagogical environment they are required to work in.

There are also VET sector systems and processes that have impacted on the quality of VET teaching. Since 2002 the arrangements for assuring the quality of VET teaching have been part of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). This framework describes standards for teacher induction; minimum VET teaching qualifications; ongoing professional development; and mentoring of unqualified teachers through direct supervision and team assessment arrangements. Under these arrangements Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) are required to have systems in place to ensure that VET teachers are qualified and competent to teach in the units they have been employed for. Why then is there evidence, as discussed by your papers, and anecdotally that there are varying levels in the quality of VET teaching? We argue that whilst the AQTF standards do provide the framework to enable this to happen, in practice this it is not always the case. Teachers play an integral role in the quality of the learning experience for students. Under this quality assurance system how is it that RTOs are able to employ 'VET teachers' without them having the necessary qualifications and competence with little consequences to their registration?

The rigour of the minimum qualification, the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, is also questioned in terms of curriculum structure and how it is delivered ie. provider validity and rigour. We question the level of this qualification as an induction program and suggest that a Certificate III program would be more appropriate. We believe that this program would have a greater uptake as it would provide them with the basic skills and knowledge required to commence teaching eg. VET context, competency based assessment. This program would provide them with the support, and confidence, to both teach and be able to undertake further education, which is not necessarily current practice.

We believe these three elements are impacting negatively on the quality of VET teaching. We would like to see the status of VET teaching raised and we believe this will only be achieved when there is greater trust in adherence to the systems and processes already in place. For this to happen there must be greater RTO compliance with the AQTF VET teaching standards, and resolution of the applicability of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification. We argue that a national VET teachers registration board could be the answer to these issues. However this body would have to have both registration, and accreditation, powers to ensure improvement in the professionalism of the VET teaching workforce.

2. To what extent do the options outline here allow teachers, RTOs and/or VET more broadly to build on existing processes to improve and ensure the quality of VET teaching

There are some very good options discussed in your paper and they should allow individuals and organisations to build on existing processes. However many of them would require substantial changes at the system (or government) level with resultant increased levels of funding in order for them to be achieved. We think that the quality of VET teaching will only improve with individuals, organisations and the VET system (government and stakeholders) working together to improve the process.

3. Do you find helpful the paper's presentation of options in stages: Stage 1 (augmented status quo), Stage 2 (intermediate enhancement), Stage 3 (Ambition)?

We found the presentation of various options to be helpful and in many cases would have a preferred an option 4 ie. a combination of ideas from 1 to 3. We did not find the designations of augmented status quo, intermediate enhancement or ambition helpful in framing our responses. We feel they were value judgements made by the researchers, and did not necessarily reflect the current VET sector environment. In fact some areas that were judged to be aspirational are in fact already the status quo in Victoria eg. options for ongoing professional development.

4. Do you find helpful the paper's analysis of VET teaching into elements?

We found it helpful to respond to the various elements as defined by the researchers. However we did not agree with the priority of the list, and felt some elements should have been discussed earlier than you list suggests eg. accreditation of VET teacher qualifications.

5. Have we missed any element or might some elements be combined?

We thought that many of the elements should have been combined. Where we have thought it was appropriate we have provided responses to combined elements eg. initial and continuing teacher qualifications.

6. Is there any option that we have missed that you believe should be considered?

You have argued in your papers that the VET sector is not homogeneous and we strongly agree with your argument. As such it is difficult to compare VET organisations with each other, however organisations within the same section of the sector can be compared. For example a comparison can be made between TAFEs, enterprise and private RTOs and Adult and Community Education providers.

We would argue that your paper reflects the challenges faced mainly by TAFE providers, which operate in a far more complex environment than do other RTOs. They do not have the same need to cater to the wide range of students, programs, levels and funding sources. Nor do they have the same responsibility for the carriage of government policy eg. employability skills, skills shortages.

We believe that you have based many of your options on the assumption that a VET teacher is a person who is employed in an RTO. However, there are four different types of teachers (and they are generally employed with different teaching qualifications) working across all RTOs. However we would strongly argue that only TAFE institutes would employ all four groups of teachers in the following list due to the complexity of their operations:

- Foundation or further education teacher ie. English as a Second Language, Certificates for General Education for Adults (primary or secondary teacher qualification)
- Secondary teacher ie. VCAL (secondary teacher qualification) and VETiS (VET teacher qualification)
- VET teacher or workplace trainer and assessor ie. Certificate I to IV (VET teacher qualification)
- Tertiary teacher - Diplomas and Advanced Diploma, degrees and vocational certificates and diplomas (teacher qualification to be developed)

Throughout your papers you have argued that the VET sector is industry driven however, we would argue that not all teachers working in a RTO are aligned to an industry, or teach from a Training Package. We would also question the alignment to a specific industry in the delivery of current Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas. We have reviewed six major training packages and have noted that at these levels the qualifications are made up of management units including OHS, strategic planning, human resources management, marketing, finance, leadership, risk management, project management and quality assurance. For this reason we do not see the necessity of being an industry ‘expert’ (unless they are a management expert) to teach these qualifications.

Therefore we argue that there is a need to develop qualifications and standards for the four groups of teachers no matter where they are employed. For example a VET teacher (as per our definition) should be required to have the same teaching qualification, requirement for ongoing professional development and registration if working in a TAFE, private RTO or ACE provider.

OUR RESPONSES TO YOUR OPTIONS

Options for the structure of the VET teaching workforce

We agree with option 3 as this framework provides for different levels of expertise and employment options.

However, we disagree with your categorisation of teachers based on their level of responsibility. We believe the categories should be based on the differing roles of a VET teacher based on their needs according to the student cohort, curriculum and pedagogy structure they teach under. Once these categories are determined then sub-categories as you have suggested, based on levels of responsibility, can be developed.

Developing new ‘master practitioner’ roles

We do not agree with any of your proposed options.

We agree that the development of the master practitioner is an important role in improving the professionalism of the VET teaching workforce. However the options suggested are based on teachers undertaking programs through non educational bodies. We would prefer a more collegiate and mentoring approach. As such we argue that master practitioners should be developed by networks of teacher, both within and external to their organisation (see registration options). Also for this to be successful across a national system that this would be a very expensive option. We believe funding for this option could be spent more effectively on areas of greater need.

Developing new cross sectoral teaching roles

We do not agree with any of your proposed options.

We question who would be attracted to teaching across such a broad range of student cohorts and curriculum/pedagogical environments. We also question that the same person would have the interest, expertise and background (academic or industrial) to be interested in such a diverse teaching position.

Creating a staff collection

We do not believe we have the necessary expertise (from a HR or quality perspective) to comment on any of the options.

Options for entry level VET teaching qualifications

Options for continuing VET teacher education qualifications

We argue that these two elements should be discussed together as we believe VET teacher qualifications, both initial and continuing, should be part of a designated pathway program.

We strongly agree with your model of:

- Induction or pre-service program
- Basic entry level qualification upon commencing teaching
- Higher level qualification as they progress

We believe the current Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is too high level for an induction program. As such it forms an impediment to ‘teachers’ undertaking any accredited training, which is discussed in your papers. New teachers, especially those straight from industry, need support to understand the curriculum; develop lesson plans; develop basic assessment tools; and complete teacher administration tasks. We would suggest a Certificate III program (which is not available in the current Training Package) would be able to address these issues. Attainment of this qualification would provide the support and confidence to enable them to undertake higher qualifications.

We believe there should be a VET teacher pathway that commences within the VET sector (Certificate III) and concludes in the higher education sector (Masters). This pathway will provide an upward progression of the teaching skills and knowledge to become a more experienced teacher. The pedagogical basis for the program, especially in the early stages, should be applied learning, which reflects how they should teach in a vocational environment. We believe the earlier qualifications should concentrate on ‘how’ to teach. As the qualifications develop more complex curriculum and pedagogical elements can be incorporated eg. adult learning, supporting student diversity, curriculum development.

Mentoring and institutional strategies to support new teachers

We agree with option 2.

Mentoring is an important aspect in the development of VET teachers and should be provided at least throughout Certificate III, IV and Diploma levels. For this to be effective mentors will also require additional training and development to fulfil this role. We disagree with option 3 (where mentoring arrangements should only be required in large RTOs) as mentoring should already be in place due to their size of their workforces. However mentoring for teachers in small RTOs is vital as they are often working alone, or in small teams. They may also not be working in an environment where education is the core business eg. enterprise RTOs. We suggest that the VET teacher registration body could provide these services to smaller RTOs.

Options for continuing professional development

We argue that a combination of all three options is desirable.

Continuing professional development should be a shared responsibility between the individual teacher, RTO and VET sector as a whole.

Options for maintaining and extending industry currency

We agree with option 3 although this is the current status in Victoria.

Industry release funding for TAFE teachers has been available through the TAFE Development Centre for a number of years. We particularly like the basis of option 3 that suggests that key performance indicators to drive outcomes of the project eg. development of new curriculum resources, lesson plans.

Options on developing VET pedagogy and models of teaching

We agree with option 3 as a future option.

The establishment of a research centre to undertake research on VET pedagogy and develop the scholarship would be beneficial to the VET sector. We would argue that this is not of a high priority at this stage. Option 1 is preferred until issues of higher priority are resolved.

Accrediting teacher education qualifications

Registering VET teachers

We argue that these two elements should be discussed tougher as we believe that a VET teacher registration board should also have the power to accredit VET teacher qualifications.

We agree that there should be a body that registers VET teachers, along similar lines to the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT). However for it to be most effective it would have to have to define the 'VET teacher' role. From that it would also need the power to determine what qualifications and competence would be most appropriate for this group of teachers.

The greatest advantage to this body should be their ability to accredit VET teacher qualifications. This should give them the power to determine what courses are appropriate and who are reputable providers ie. a list of preferred providers. One of the greatest points of contention both within, and in the greater education community, is the status and validity of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. This list could be accessed by any individual or body that needs to have this information. For example, a higher education institution could use this information to grant credit. We agree that a register of VET teachers, and this body promoting the advantages of this membership is required, as per option 3.

We agree that initial registration should be based on attainment of a minimum VET teaching qualification. However we would argue that re-registration should be based on criteria that are much broader than attainment of higher qualifications. Elsewhere in your paper you have argued for creating different levels of VET teachers; attainment of higher VET teaching qualifications; ongoing professional development and master practitioners. We believe this body could be the solution to these issues through a re-registration process. Through this process teachers would have to identify attainment of higher VET teacher qualifications and/or evidence of ongoing professional development. We particularly like some of the health professional re-registration processes where practitioners have to attain a certain level of points to retain their registration. In these processes all professional development activities are weighted depending on value of the activity. For instance attainment of a higher level qualification would have a higher points value than attending a seminar. This process could then provide a system of categorising membership as discussed in option 2.

If established this will be a substantial professional body based on the numbers of VET teachers currently employed across Australia. As VET is a national system it would follow that this would also be a national body, with state branches. This would result in the determination of qualifications and competence from a body that is not the RTO, which has been problematic for some time. We agree that this has undermined the professionalism of the VET teacher. We also see advantages in a body of this size having subsets based on the major industrial areas. The Victorian VET sector already has an excellent network of VET teacher networks that could be incorporated into this body. Thus this body could have a powerful influence on both the pedagogical and industrial requirements of the VET teacher.

Evaluating the quality of teaching in VET

We argue that a combination of all three options is desirable.

It is important that in the VET sector both curriculum and pedagogy should be evaluated. This is an acknowledgment that VET is a national system and decisions on curriculum, and sometimes pedagogy, are made independently of RTOs and teachers. For instance determination of core/mandatory units, rules on importation of units from other Training Packages. Therefore it is important that any evaluation of VET teaching is undertaken at both the curriculum level (system based) and pedagogy level (teacher or institute based).