

Submission to the Australian College of Educators' The quality of teaching in VET: options paper

Manufacturing Skills Australia

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This report has been prepared by Manufacturing Skills Australia in response to the Australian College of Educator's The quality of teaching in VET: options paper.

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Submission to the Australian College of Educators' options paper 'The quality of teaching in VET'

1. Executive summary

Manufacturing Skills Australia is pleased to be able to respond to the Australian College of Educators' options paper – 'The quality of teaching in VET'.

In its response to the options paper, MSA has addressed a number of key areas. These key areas and MSA's responses are summarised below.

Terminology

Concern is expressed about the use of the term 'teacher' to define the VET workforce who present teaching and learning. Teaching only represents part of the role of a VET professional and neglects the important role of assessment.

Current arrangements for assuring the quality of teaching in VET

Again, MSA is concerned that the options paper makes little reference to the importance of assessment within the VET sector. While MSA agrees that the quality of teaching can enhance the learning experience, the focus of ensuring quality within VET should not be solely on 'teaching' i.e inputs. Feedback received from Industry is that assessment is often poorly done and that there is a reluctance to engage with Industry to gather assessment evidence from the workplace or to provide workplace-based assessment. Vocational education and training is competency-based with the focus on the outcome: competent workers with the skills needed to satisfactorily perform an assigned job role within their place of employment.

The ability of the options to allow teachers, Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), and/or VET to more broadly build on existing processes to improve and ensure the quality of VET teaching

MSA is concerned that the focus of the options paper is on institutional delivery of VET rather than on the broader environment in which VET is delivered and assessed. Industry has identified accredited training and assessment at the workplace level as one of their key requirements from VET. Therefore there is a need for any paper researching the quality of teaching in VET to consider training and assessment that occurs within the workplace.

The paper's presentation of options in stages

While the presentation of options in "stages" could be useful, the lack of explanation of the stages makes it difficult to assess the value of this style of presentation. Even the use of the terminology "stages" is confusing. An explanation of the presentation structure would have been helpful to ensure greater understanding.

Missed elements or elements that could be combined

MSA believes that any study into a framework to improve the quality of teaching in VET must address the issue of assessment. An understanding of the process of assessment -and skills in the conduct of assessment processes - are vital to all VET practitioners regardless of where they work. The VET professional also needs to develop higher-level skills in the development of assessment tools that meet the needs of the person being assessed and are focused on the demonstration of skills and application of knowledge in the workforce.

The elements: *Continuing teacher education qualifications* and *Maintaining teachers' industry currency*, MSA believes are the two elements that form *Continuing professional development* for VET practitioners. While it is useful to clearly identify them for the purpose of analysis, any program

of continuing professional development should and needs to consider both elements. The major issue with continuing professional development is getting the balance of these elements right.

A review of the options proposed

MSA has provided comment on several of the options within the paper. The main focus of MSA's comments has been around the need for a framework that includes the workplace-based assessor and trainer. There is also a need to balance the twin demands of pedagogy and vocational competence to ensure that VET professionals have the skills needed to create an Australia that is "competitive, productive, prosperous, resilient and inclusive"¹.

As well as the need to develop strong foundation skills, there also needs to be qualifications that are aligned appropriately with career opportunities and the work roles and jobs that exist within the sector². MSA supports the introduction of skills sets as an alternate option for the professional development of VET practitioners.

MSA does not support the introduction of an occupational registration system for VET practitioners. The introduction of a national regulatory body for RTOs in 2011 has the potential for leverage on professional standards. There is also the possibility of extending the scope of the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership to include the VET sector. Alternatively a similar role could be incorporated into the new VET regulator.

¹ Wheelahan, L. and Moodie, G. 2010 *The quality of teaching in VET: options paper* LH Martin Institute Melbourne pp5

² Guthrie, H 2010 *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce* NCVET Adelaide

2. About Manufacturing Skills Australia

Manufacturing Skills Australia (MSA) is the national industry skills council recognised by the Australian Government to ensure that the skill needs of the manufacturing and automotive enterprises are being met. It is responsible for workforce development initiatives which include providing industry intelligence and advice to inform government policy, supporting the development, implementation and improvement of nationally recognised training and qualifications, and providing skills and training advice to individual enterprises to assist with training and development processes.

Our vision is to be the pre-eminent organisation in Australia fostering and advocating for the workforce skill development needs of a thriving industry. We provide bi-partisan leadership and value the empowered and informed input of industry stakeholders. We strive to provide high quality information and workforce development resources to support the participation of industry in developing an innovative, highly productive and globally competitive manufacturing industry.

MSA is funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and works closely with Skills Australia, industry associations, unions, training providers, government agencies and employers to continually evolve and improve skills for manufacturing.

3. Terminology

The paper defines the term ‘teacher’ to include:

- Teachers
- Trainers
- Lecturers
- Tutors
- Assessors
- Workplace assessors and/or trainers
- VET practitioners
- VET workplace consultants
- Those who develop courses and modules and learning and assessment materials
- Any other term that may be used to describe those who present teaching and learning³.

MSA is concerned that the use of ‘teacher’ inadvertently focuses attention on only one small part of vocational education and training which is ‘education’ and neglects the more important training and assessment aspects. Vocational education and training has as its focus the demonstration of skills (whether ‘soft’ or ‘hard’ skills) within a work environment. ‘Teaching’ is more about the retention and reproduction of knowledge, not the practical application of knowledge in a work environment.

‘VET professionals’ would perhaps be a more appropriate term. VET professionals may work in a variety of areas within the VET system. They may be managers within a training organisation, technical writers, curriculum developers, resource writers, industry liaison officers, learning and development practitioners etc, as well as “people who present teaching and learning”. Many VET professionals are experts drawn from industry and have worked as VET practitioners before taking on these broader roles. Most have completed tertiary qualifications relative to their roles. Training and assessment may only be a small part of their role.

³ Wheelahan, L. and Moodie, G. 2010 *The quality of teaching in VET: options paper* LH Martin Institute Melbourne pp4

Question 1: do you believe that current arrangements for assuring the quality of VET teaching are satisfactory?

Anecdotal evidence gathered by MSA for its 2010 Environmental Scan⁴ highlighted several issues in relation to the quality of teaching and, more importantly, assessment in VET. MSA is concerned that within the options paper little reference is made to the importance of assessment within the VET sector. While MSA agrees that the quality of teaching can enhance the learning experience, the focus of ensuring quality within VET should not be solely on ‘teaching’ i.e. inputs. Feedback received from Industry is that assessment is often poorly done and there is a reluctance to gather assessment evidence from the workplace or to engage with Industry to provide workplace-based assessment. Vocational education and training is competency-based with the focus on the outcome: competent workers with the skills needed to satisfactorily perform an assigned job role within their place of employment.

Quality teaching is not just about the skills and knowledge of the individual teacher. It is also about the environment within which the teacher operates, whether this is an educational institution or an enterprise’s workplace. It encompasses access to support such as quality resources (human, organisational and physical) and professional development opportunities.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) recently released “*Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce*”⁵ – an occasional paper in which Guthrie argues that “When taught well, the CIV TAA⁶ can provide important foundational training and assessment skills for practitioners entering the field”. MSA agrees that for many VET practitioners, VET-level qualifications are “the appropriate level for them to practise in the vocational areas in which they teach”⁷. However the VET sector is changing rapidly and with it, the role of the VET professional. Information gathered by MSA is that VET professionals need to undertake continuing professional development so that they can gain and maintain the skills required to meet the needs of an **industry-led VET system** that can contribute to a productive Australia⁸.

Question 2: to what extent do the options outlined here allow teachers, RTOs, and/or VET more broadly to build on existing processes to improve and ensure the quality of VET teaching?

MSA is concerned that the focus of the options paper is on institutional delivery of VET rather than on the broader environment in which VET is delivered and assessed. In MSA’s 2010 Environmental Scan, industry identified accredited training and assessment at the workplace level as one of their key requirements of VET⁹. Furthermore, the use of internal workplace training and assessment in collaboration with Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) could assist in reducing capacity constraints in the VET workforce and enhance industry leadership and participation. There is also another potential benefit from engagement with workplace training and assessment for institution-based trainers and assessors – the access to continual professional development in their specialist vocational area. “As a workplace trainer and assessor, I never had to worry about maintaining vocational currency. I had the opportunity to work with all the latest technology when I went into various enterprises” (TAFE NSW Workplace Trainer and Assessor).

⁴ Manufacturing Skills Australia *Environmental Scan 2010*

<http://www.mskills.com.au/Research.aspx?TAG=MSA.Research.MSA&SectorId=78>

⁵ Guthrie, H 2010, *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce*, NCVER Adelaide

⁶ CIV TAA – Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

⁷ Guthrie, H 2010, *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce*, NCVER Adelaide pp 11

⁸ Manufacturing Skills Australia 2010 *Submission to the Vocational Education and Training Workforce study*

<http://www.mskills.com.au/Research.aspx?TAG=MSA.Research.MSA&SectorId=78>

⁹ Manufacturing Skills Australia *Environmental Scan 2010*

<http://www.mskills.com.au/Research.aspx?TAG=MSA.Research.MSA&SectorId=78>

Question 3: do you find helpful the paper’s presentation of options in stages: stage 1 – the augmented status quo, stage 2 – intermediate enhancement, and stage 3 – ambition?

While the presentation of options in “stages” could be useful, the lack of explanation of the stages makes it difficult to assess the value of this style of presentation. Even the use of the terminology “stages” is confusing. Is it proposed that the final model for the preparation and continuing development of VET professionals will endorse a staged approach to implementation? Are the stages sequential? What is meant by “the augmented status quo”; “intermediate enhancement” and “ambition”? An explanation of the presentation structure would have been helpful to ensure greater understanding.

On examination of the options offered throughout the paper, MSA is concerned that the whole of one stage may be chosen for the final model rather than the best option for each element. Further discussion around each element and the preferred option appears later in this submission.

Question 4: do you find helpful the paper’s analysis of VET teaching into elements?

The analysis of VET teaching into elements enables a thorough review. It also assists in identifying gaps within the options paper as outlined in Question 5.

Question 5: have we missed any element or might some elements be combined?

As has been previously mentioned, MSA is concerned that there is little or no mention of assessment skills within the analysis of teaching in VET. Vocational education and training is competency-based not just theory-based.

Competency-based assessment is commonly linked to competency-based training and forms the basis of the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system in Australia.¹⁰

As can be seen by the above description, the focus is on assessment. MSA believes that any study into a framework to improve the quality of teaching in VET must address the issue of assessment. An understanding of the process of assessment and skills in the conduct of assessment processes are vital to all VET practitioners regardless of where they work. The VET professional also needs to develop higher-level skills in the development of assessment tools that meet the needs of the person being assessed and are focused on the demonstration of skills and application of knowledge in the workforce. In 2009 the National Quality Council (NQC) adopted a revised definition of competency to:

“Competency is the consistent application of knowledge and skill to the standard of performance required in the workplace. It embodies the ability to transfer and apply skills and knowledge to new situations and environments.”¹¹

Any review of the quality of teaching in VET must not lose sight of the aim of vocational education and training, which is competence as expected in the workplace. NQC’s review of the quality of assessment practices found that there was widespread dissatisfaction with the quality of assessor training.

¹⁰ Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs 2009 *Competency-based assessment* http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sa/disability/pubs/employers/prorata_wage_research/Pages/comp_based_assess.aspx

¹¹ National Quality Council / Council of Australian Governments Joint Steering Committee 2009 *VET Products for the 21st Century* pp. 5

Furthermore:

“The quality and consistency of assessor training is potentially being compromised by:

- The marked variations in the cost and duration of assessor training programs. According to participants in the consultations this has produced a situation in which some individuals shop around for the ‘least time / least cost’ provider of assessor training.
- The different ways in which RTOs interpret the assessment requirements specified in the Training Package. For example, a number of participants in the workshop questioned how RTOs offering the unit *TAAASS402B Assess Competence* as part of a short program ensure that candidates meet the following requirements specified in the Evidence Guide.”¹²

These findings are in line with industry feedback to MSA.

Within the area of assessment, there is also a need for VET professionals to be skilled in the use of the assessment processes of Recognition of Current Competence/Recognition of Prior Learning (RCC/RPL/Recognition). According to the NQC “Recognition involves identifying, confirming and, where relevant, certifying the competencies that individuals acquire through work and life experience.”¹³ According to a recent article in *Campus Review*¹⁴, Recognition processes are on the increase and are likely to continue to increase as “a qualifications-hungry market collides with an experienced – but not necessarily qualified – workforce”. In the four years from 2005 to 2009, the number of full-year equivalent students securing Recognition increased 250% (from 13,500 to 34,000)¹⁵.

At present, RPL and RCC are not done well, and the complexity of these processes acts as a barrier to the gaining of qualifications via these means. Recently the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) found that some retrenched workers received full qualifications when assisted through skill recognition processes; demonstrating the excellent outcomes that can be achieved when such processes are applied efficiently¹⁶.

One of the key messages from research is that institutions need to ensure mentors and assessors used in Recognition processes have the appropriate skills to successfully assist candidates to undertake these processes. Anecdotal evidence gathered by MSA confirms these findings.

The elements *Continuing teacher education qualifications* and *Maintaining teachers’ industry currency* - MSA believes that these are the two elements that form *Continuing professional development* for VET practitioners. While it is useful to clearly identify them for the purpose of analysis, any program of continuing professional development should - and needs to - consider both elements. The major issue with continuing professional development is getting the balance of these elements right: one cannot be given a higher priority over the other¹⁷. Industry would argue that industry currency should be a priority, yet having VET practitioners with an understanding of pedagogy (as it applies in VET) and competent skills in assessment processes (including Recognition) and training, is essential to providing industry with skilled and competent workers.

¹² National Quality Council, 2009 *Quality of Assessment Practices Stage 1 Report Part A* pp16
http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/49660/Quality_of_Assessment_Practices_-_Stage_1_Report_-_Part_A_-_Optimised.pdf

¹³ National Quality Council, 2009 *Alternative Frameworks for the Recognition of Workplace Training* report pp 5
http://www.nqc.tvetaustralia.com.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/49764/Workplace_Training_Report.pdf

¹⁴ Ross, J. 2010, RPL set to spike *Campus Review Online* 13 September 2010 accessed September 2010

¹⁵ National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2009 *Students and courses report*

¹⁶ Manufacturing Skills Australia, *Environmental Scan 2010* pp 13

¹⁷ Manufacturing Skills Australia 2010 *Submission to the Vocational Education and Training Workforce study*
<http://www.mskills.com.au/Research.aspx?TAG=MSA.Research.MSA&SectorId=78>

Question 6: is there any option that we have missed that you believe should be considered?

As part of the review of the options proposed, MSA has made suggestions regarding possible alternatives.

A review of the options proposed

The structure of the VET teaching workforce

“The favoured option of this paper proposes is that different categories of teachers be defined by the level of responsibility that they have, which is then linked to appropriate preparation for that level of responsibility.”¹⁸

MSA is concerned that the focus is on a person’s level of responsibility, rather than where the person works. By placing the focus on a person’s level of responsibility, there is the risk of creating ‘silos’ of practitioners and a devaluing of the work of a person where training and assessment make up only one aspect of their role (e.g. workplace trainers and assessors who incorporate their role into a larger supervisory role in the workplace). It is important to acknowledge that the work of such people may be at a different level but is of equal value.

Of the options proposed, Option 2 – distinguishing between workplace trainers and assessors and all other VET teachers - is the preferred option with consideration of the issues outlined above. Option 2 is in line with current AQTF requirements¹⁹. Distinction needs to be made between teaching/training and assessing. There are more people doing assessment in the workplace than there are people carrying out both training and assessment. MSA actively promotes workplace assessment for industries within its area of responsibility through the Manufacturing and Engineering Assessment System (MEAS) and Hydrocarbon Assessors Network (HAN). MSA has found that the workplace trainer and assessor plays an integral part in the VET system and this role will continue to grow in importance, as VET strives to meet the demands of an industry-led system²⁰.

It is important to note that nearly 60% of VET practitioners in TAFE are sessional teachers (either working part-time or on contract)²¹. Data relating to the private VET sector is not available. For sessional teachers, training and assessing may be a secondary role. Their value to the training organisation may however be high as they may provide the vocational expertise that is required. Any option chosen will need to ensure that the work of these teachers is not devalued by creating professional silos.

Recruiting and retaining teachers

MSA agrees that VET is facing a crisis due to the ageing of its workforce, the high levels of casualisation and the increase in demand for VET. MSA believes that there needs to be better industrial/institutional arrangements for the casual workforce that includes recognition of the need and support for the professional development of the workforce. Such arrangements would increase the attractiveness of the sector for experienced practitioners from industry.

With regard to the development of “teaching” as a career stream within industries, the recently introduced Australian Modern Awards make some provision for the recognition of workplace trainers and assessors. The Manufacturing and Associated Industries and Occupations Award 2010, for

¹⁸ Wheelahan, L and Moodie, G 2010 *The quality of teaching in VET: options paper* pp 9

¹⁹ Australian Quality Training Framework 2010, *Users’ Guide to the Essential Conditions and Standards for Continuing Registration* Appendix 2

²⁰ Manufacturing Skills Australia *Environmental Scan 2010*

²¹ Guthrie, H (ed.) 2010 *Vocational education and training workforce data 2008: A compendium* NCVER Adelaide

example, recognises the occupation of Principal Supervisor/Trainer/Co-ordinator²². In many workplaces/organisations, training and assessing roles are often incorporated into more broad roles such as learning and development, human resource management, workforce development, etc. There is a danger in developing a “teaching career stream” that will isolate training and assessment from the broader roles. It is important to recognise these roles and their contribution to the quality of VET teaching.

As part of its submission to the National VET Workforce Study, MSA highlighted the need for a comprehensive database on the composition of the VET workforce to enable effective workforce planning. More importantly, MSA believes there is a need for a mechanism by which the VET workforce can be assessed on its ability to achieve key objectives²³. Such data should be collected by NCVET and presented in the same manner as the current Students and Courses reports, etc.

Developing new ‘master practitioner’ roles

MSA is not comfortable with the use of ‘master practitioner’ to describe the role of an experienced VET professional with the responsibility for developing the next generation of practitioners. The explanation of the role of a master practitioner lacks detail and is unclear where the practitioner is located. If the practitioner is located within an enterprise, is the practitioner employed by the enterprise and is the role restricted to the enterprise, or does it have a wider application?

‘Master practitioners’ may be terminology that is suitable for institution-based VET practitioners. Certainly recent work undertaken by TAFE SA Regional Institute would support the identification and development of master practitioner roles within RTOs²⁴. Within an enterprise, a more suitable term may be “Enterprise learning representative”. The United Kingdom has had a Learning Representative scheme in place since 1997 while New Zealand is in the process of introducing a similar scheme.

In both the United Kingdom and New Zealand schemes, the Learning Representative is an employee of the enterprise whose role is to support and encourage employees to undertake learning and development that is of benefit to the enterprise. They also work with management to identify enterprise learning and development needs. In New Zealand the scheme is tied to industry training programs that lead to qualifications²⁵. The New Zealand scheme may be more suitable for Australia, as the learning representative acts an interface between the RTO and the enterprise.

While MSA sees this role as useful in the skilling up of the next generation of VET practitioners, the lack of detail raises more questions than answers and precludes an informed evaluation of the options.

Developing new cross-sectoral teaching roles

MSA believes that cross-sectoral teachers have a place within the VET system, provided that their expertise and professional development is based around the subject matter that they are delivering. As they are working at the school-VET-higher education nexus, such teachers must be experienced and knowledgeable in the industry application of their specialist area. To not have such experience and knowledge would undermine the value of these professionals.

Another potential issue with the development of cross-sectoral teaching roles is industrial arrangements. A recent article by Hare²⁶ highlighted some of the issues involved in relation to cross-sectoral teaching.

²² Australian Modern Awards 2010 *Manufacturing and Associated Industries and Occupations Award 2010*
http://www.fwa.gov.au/documents/modern_awards/award/ma000010/default.htm

²³ Manufacturing Skills Australia 2010 *Submission to the Vocational Education and Training Workforce study*
<http://www.mskills.com.au/Research.aspx?TAG=MSA.Research.MSA&SectorId=78>

²⁴ Mitchell, J 2010 *Brutally honest capability analysis* Campus Review Vol 20 no 17 pp11

²⁵ New Zealand Council of Trade Unions and Skills NZ 2005 *Learning Representatives: an Employer's Guide*

²⁶ Hare, J, 2010 *Tertiary unity splintered by industrial disunity* Campus Review Online accessed September 2010

There may also be issues around the credentials required of such teachers, given that secondary teachers are required to be registered with the various state Boards of Education, and VET practitioners need a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, while university lecturers often don't have or are required to hold a teaching qualification.

Creating a staff collection

MSA supports the creation of a VET workforce collection as an enhancement of NCVER's current collections and reporting procedures. Such data is required to obtain a clear picture of the VET workforce and for the effective professional development of the VET workforce. However MSA questions the relevance and/or value of reporting such data via the proposed My Skills website. In particular, MSA is concerned as to what data would be reported and how the data would be used.

VET teacher preparation and development

It is important to note that there are many reasons for people entering the VET workforce²⁷. While MSA agrees with the preparation and development model identified within the study, concern is expressed that the proposed model could be viewed as a barrier by potential VET practitioners. The induction program in particular should encourage new practitioners by giving them the skills required to confidently and competently provide assessment and training. MSA sees the induction program as perhaps a skill set that provides the foundational skills required. This skill set could be undertaken by all sessional staff in institutions.

The current requirements for assessors as stated in the AQTF are, MSA believes, currently adequate for workplace assessors whose only role within VET is workplace assessment. Making workplace assessors undertake either a full qualification or units of competency, which are not related to their role as workplace assessors, would be met with resistance from both the enterprise and the assessors themselves. The units of competency currently stipulated are all core units from TAE40110 and therefore a workplace assessor has the option of up-skilling to the full qualification if desired or their role changes.

Any induction program would need to include these units to ensure that the needs of workplace assessors are met. Workplace assessors would be able to undertake an induction program that only includes these units, or only complete these units in a broader induction program.

MSA agrees with Guthrie's assertion that "when taught well, the CIV TAA can provide important foundational training and assessment skills for practitioners entering the field"²⁸. The VET sector is the only sector that has a national focus (although the schools system is moving to a National Curriculum). Training Packages have been designed to meet national standards. This places the accreditation of VET practitioners in a unique position.

Anecdotal evidence regarding the delivery and assessment of the CIV TAA supports Clayton's findings of uneven quality, inconsistencies in delivery and the qualification's inability to meet the skill needs of two diverse groups of practitioners – workplace assessors and trainers and institution-based trainers and assessors²⁹. It is not uncommon to hear reports of CIV TAA being delivered in a weekend. Currently there are institutions offering upgrades to the CIV TAE as a half-day workshop.

Regardless of which institution is offering the CIV, assessment is classroom-based. For workplace assessors and trainers, this is not a 'simulated workplace' and does not come close to replicating the context in which they are working. There is a need to ensure that the foundation qualification is competency-based, and assessed within the context of the environment in which the VET practitioner works.

²⁷ Guthrie, H 2010 *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce* NCVER Adelaide

²⁸ Guthrie, H. 2010 *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce* NCVER Adelaide pp16

²⁹ Clayton, B 2010 cited in Guthrie, H 2010 *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce* NCVER Adelaide pp16

MSA agrees that the entry-level credentialed study should be generic. However higher-level credentialed study should focus on ‘continuing professional development’ in the person’s area of technical expertise and on pedagogy. The completion of credentialed study would be just one option within a range of continuing professional development strategies.

MSA supports the idea of nested qualifications. There is a need for these qualifications to also be competency-based and to provide career pathways for VET practitioners. The current Diploma of Training and Assessment does not meet the needs of VET practitioners wanting to up-skill to a higher training and assessment qualification, as can be seen by the low levels of uptake – 1,309 enrolments in 2009³⁰.

Mentoring and institutional strategies to support new teachers

MSA concurs that mentoring for new VET practitioners is a valuable aid. However the proposal for government to use the new ‘Quality Skills Incentive’ as an incentive for institutions to implement, institutionalise and evaluate mentoring schemes would mean that the Quality Skills Incentive would need to be extended to include all RTOs, not just the top 100 as is currently proposed.

To make the mentoring of all new practitioners a requirement of all institutions would be an impost on smaller RTOs, who may not have suitable VET professionals available to act as mentors. Another consideration is recognition and training of mentors within an organisation. There are industrial relations issues to be considered in any of the options put forward in the paper.

Option 3 recommends that a complementary mentoring scheme be established as part of a “VET teachers’ professional association”. MSA would like to draw the authors’ attention to the existing professional associations which are organised around subject matter, e.g. engineering, automotive, science teachers, etc. Such professional associations serve a dual purpose in that not only do they provide support for new practitioners, they also provide professional development opportunities.

Continuing VET teacher education qualifications

MSA agrees that it is no longer possible to define a single type of VET practitioner. The VET sector is very diverse, operating in many different contexts, occupational fields and students with differing needs. Because of this, continuing VET practitioners need to be supported to up-skill through targeted continuing professional development. The form that this professional development takes should be guided by the requirements of the individual practitioner. For example the enterprise-based VET practitioner may require skills to mentor existing workers through the Recognition process, or to support workers with language, literacy and numeracy needs.

Such professional development may not be up-skilling to a higher level qualification. Rather the VET practitioner may undertake a skill set that provides them with the required skills for their enhanced/new role. The skill set could provide advanced standing for a higher-level qualification. This would also have the added benefit of encouraging VET practitioners that are hesitant to undertake a higher-level qualification.

It is important when considering continuing professional development to keep in mind the context in which VET occurs³¹. Increasingly VET is less about standing up in front of a class, and more about blended learning, flexible delivery, on-line and workplace training. Rapidly changing technology is changing the VET workplace and is another area in which VET practitioners will need to be up-skilled. There are also the needs of the ‘remote’ learner, defined here as the learner who is ‘remote’ from the RTO delivering the training, although they may live in a metropolitan area.

One option that has not been considered by the authors is the development of ‘communities of practice’. Communities of practice are being successfully used in other vocational professions such as

³⁰ NCVET VOCSTATS accessed September 2010

³¹ Guthrie, H. 2010 *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce* NCVET Adelaide

nursing and teaching, to provide continuing professional development. MSA supports Guthrie's view that workforce and professional development within VET needs to focus on approaches that develop "a shared vision of professional learning aimed at helping to shift the mental models staff have about their work"³².

Whatever option is chosen, any higher-level qualifications must be competency-based. Credentialed higher-level education alone is not the only answer to the up-skilling of the VET practitioner. Key to effective practitioner preparation and successful continuing professional development is the quality of management and workforce development practices³³.

Continuing professional development/Maintaining and extending industry currency

It is difficult to separate continuing professional development and maintaining and extending industry currency from continuing VET practitioner education qualifications. There are two parts to continuing professional education for VET practitioners: maintaining vocational currency and developing skills/up-skilling in pedagogy. As MSA noted in its submission to the Review of the VET workforce, both areas are of equal importance³⁴. Any discussion of continuing professional development must address both areas.

Maintaining vocational currency can be supported through VET practitioners engaging with industry/enterprises. VET practitioners that are involved with apprentices and trainees have opportunities to engage with industry/enterprises. Such practitioners need to be encouraged to undertake such engagement. For VET practitioners that do not have the same opportunities, there needs to be support provided to enable engagement.

Accrediting teacher education qualifications

MSA does not support the idea of a VET teacher education accrediting body. VET practitioner accreditation should remain within the province of VET because VET qualifications certify "not only that a qualification is at an appropriate standard, but also that it is relevant to a specified job"³⁵. Currently regulation of the VET system is through the regulation of RTOs. With the introduction of a national regulatory body in 2011, there is potential for leverage on professional standards through this body.

There is also the possibility of extending the scope of the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) which is responsible for

- "rigorous national professional standards
- fostering and driving high quality professional development for teachers and school leaders
- working collaboratively across jurisdictions and engaging with key professional bodies"³⁶

This could include the VET sector. Alternatively a similar role could be incorporated into the new VET regulator.

Guthrie suggests that it may be more important to register auditors, technical advisors and other consultants³⁷. This is a point of view shared by MSA's stakeholders who report a restrictive auditing system and inconsistencies of performance between individual auditors³⁸. MSA currently holds bi-

³² Guthrie, H. 2010 *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce* NCVER Adelaide pp 19

³³ Guthrie, H. 2010 *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce* NCVER Adelaide

³⁴ Manufacturing Skills Australia 2010 *Submission to the Vocational Education and Training Workforce study* <http://www.mskills.com.au/Research.aspx?TAG=MSA.Research.MSA&SectorId=78>

³⁵ Wheelahan, L. and Moodie, G 2010 *The quality of teaching in VET: options paper* LH Martin Institute, Melbourne pp 28

³⁶ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/ta/go> accessed September 2010

³⁷ Guthrie, H. 2010 *Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce* NCVER Adelaide pp 26

³⁸ Manufacturing Skills Australia 2010 *Submission to the Vocational Education and Training Workforce study* <http://www.mskills.com.au/Research.aspx?TAG=MSA.Research.MSA&SectorId=78>

annual workshops for all its consultants involved in Training Package development to ensure that they remain current and appropriate.

Evaluating the quality of teaching in VET

MSA believes that evaluation of the quality of teaching in VET should remain under the jurisdiction of NCVER. The Student Outcomes survey, which is the current tool, should be extended to cover not only the publicly funded RTOs but also fee-for-service RTOs.

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