



Victorian TAFE
Association
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The VET Professional and TAFE Teacher Qualifications

A Discussion Paper

2:1

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This paper is the first in the second series of short Monographs produced by the Association. The series has been initiated for a number of reasons, the primary one being that it is timely in the context of a new century to revisit some of the conceptual issues and philosophical principles underpinning the TAFE sector.

The sector has undergone radical transformation over the last few decades since the recommendations of the groundbreaking Kangan report were transformed into public policy. Rapid and sweeping changes have led to continued confusion about the roles and practices of contemporary TAFE, contributing to an undervaluing of the crucial role TAFE plays in the community and economy. This Monograph Series is one part of the Association's strategy to initiate public debate and comment on these issues.

In conjunction with this series, a longer, more wide-reaching research project with a similar purpose is being planned, which is expected to be available for distribution

around mid-2001. After the release of each Monograph, a forum will be held during which the Monograph issue will be discussed, enabling the Association to get feedback and stimulate debate.

We are pleased to announce that The Hon. Senator Kim Carr, Manager of Opposition Business in the Senate, will be the speaker for this monograph seminar which will be held at the city campus of William Angliss Institute of TAFE on Wednesday the 14th of March 2001.

If you would like to comment on this paper, attend the luncheon seminar, contribute to the larger project or suggest other issues for comment, please feel free to contact the Association's offices.

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This monograph is intended as a discussion paper and as such the views expressed in it do not necessarily reflect the views of the Victorian TAFE Association Inc.

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ABBREVIATIONS USED

AEU	Australian Education Union	OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
ANTA	Australian National Training Authority	STB	State Training Board
ARF	Australian Recognition Framework	TAFE	technical and further education
CBT	competency based training	UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
COTTE	Committee on Technical Teacher Education	VET	vocational education and training
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research	VTA	Victorian TAFE Association
NQQAA	National Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority		

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INTRODUCTION

The ideals of education, like all other ideals, are no doubt incapable of final realization. Yet the desired goal must be formulated, however unattainable it may seem, for even a small advance towards a good end is manifestly better than a small change in a bad direction or in no direction at all.¹

Teaching is currently receiving significant media and research attention both locally and abroad. In the lead up to the Australian federal election, education rates as one of the highest concerns to voters, and with it there is much discussion about teachers and teaching. The issue is further highlighted by the flurry of recent Victorian and national reports into education that all address teaching in some way.² These reports, and the majority of the media attention given to the issue, suggest that teaching is an undervalued profession.

Both locally and internationally we are witnessing an increasing realisation that as the world enters the twenty-first century - characterised by further globalisation and the precedence of the 'knowledge economy' - education and thus teaching are crucial to the prosperity of all societies. While the majority of these discussions focus almost exclusively on school teaching (an issue to which we will return later), there have also been very significant developments in vocational education and training (VET) teacher preparation.

The purpose of this discussion paper is to canvass some of the issues surrounding the on-going professionalisation of VET teachers. There is a large body of national and international evidence and research to draw upon and a number of issues to consider which gives us some indication of how significant and relevant the topic is. Indeed, VET professionalism is listed as a key priority area in the Australian National Training Authority's (ANTA) National Strategy.³

The paper will be divided into six parts, beginning in the remainder of the introduction with a description of recent developments in the area of VET teacher/trainer development. Part 1 will then reiterate in more detail the value of teachers and education generally, and we will move in Part 2 to a discussion of the differences between VET and other teachers. Part 3 will focus on the concept of what a profession is and Parts 4 and 5 will address both the potential positives and negatives of further professionalising VET teachers.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF DEVELOPMENTS IN VET TEACHER TRAINING

Serious systemic attention was not really directed toward improving the quality and standing of VET teachers and trainers until the iconic Kangan report in the mid-70s. Indeed, VET itself was not given due respect until Kangan, and this period is considered by many to be the beginning of modern Australian technical and further

1 Norman M. Goble and James F. Porter, *The Changing Role of the Teacher: International Perspectives* (Paris: International Bureau of Education, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 1977).

2 These include: Senator Jacinta Collins (Chair), *Aspiring to Excellence: Report into the Quality of Vocational Education and Training in Australia* (Canberra: Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee, Commonwealth Government, 2000); Lindsay Connors (Chair), *Public Education: The Next Generation: Report of the Ministerial Working Party* (Melbourne: Department of Education, Employment and Training, Victoria, 2000); Peter Kirby (Chair), *Ministerial Review of Post Compulsory Education and Training Pathways: Final Report* (Melbourne: Office of Post Compulsory Education, Training and Employment, 2000); and Kaye Schofield, *Delivering Quality: Report of the Independent Review of the Quality of Training in Victoria's Apprenticeship and Traineeship System* (Melbourne: Office of Post Compulsory Education, Employment and Training, 2000), Vols 1 and 2.

3 See the ANTA website: http://www.anta.gov.au/abc/ABC_National_Strategy.HTM

education (TAFE). Kangan took the sector and the professionals working within it seriously and offered them a sense of identity for the first time.

A significant inquiry, known as the Fleming Inquiry, arose from the Kangan recommendations.⁵ A Committee on Technical Teacher Education (COTTE) was formed to address the formal preparation of TAFE teachers in Australia and they tabled a report in Parliament in 1975. Due to other political factors, the report was not considered by Government until the late 1970s when the Tertiary Education Commission released recommendations on the formal preparation of TAFE teachers.⁶

The Fleming report is significant for its insistence on the pedagogical preparation – that is, the ability to teach – of TAFE teachers.⁷ For many, it marked the beginning of an acknowledgment that to teach well it is not enough to understand the subject being taught; teaching skills are also required. However, these recommendations, while significant at the time, were fairly weak and according to many subsequent analyses, this period and the ensuing decade were characterised by a "lack of confidence" and "superficiality" in thinking about TAFE teacher education.⁸

While TAFE teaching has developed consistently since then, the turn of the new century has brought with it significant general interest in teaching. Notably, the federal Adey report of 1998, which aimed to establish national standards and guidelines for initial school teacher training, was funded under the *Projects of National Significance*.⁹ Two other important reports around this time addressed the status of teaching and teachers – the state-based New South Wales report known as the Ramsey report¹⁰ and the report by the Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *A Class Act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*.¹¹

More recent government inquiries and reviews into education have built upon these reports, and all have given significant attention to teaching. Initial teacher training and on-going professional development have been widely discussed. While the Commonwealth released a national strategy for school teacher professional development in 2000, governments continue to come under fire for inadequately resourcing the strategy and for practically ignoring the issue of professional development in relation to non-school teachers. The Commonwealth, via ANTA, has implemented various professional development programs,¹² but systemic change has been weak.

4 Myer Kangan, *TAFE in Australia: Report on Needs in Technical and Further Education* (Canberra: Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education, Australian Government, 1974).

5 P. W. I. Fleming (Chair), *The Formal Preparation of TAFE Teachers in Australia: A Report to the Council by the Staff Development Advisory Committee* (Canberra: Tertiary Education Commission Technical and Further Education, 1978).

6 For further explanation, see: Clive Chappell, Andrew Gonczi, and Paul Hager, "Kangan and Developments in TAFE Teacher Education", *The Australian TAFE Teacher* 28.4 (1994) p58.

7 Op. cit., Fleming, p98.

8 Op. cit., Chappell, Gonczi and Hager, p59.

9 Professor Kym L. Adey (Chair), *Preparing a Profession: Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project* (O'Connor, ACT: Australian Council of Deans of Education, 1998).

10 Dr Gregor Ramsey (Chair), *Raising the Standing of Teachers and Training: Review of Teacher Education in NSW* (Sydney: NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching, 1997).

11 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *A Class Act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession* (Canberra, 1998).

12 Two examples of such programs are *Framing the Future* and *Learnscope*. For more information see the ANTA web-site at <http://www.anta.gov.au/>

However, great changes seem set to occur in this area in the coming year. A landmark report into the quality of VET in Australia by the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee recommended that its proposed National Qualifications and Quality Assurance Authority (NQQAA) should take on the role of setting and overseeing national professional teaching standards and function as a registration body in order to help restore the skills and qualifications of VET teachers.¹³

Another of the report's recommendations, which is currently being considered, is the amendment of the Australian Recognition Framework (ARF) so that the registration of training providers is conditional upon their staff holding minimum teacher training qualifications. Part of the consideration includes a review of the required qualification level, which currently stands at Certificate IV. These developments demonstrate the level of interest in VET teaching and qualifications despite VET's conspicuous absence in public discussions about teaching in general.

As will also become clear throughout this paper, interest in teaching – both general and VET – is an international phenomenon. Teacher education has been hotly debated in the United States following dramatic education reforms in the 1980s and beyond. Of particular relevance here is *The Unfinished Agenda* report produced by the National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education in 1985, which suggested that vocational education teachers should attain the same level of education as general school teachers.¹⁴ This and subsequent developments in VET teacher training in the United States have attempted to address a critical question: "[w]hat is the optimum mix of preparation studies and experience for vocational teachers?"¹⁵

Another very interesting international project focusing on VET teaching is the EUROPROF Project. EUROPROF is a two year research project by sixteen European partners looking at the professionalisation of VET. It aims to "develop new qualifications for VET professionals, planners, teachers and trainers, through a European Masters qualification to be offered in universities in different European countries."¹⁶ Much of the research conducted for the project is relevant in an Australian context and will therefore be drawn upon in this paper.

13 Op. cit., Collins, p169.

14 *The Unfinished Agenda: The Role of Vocational Education in the High School* (Columbus: National Commission on Secondary Vocational Education with the National Centre for Research in Vocational Education, Ohio State University, 1985).

15 Curtis R. Finch, *Teacher Preparation, Qualifications, and Demands: Working Papers* (Berkeley, California: National Centre for Research in Vocational Education, University of California, 1991) p4.

16 *The Eight Cornerstones of the EUROPROF Project* (Bremen: University of Bremen, 1997) www.itb.uni-bremen.de/projekte/europrof/page_3.htm

Before delving into a discussion relating specifically to VET teaching and teachers, it is worth reflecting briefly on the value of teachers in general. While teaching is generally regarded in the community as an important job, it has suffered from something of an image crisis at various times. It is sometimes regarded as a 'soft option' and is certainly not always accorded the respect of other professions, as the dubious prefix 'para' in para-professional (which is how teaching is often described) attests. The 1997 Adey report into developing national guidelines into teacher education (cited previously) suggested that public uncertainty and concern over teacher education "most likely ... has its genesis in the lack of knowledge of the content, development and demands associated with contemporary [teacher preparation] courses...".¹⁷ This is equally, and perhaps even more true of the public perception of VET teacher preparation.

Furthermore, teaching skills are sometimes considered 'soft' skills and have been traditionally undervalued in opposition to scientific and technical knowledge.¹⁸ The reasons for this are complex but no doubt include societal attitudes about what constitutes valuable knowledge and skills. Research suggests that these attitudes are inflected for example by gender, in that skills associated with teaching are stereotypically associated with women.¹⁹ While such attitudes are shifting, their legacy remains.

So why are teachers important? This question must be preceded by the question of why education and training are important. There is not space enough here to do justice to all the reasons education and training are valuable to individuals and communities, but it is important to note that the benefits of education and training are well-recognised nationally and internationally and include both economic and non-economic benefits.

It is now widely accepted that education has tangible and non-tangible economic benefits for individuals, for whom economic freedom, principally gained via earning capacity, is closely tied to their educational level. The tangible economic benefits of education to communities and nations such as increased productivity and tax revenue are routinely acknowledged, and the non-tangible economic benefits of education such as the link between education levels and the likelihood of avoiding welfare dependency are now gaining greater recognition.

Arguably more important are the non-economic benefits of education – again to both the individual and the community. The lynch-pin of participatory democracy is an educated society. Universal public education is essential for the development of full citizenship and the more highly educated, the more highly developed a country's citizens are. Moreover, the positive effects of learning on self-esteem, confidence and self-worth cannot be underestimated – nor can the attainment of social capital. Education is as crucial to our citizens and society as it is to our economy.

17 Op. cit., Adey, p1.

18 Jocelyn Robson, "A Profession in Crisis: Status, Culture and Identity in the Further Education College", *Journal of Vocational Education and Training* 50.4 (1998) p589.

19 See, for example, K. Brady, "Teaching as Women's Work?" *Teaching and Teachers Work* 6.4 (December 1998) pp1-12; and, S. Jaehrling, *Mothers and Moral Guardians: The Conflict Between Feminization and Professionalization in the Semi-Professions of Librarianship, Teaching and Social Work* (Clayton, Victoria: Monash University, 1994).

Of course, both commonsense and research indicate that the quality of teachers is a fundamental element of any decent education system. The recent report arising from the Victorian inquiry into post-compulsory education and training pathways for young people (known as the Kirby report) perhaps put it most succinctly when it said that "[i]n the much-disputed area of educational theory and research, possibly the most consistent and undisputed finding is that the quality of teaching is a major factor in the quality of learning outcomes."²⁰

Several major international education research projects have cited the importance of teachers to quality education. This importance is two-fold. Firstly, as the seminal United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) report *Learning: The Treasure Within* suggests, teachers "are instrumental in the development of attitudes – positive or negative – to learning."²¹ Good teachers create life-long learners. Research by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also confirms the "importance of teacher quality in promoting student achievement."²²

Secondly, research by these bodies indicates that teachers are crucial to educational reform. Delors states that "[n]o reform has succeeded against teachers or without their participation."²³ This is particularly pertinent given that, as other UNESCO research found, a "changing world requires a changing style of education."²⁴ Education has been subjected to massive reform all over the world – probably nowhere more so than in the Australian VET sector!

Teachers' involvement in these changes is integral to their success and unfortunately, here – as elsewhere according to EUROPROF²⁵ – teachers have often been left out of the development of the reform process and have instead been subjected to it. The consequences of this include active resistance to reforms and potentially less helpful reforms themselves. This is especially worrying given the importance of quality education to all individuals and societies in the new century.

20 Op. cit., Kirby, p136.

21 Jacques Delors (Chair), *Learning: The Treasure Within: Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century* (Paris: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), 1996) p141.

22 *Quality in Teaching* (Paris: Centre for Educational Research and Innovation, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 1994) p15.

23 Op. cit., Delors, p145.

24 Op. cit., Goble and Porter, p11.

25 Anja Heikkinen, "Changes in Vocational Teachers' Conceptions of Their Work", *EUROPROF*. (1997) www.itb.uni-bremen.de/projekte/europrof/page_3.htm, p13.

2.1 Undervaluing VET teachers

As briefly addressed above, it is clear that teaching is not always accorded the respect it deserves. When one considers *vocational* or *TAFE* teaching, the situation is often worsened as VET teachers and trainers frequently suffer all the prejudices that VET itself suffers. The societal perception of teaching as a 'feminine' profession is also relevant here, as are the further class associations with TAFE that persist. Hierarchies of knowledge and skill are underpinned by hierarchies based on class and gender, and VET teachers are especially vulnerable to these prejudices.

The fact that in common parlance the word teacher refers generically to 'school teacher' unless otherwise stated is possibly indicative of the inferior status accorded to VET educators. Perhaps a further example of this is the fact that school teachers can and often do teach in VET institutions but VET teachers cannot teach in schools (unless they are also school teachers).

The point of course is not to insist that VET teachers are better than school teachers nor to insist that they are the same. As the Fleming inquiry (and numerous others since) found, there are great differences between VET and school teaching and thus it recommended "a move away from the school teacher model of teacher education on the grounds that TAFE teachers and TAFE students had needs that were different from their school counterparts."²⁶ It supports this assertion by drawing attention to the vastly different institutional structures in VET, as well as important differences in student demographics (most VET students are part-time for example).²⁷

While there are a number of practical reasons why teachers without VET teacher qualifications are employed in the VET sector, it is worth considering the effect this has on the identity and status of VET professionals. Delors suggests that "[q]ualified teachers ... are often in short supply for vocational education, a situation that does nothing to improve its image."²⁸

2.2 Technical v. pedagogical skill

Perhaps the greatest common factor to all types of quality teaching is the requirement for pedagogical skills. These skills have traditionally been undervalued in VET teaching both locally and internationally, and due to the vocational nature of VET, technical skills have been thought of as far more important than pedagogical ones.

Discussing the Finnish VET system for example, Anja Heikkinen points out that the pedagogical competence of VET trainers was formerly thought of as quite irrelevant in Finland and that despite the professionalisation of the system, insufficient attention to educational theory persisted until recently²⁹. Similarly, Curtis Finch's research into the United States' VET system found that "vocational teacher preparation programs

26 Op. cit., Chappell, Gonczi and Hager, p58/59.

27 Op. cit., Fleming, p75.

28 Op. cit., Delors, p150.

29 Op. cit., Heikkinen, p3 & p7.

gave little attention to preparation for teaching basic skills...³⁰ and Jocelyn Robson's research in the UK found an undervaluing of the further education teacher's role *as a teacher*.³¹

This perception that *teacher* training is not relevant to VET teachers persists despite almost universal concurrence by educationalists that, as Delors puts it, a "careful balance has to be struck between competence in the subject taught and competence in training."³² Similarly, in its submission to the recent Senate Inquiry into the quality of Australian VET, the Australian Education Union (AEU) stressed the necessity for both teacher qualifications (including pedagogical and methodological skills) and industry qualifications and experience.³³

It is sometimes argued that VET teaching is employment focussed and therefore requires little more than the preparation of people for work and, in turn, that this consists of teaching students technical skills to be used in the work-place. This argument contains a number of assumptions and can be challenged on many levels.

Firstly, while the focus of VET is on vocational skills, the development of such skills is not the *exclusive* focus of VET. The purpose of VET has always been much broader than preparing students for work and, whether acknowledged or not, VET includes many of the benefits of general education including life and employment skills that are not specific to one industry or employer. What are known as the Mayer competencies are just as important to VET as other forms of education and training.³⁴ Suggestions to the contrary sell VET and VET teachers short.

Moreover, even if we maintain the assumption that VET is exclusively about the development of employment skills, it is clear that the teaching of so-called "work skills" requires good teaching and, just as importantly, that existing employers and the emerging work-force require generic and transferable (so-called 'soft') skills such as team-work, communication and critical thinking.³⁵ As part of the EUROPROF project, Per-Erik Ellstrom argues that much research into VET is ill-informed by the "technical-rational" perspective which problematically assumes a narrowly functionalist view of the relations between education and work.³⁶ In an era when many jobs of the short-term future have not even been created yet and of almost guaranteed job migration, transferable skills are possibly even more critical than job and employer specific technical skills.

While the technical skills of VET teachers have been and still are crucial to quality teaching, so too is their ability to actually teach them. This is arguably more important given the importance of transferable skills which one would think the teacher must possess themselves to be able to teach them effectively. For this reason, the

30 Op. cit., Finch, p10.

32 Op. cit., Delors, p149. See also, op. cit. *Quality in Teaching*, pp10-14.

33 Cited in op. cit., Collins, p117.

34 Ref. Eric Mayer (Chair), *Putting General Education to Work: The Key Competencies Report* (Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia, 1992).

35 See the landmark report: AC Nielson, *Employer Satisfaction with Graduate Skills: Research Report* (Evaluations and Investigations Programme, Higher Education Division, Department of Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs, February 2000).

36 Per-Erik Ellstrom, "The Many Meanings of Occupational Competence and Qualification", *EUROPROF* (1997) www.itb.uni-bremen.de/projekte/europrof/page_3.htm, p1.

EUROPROF project suggests that the new occupational profiles for VET professionals "will be multi-dimensional – in the sense of bringing together vocational skill with pedagogic skills and in the sense that vocationally organised work is itself becoming multi-dimensional."³⁷

The pedagogical requirements of VET teachers have been acknowledged in various parts of the VET sector in Australia for some time. The Fleming report encouraged a shift in perception of VET teachers from practitioners to teachers³⁸ and recommended that an induction course of at least two weeks duration with an emphasis on basic teaching skills be implemented in TAFE.³⁹ However, many believe that such a course would not sufficiently prepare VET teachers, criticising the assumption that due to VET teachers' prior work experience and maturity, anything other than minimal teacher preparation was not necessary.⁴⁰

2.3 Academic v. VET teaching/knowledge

The binary of technical versus pedagogical skill of VET teachers is also affected by assumptions about what VET teachers actually teach. This binary is, in turn, underpinned by a problematic division between vocational or technical knowledge on the one hand, and general or academic knowledge on the other. Chappell, Gonczi and Hager suggest that this division was reinforced by reforms arising from Kangan despite (as they point out) the fact that Kangan specifically "urged that this dichotomy needed to be overcome."⁴¹

There is a long history of criticism of what is perceived to be the arbitrary division between general and vocational education. As briefly mentioned above, in contemporary terms, much of this is based on the acknowledgment that transferable, generic (that is, general) skills are required for work and thus must form part of vocational education. One could also argue that many of the outcomes of general education are potentially achieved by vocational education.

The introduction of competency based training (CBT) in VET has been accompanied by criticism from many stakeholders in the VET sector, including a number of teachers. ANTA defines CBT as:

*The specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standard of performance expected in the workplace.*⁴²

In lay terms, CBT is based on measuring vocational standards of competence by assessing whether or not someone can actually do something. That is, if a student can demonstrate a skill, they are considered to have sufficient competency in that skill.

37 Graham Attwell, "Pressures for Change in the Education of Vocational Education and Training Professionals", *EUROPROF* (1997) www.itb.uni-bremen.de/projekte/europrof/page_3.htm, p13.

38 Op. cit., Chappell, Gonczi and Hager, p59.

39 Op. cit., Fleming, p76.

40 Fleming makes such an assumption, see: *ibid.*, p77.

41 Op. cit., Chappell, Gonczi and Hager, p59.

42 Josie Misko, *Competency-Based Training: Review of Research* (Leabrook, SA: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 1999) p1.

Some educators believe that this modularised and outcome-focussed style of education undermines the pedagogical relationship between teachers and students. It is argued that *how* someone learns something is just as important as what they learn, if what they learn is going to be transferable to other contexts. This argument is very complex (and, indeed, has its critics)⁴³, but a simplistic example could suggest that if a student can demonstrate how to change the fan-belt on a Ford, that does not mean that s/he will necessarily be able to change one on another car or in another work-shop.

In short, some stakeholders argue that CBT undermines the teacher's role by reducing her/him to an assessor rather than a teacher. Training Packages (which have recently been introduced into the Australian VET system and which are underpinned by a CBT model) have been criticised along these lines.⁴⁴ They have also come under persistent criticism for not including the perspective of teachers - having been developed almost exclusively via industry input.

Training Packages are endorsed by ANTA and it has been argued that even if they don't in themselves undermine the role of the teacher, ANTA's lack of consultation with VET teachers in the development of them does point to an undervaluing of teachers' expertise. This is compounded by the lack of teacher and/or educationalist representation in the ANTA Board. ANTA, as the peak representative body for VET in Australia, must demonstrate a public commitment to VET teachers if their role is to be valued more highly.

2.4 Who are VET teachers and what do they do?

"My primary role is that of a classroom teacher, although this by no means represents the majority of my time allocation."⁴⁵

The role of VET teachers and trainers has changed considerably in recent years with massive reform in the sector that "has redefined the nature of teachers' work."⁴⁶ In essence, the influence of neo-liberal thinking with an emphasis on competition, economic efficiency and entrepreneurialism has arguably meant that VET teachers have come to resemble business people more closely. A State Training Board (STB) report found that the non-teaching role of VET teachers was significantly increasing and their role was expanding to include more administrative responsibilities and commercial activity.⁴⁷

There are mixed feelings and thoughts about this trend, and it could be argued on the one hand that such a trend offers opportunities for the increased professionalisation of VET teachers as their roles expand and they gain new skills and recognition. Equally, it could be argued that this trend has undermined the *teaching* role of VET teachers

43 Many supporters of Training Packages argue that they allow the teacher greater flexibility, thus enhancing their professionalism and improving the quality of learning. See Moira Scollay, CEO of ANTA's, article, "Pedagogy and the Training Package: The Ideal Learner's Combo." *Campus Review* (22-28 March 2000:12)

44 See for example, Op. cit., Robson, p592.

45 *TAFE: A Time of Change: What TAFE Teachers Feel About Their Changing Roles* (Melbourne: State Training Board, 1992) p4.

46 Chandra Shah, *Employment Shifts in the TAFE Workforce in Victoria, 1993-98*, Working Paper No. 27 (Melbourne: Centre for the Economics of Education and Training, Monash University, 2000) p2.

47 Op. cit., *TAFE: A Time of Change* p9.

and has consequently de-professionalised them (if we understand professionalism as best teaching practice).

Either way, it is clear that VET teachers have not been involved in the reform process as adequately as they could have been and that their expertise and input has not been taken seriously enough. As early as 1992 – well before neo-liberal reforms had really taken hold in the sector – VET teachers felt uneasy about the reforms occurring around them and felt that their role was being reduced to making a profit for the institution rather than achieving positive learning outcomes.⁴⁸ This is not specific to the VET sector and, indeed, the Connors report into public schooling also found that key stakeholders were distressed about the amount of time spent by teachers on non-teaching tasks.⁴⁹

A further finding of the STB report was that staff "have strong attitudes towards the perceived lack of teacher training for contract staff and on-going training of all staff."⁵⁰ This issue has come up time and time again in various settings and, in short, it is suggested that the increasing casualisation of the VET work-force has meant practically that the educational qualifications of the work-force overall have dropped, representing a de-skilling of VET teachers.⁵¹ The previous practice in TAFE was for institutes to recruit industry people and provide them with teacher training, but increasing casualisation of teaching staff has led to a situation whereby "there may not be requirements for hourly paid teachers to be qualified in education, though in most cases they hold relevant industry qualifications and experience."⁵² This is particularly acute in relation to private providers whose teachers and trainers generally hold overall lower qualifications than those in public TAFE Institutes.⁵³

The issue of whether or not the expansion of VET teachers' roles represents a de-professionalising of the work-force depends on your definition of 'professional' (as the next section will suggest in more detail) and, potentially, whether teaching or technical skills are more highly valued. For example, it is argued that another consequence of the reforms of recent years has been increased industry responsiveness. This has led to greater levels of industry input into VET curricula and to more on-the-job training which, it is argued, has meant that VET teachers' industry or technical skills have been more relevant and up-to-date than they had been in previous years.

However, while this may be true, the expansion of the private training market, and in particular the increase in on-the-job training, has led many stakeholders (including the VTA) to ask the question of who is assessing the assessor? While there are undoubtedly many benefits to on-the-job training, placing a

48 Ibid., pp7 & 9.

49 Op. cit., Connors, pp42/43.

50 Op. cit., *TAFE: A Time of Change*, p9.

51 See "Volume 1: Summary" (especially, p29) of an OTFE report that pointed to this issue: Glen Villiens et.al. *Staff Training and Development in the TAFE Sector of the State Training System*, (Melbourne: Office of Training and Further Education, 1997)

52 Op. cit., Collins, p117.

53 For example, the preliminary findings of a current research project into Victorian sessional VET teachers suggests that public sector sessionals are more likely to hold higher overall educational qualifications than private sector sessionals. See Table 4.2 "Highest teaching or training qualifications held." David Gaulke (Project Manager), *Training the TAFE sessional workforce: sessional teachers, tutors, trainers in the TAFE sector – Preliminary Findings*, (Melbourne: Box Hill Institute of TAFE with Market Share, January 2001)

student in an environment where there is the possibility that no-one can actually teach is potentially a waste of time, no matter how much contemporary and relevant technical competence everyone has. Work-place trainers are assuming a greater and greater role in VET and despite this, little attention has been paid to them. In fact,

a recent National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) study found that the "penetration and impact of workplace trainer competency standards are low."⁵⁴

All the reforms in VET over the preceding decade have led to the seemingly contradictory situation whereby the qualifications available for VET practitioners have increased, while the entry standards required by employing authorities have (as the Senate inquiry indicated⁵⁵) decreased.

As Chappell, Gonczi and Hager suggest, the quality and quantity of training available to VET teachers has been increasing (albeit slowly) since Kangan, climaxing in the 1990s with university degree level qualifications.⁵⁶ However, as Chandra Shah suggests and as Erica Smith observed in her submission to the Senate Inquiry, most states don't require VET teachers to have education qualifications, and a Certificate IV in Workplace Training and Assessment is becoming the minimum and maximum qualification.⁵⁷ Paul Byrne suggests that we should contrast this with, for example, the mandatory requirement for post-graduate qualifications in teaching for school-teachers, in order to understand one of the reasons why VET teachers and trainers are not always regarded as professionals.⁵⁸

54 Roger Harris et. al., *More Than Meets the Eye? Rethinking the Role of the Workplace Trainer* (Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), 2000) <http://ncver.edu.au/cgi-bin/gda.pl?id=1638/research/proj/nr7035e.htm>

55 Op. cit., Collins, p116.

56 Op. cit., Chappell, Gonczi and Hager, p59

57 Erica Smith is cited in op. cit., Collins, p117. Also see, op. cit., Shah.

58 Paul Byrne, "TAFE Teaching: Is It a Profession?" *The Australian TAFE Teacher* 26.1 (1992) p11.

Before we can ascertain the relationship between TAFE teacher qualifications and the professionalisation of VET, we need to look more closely at the term professional itself. Two problematic assumptions running through most of the literature about the VET professional are that the designation of professional status is something that is automatically desired and that it is easily determined.

In relation to the latter assumption of determining what constitutes professional status, this paper has already alluded to the contestable nature of the term. There is a significant body of literature addressing the topic of professionalism and most of it outlines the following broad characteristics: formal education and entry requirements; a monopoly over an esoteric body of knowledge and associated skills; autonomy over the terms and conditions of practice; collegial authority; a code of ethics; and commitment to a service ideal.⁵⁹

As we unpack the boundaries of professionalism further, it is clear that different understandings of professionalism will result depending on which of the characteristics listed above are prioritised. An example provided by Malin relates to the professionalism of doctors.⁶⁰ Some doctors argue that in a situation whereby a patient cannot financially afford treatment, adherence to a code of ethics and commitment to an ideal of treating the ill are the professional priorities, thus requiring the doctor to treat the patient. Conversely, others suggest that the terms and conditions of practice mandate payment for services and that undermining the system by stepping outside those terms constitutes a breach of professional conduct.

For our purposes, professional priorities as they relate to the role and goals of the VET teacher need to be determined. The EUROPREF project suggests that their aim is to "professionalise VET professionals" by raising the skill level and status of the occupation.⁶¹ However, this offers no easy solutions since we need to ask what skills are being increased and why. For example, it was clear from the STB's report on TAFE teaching in 1992 that many TAFE teachers felt that they were being de-professionalised because of the shift away from a focus on teaching, even though they were learning new skills as their institutions became more entrepreneurial.⁶²

Jocelyn Robson's work on the professional crisis facing further education teachers in the UK suggests that the culture of further education teachers is:

*thin; uncertain of the nature or value of a shared body of professional knowledge, unable to require all entrants to qualify formally as teachers ... compelled to accept recruits into its ranks from hugely diverse backgrounds and entry routes, with no means of controlling their numbers, the professional group lacks closure and is struggling to develop any sense of its collective status or identity.*⁶³

Perhaps most importantly, what she and others draw attention to is the professional requirement for strong and clearly demarcated entry boundaries. Research into various VET systems suggests that professional exclusivity is low for VET teachers

59 Nigel Malin, ed., *Professionalism, Boundaries and the Workplace* (London: Routledge, 2000) p261.

60 Ibid., p261.

61 Op. cit., *The Eight Cornerstones of the EUROPREF Project*, Part 5.

62 See, Op. cit., *TAFE: A Time of Change*.

63 Op. cit., Robson, p602.

and that this affects the status of the profession.⁶⁴ Locally, the Ramsey report also found that teacher registration should act as a gatekeeper to the profession.⁶⁵

Robson's research found two other barriers to the designation of further education teachers as professionals that are similarly relevant. Firstly, she demonstrates that most VET teachers "retain strong allegiances to their first occupational identity." The vast majority of VET teachers are professionals in other fields and their primary identification is therefore unlikely to be as a teacher – particularly given that, as argued previously, teaching is not always accorded the respect it deserves. Paul Byrne argues that "TAFE teachers often see themselves as a vocational expert currently involved in teaching."⁶⁷

Secondly, Robson suggests that there are now tensions between the requirements of managerialism and those of professionalism. In particular, she is critical of the fact that reforms in the UK further education sector have been imposed from above and haven't involved sufficient teacher consultation.⁶⁸ As mentioned before, recent reforms in the Australian VET sector – particularly the introduction of Training Packages – have been criticised along similar lines and it could be argued that this undermines the professional criterion relating to the ability to determine the terms and content of practice.

Robson goes on to outline many concerns that are echoed locally about the influence of managerialism and neo-liberalism in relation to measuring productivity and efficiency.⁶⁹ In Australia – particularly in Victoria – the VET sector has been subjected to widespread neo-liberal reforms that have been based on the concept of 'growth through efficiencies'.

As we have demonstrated elsewhere, the Victorian VET system continues to be the most underfunded in the country.⁷⁰ Despite massive growth in education and training in the sector, the Federal Government continues to refuse to provide growth funds for training, further exacerbating the funding crisis our TAFE Institutes face. Increased financial pressure on Institutes means increased pressures on teachers and encourages a system that defines productivity economically rather than in terms of learning outcomes.

64 See *ibid.*, pp588/589; and Nevin R. Frantz, et. al., "Standards of Quality for the Preparation and Certification of Trade and Industrial Teachers", *Journal of Industrial Teacher Education* 34.1 (1996) p31.

65 *Op. cit.*, Ramsey, p2

66 *Op. cit.*, Robson, p596.

67 *Op. cit.*, Byrne, 1992, p12.

68 *Op. cit.*, Robson, p593, 596.

69 *Ibid.*, p596.

70 See, Victorian TAFE Association, *The quality of vocational education and training in Victoria: A submission to the Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education Committee*, Melbourne: VTA, 1999.

Although counter-intuitive, it should by now be coming clear that the designation of professional status is not without its problems. Before addressing the positives, we will briefly examine some concerns about discourses of professionalisation in relation to VET teachers.

David Raffe's research into the Scottish VET system found that the association between VET (and thus VET teachers) and marginalised groups, such as the unemployed for example, leads to low parity of esteem.⁷¹ Equally in Australia it could be argued that the connection in the popular imaginary between TAFE and disadvantaged learners from marginalised backgrounds negatively affects the esteem in which VET and TAFE (and the teachers within them) are held.

Does this mean that we should distance ourselves from such learners? On the contrary, public TAFE Institutes have a proud and continuing record of commitment to disadvantaged learners. A comparative example may help reinforce this point. Many of the schools that are considered by the public and perhaps even people within the education sector to be most professional are those schools with high academic achievement records. These schools are usually private schools with select entry criteria that overwhelmingly exclude socio-economically disadvantaged groups. Does the means (of exclusivity) justify the ends of professional status?

Moreover, as Malin points out, the influence of many social and political movements has lead to a re-thinking and challenging of the whole notion of expertise and professionalism. He points out that individuals no longer place great faith in 'expert' systems and some "occupation groups challenge notions of professionalism and deliberately espouse a philosophy of client empowerment, including the use of a shared identification as resource to abnegate hierarchical practitioner-client relations...".⁷² In other words, and in relation to teaching, notions of professionalism can be thought to set up a redundant hierarchy of teacher/expert v. student which fails to acknowledge what the teacher can learn from the student, thus ignoring the reciprocal nature of learning.

A broader and related point that is particularly relevant to VET is that the stereotypes and cultural baggage associated with vocational learning need not lead to an imitation of other forms of education that are valued more highly. Indeed, Raffe makes a good point when he asks:

*why do visible differences between academic and vocational provision undermine the status of vocational provision, rather than call into question the assumptions, values and practices of academic provision?*⁷³

If professionalising VET teachers actually means attempting to make them more similar to other professionals in different contexts, then one must question the wisdom of it.

71 David Raffe, "Issues in the Scottish Reform Programme: *Higher Still* in Relation to the Six Themes", *Reforming Upper Secondary Education in Europe: Survey of Strategies for Post-16 Education to Improve the Parity of Esteem for Initial Vocational Education in Eight European Education Systems*, ed. Johanna Lasonen (Jyväskylä, Finland: Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, 1996) p210.

72 Op. cit., Malin, p262.

73 Op. cit., Raffe, p208.

Furthermore, it is worth reflecting on what is being sought in the professionalisation of VET and how it will potentially change the character of the sector. For example, the professional requirement for strong entry boundaries mentioned earlier is arguably out of character with the VET sector. The wide range of professional and vocational qualifications found among TAFE staff is "symptomatic, of course, of the labyrinthine nature of technical and vocational education itself...".⁷⁴ It could easily be argued that this diversity is a strength that should be protected.

Another problematic assumption found in discussions about professionalising the VET sector is that the boundary to entry to the profession should be a university qualification. One could legitimately ask whether or not the assumption that university is the appropriate place to train VET teachers ironically reflects an automatic assumption that university education is superior to TAFE. Of course, a counter argument to this is that the qualification level is what is important and that since TAFE cannot offer qualifications beyond the Advanced Diploma level in Australia, universities must train VET teachers above that level. Notwithstanding the logistics of the situation, it still seems relevant that the VET sector teaches and trains other professionals and yet it encourages its own professionals to train elsewhere.

Moreover, there are some practical reasons why it would be very difficult to mandate VET teaching qualifications for all VET teachers. While the casualisation of the VET workforce has led to a decrease in the overall levels of teaching qualifications, it is also true that a great deal of current technical and industry expertise has been brought into the sector as a result. There is a strong argument to suggest that it is not feasible to expect experts who are coming into Institutes to convey up-to-date specialist knowledge to have formal teaching qualifications. We should also consider the point that many teachers in higher education do not possess formal teaching qualifications and mandating them in VET would preclude cross-sectoral teaching exchanges and collaboration. Strong entry barriers could keep out people who you want to be in.

Notwithstanding the negatives potentially associated with further professionalising VET teachers, there are also many positives. Principally, we could return to the point made earlier that pedagogical skill is just as important to VET teaching as it is to other forms of teaching. Knowledge of a particular subject or expertise in a field does not guarantee good teaching. While it may not be practically possible to enforce significantly higher teaching qualifications for all VET teachers, this should not detract from the aim. As the opening quote of this paper suggests, the desired goal must be formulated no matter whether it seems achievable or not.

Furthermore, there seems little reason why higher minimum teacher qualifications than currently exist could not be required of *most* VET teachers but with the flexibility to make exceptions where appropriate. This would have the benefit of increasing or at least maintaining the educational and *teaching* competence of the VET teaching workforce while still allowing for the use as required of specific experts without formal teaching qualifications.

A significant positive effect of professionalising the VET workforce is the effect it is likely to have on the morale of the teachers. As Robson points out, the perception of oneself as a professional has many positive side effects for individuals and organisations.⁷⁵ Most notably, these effects could include the desire to increase one's skills beyond those which are required for entry or maintenance of registration, thus increasing both individual and organisation skill levels in the core business of teaching.

Moreover, if the lead for professionalising the workforce is taken by the sector itself and is not imposed, the result is likely to be an increase at least in the perception of the professional status of the sector from outside its ranks. In regards to the issue of university qualifications, a possible solution to the lack of involvement of TAFE in the development of its own qualifications is the development of collaborative projects with other institutions such as multi-sector universities. An example of such a project is the development of a Graduate Certificate in VET Teacher Training by the VTA in conjunction with Victoria University.

Another option to consider is the suggestion by the Senate Inquiry Committee and others to establish an industry body to certify entry levels into the VET teaching profession and maintain a register of qualified teachers and trainers.⁷⁶ Support for this option should be conditional upon a thorough consideration of the possible negative side effects of certain types of professionalisation and an honest, open and *consultative* process that includes teachers and aims to establish appropriate entry requirements.

75 Ibid., p586.

76 As recommended by op. cit., Collins, p169; op. cit., Byrne, 1992, p2. Also recommended by op. cit., Robson and op. cit., Ramsey, point 5.3

Of course, such an option – or indeed any serious attempt to increase the professionalisation of VET teachers - must be resourced adequately. For public TAFE Institutes, this means that governments must provide additional resources for professional development, especially for existing staff. While this paper has focussed principally on initial training due to space constraints, it should be taken as given that the VTA recognises the importance of ongoing professional and staff development. To this end, the VTA supports the AEU's suggestion that the ANTA Agreement should include an additional injection of funds for staff development.⁷⁷

Moreover, any attempt to further professionalise VET teaching must not be confined to public TAFE Institutes and must seriously address the qualifications and quality of teachers in the private VET sector. The quality of teachers in the private sector is especially important given the fact that public and private TAFE providers are theoretically not differentiated from one another in Victoria and thus directly affect the reputation of one another. At the least, private providers should have to adhere to the same standards of minimum staff qualification levels as TAFE Institutes – particularly if they are receiving public training money.

Another issue, which is worth reiterating and which requires special attention, is the issue of workplace based training. The VTA firmly believes that on-the-job training has much to offer students and should be supported, but that it must be balanced with off-the-job training. This goes some way to ensuring reciprocal monitoring. The pedagogical skills of work-place based trainers are very unlikely to be as highly developed as professional teachers and this is but one reason why a balance between the two sites of learning is important.

Finally, it is crucial to make the general point that VET teachers will not be regarded and will not regard themselves as professional until the status of VET itself is improved. This is a 'chicken and egg' situation in some respects. It must be remembered however, that the quest for professionalisation and parity of esteem should not be at the expense of the good qualities VET already possesses, nor should it be a process of imitating other sectors. It is clear that not all practices falling under the general rubric of professional conduct are worthwhile. Once again, we return to the question of what constitutes good practice and, in more general terms, what the values of the sector are. Until we can answer this, debates about professionalisation remain little more than semantic arguments.

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