

STAFF DEVELOPMENT PROVISIONS FOR TEACHERS/ TRAINERS IN THE VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING SECTOR – AN OVERVIEW

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ABSTRACT

This paper presents an overview of current arrangements for staff development activities for teachers in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector across Australia. The overview contains the results of a recent survey of staff development activities offered by universities and Departments of Education and Training in each State/Territories. The findings indicate a lack of consistency in minimum teaching qualifications of teachers/trainers and no apparent comprehensive database of staff development activities. The results present a picture that much of staff development in VET is still ad hoc.

Introduction

In June 1998, a team of researchers from the University of South Australia, Charles Sturt University and TAFE Queensland undertook a national project to study the role of staff development for teachers/trainers in the VET sector. This 12 month project is funded by the NREC Coordination Branch of the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. In this paper the outcomes of stage 1 of the project which involved a survey with universities and the office of training and development in the Departments of Education and Training in each State/Territory is reported. Staff development offered by Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) were excluded from the survey at this stage to allow for in-depth case studies and separate surveys for stage 2 to be conducted in February/March, 1999.

A letter explaining the nature of the project together with a proforma seeking lists of activities (programs, courses, workshops etc) that contributed towards initial teacher training, train the trainer and on-going teacher development were posted to course coordinators at universities and training and development officers in the Departments of Education and Training in each State/Territory. Data were collected from 29 universities across Australia and three State/Territory training and development officers. Staff development offered by the three State/Territory offices made up only a small percentage of activities that teachers and trainers have access. In the remaining five States/Territories all staff development functions have been devolved to the individual RTOs. Additional anecdotal data relating to minimum teaching qualifications, teacher registration requirements and funding access for staff development within each State/Territory were collected from informal networks and members of the reference group for the project. More details will be accessed during stage 2. A comprehensive database of staff development activities for VET teachers/trainers in any of the States/Territories was not found. No national database seems to exist either.

The Concept of Staff Development in VET

The use of the term *staff development* in the VET sector includes professional development as well as training and development, suggesting little or no difference between the three. However, there are differences between the three in terms of the purpose of each (Mondy & Noe 1993). Mondy & Noe (1993) perceive the primary purpose of staff development is to improve *efficiency* and *effectiveness*. Examples of staff development in VET include programs that focus mainly in the areas of VET reforms and policy changes or changes in practice (eg. flexible delivery). *Professional development* is a broader concept that encompasses a range of activities for the acquisition of skills, knowledge and attitudes to achieve current and future personal as well as career goals. Such activities are crucial for lifelong learning. Key examples of professional development activities include programs of study offered by universities. Mondy & Noe (1993) refer to *training* as learning activities that enhance competencies to improve work performances. Teachers/trainers in the VET sector acquire most of the teaching competencies during initial teacher training, however the development of additional skills is an on-going activity throughout their teaching/training career. Mondy & Noe (1993) define

development as transformations in individuals resulting from social, cultural, technological and environmental changes. Such transformations are largely the outcomes of life experiences.

The conception of staff development for this paper remains consistent with its perception by the wider VET sector, so as not to cause confusion. That is, it comprises *staff development, professional development and training and development*. Staff development activities contribute to the holistic development of teachers/trainers, enhancing their personal and career aspirations as well as meeting their employers' needs relating to VET practices.

The Findings

MINIMUM TEACHER/TRAINER REQUIREMENTS

The minimum teaching/training qualifications required by RTOs in each State/Territory is inconsistent across Australia, although all teachers/trainers (full-time and part-time) play a key role in the skilling of the workforce through VET. The inconsistencies were observed in RTOs within each State/Territory and even within some RTOs. Private RTOs appear to be more flexible with their minimum teacher/trainer requirements. Minimum teacher/trainer qualification appears to have implications for the types of staff development that teachers/trainers are eligible for mainly for the purpose of initial teacher training. Unlike teacher registration requirements for the primary and secondary school sectors, the VET sector does not have any such prerequisite for employment. A Certificate in Teaching (offered by universities or RTOs) forms the minimum requirement by some RTOs, while others require full-time teachers to have a Diploma of Teaching or a Bachelor of Education. There is more flexibility in the minimum qualification requirements of part-time teachers, although they perform the same duties as full-time teachers. The new National Training Packages (NTPs) now include minimum human resource requirement statements. For instance, to provide training services that include delivery, assessment and issue of a qualification, teachers/trainers are required to be competent at the Category II competency standard for workplace trainer.

Some RTOs in the public sector employ full-time teachers/trainers with industry experience, but no formal teaching qualifications on the condition that such staff undertake studies to obtain a minimum teaching qualification stated by them. While some RTOs offer financial support for such studies, others allow teachers/trainers to take time during their working hours to attend lectures or workshops. The more generous RTOs support in both ways.

INITIAL TEACHER TRAINING

Universities are the major providers of programs for initial VET teacher/trainer qualifications at certificate, diploma and degree levels. Some RTOs also offer programs at the certificate and diploma levels as well as courses that are credited towards higher qualifications offered by universities. Arrangements for cross credit of courses offered by RTOs is negotiated with universities on a case by case basis. Examples of initial teacher training programs include Certificate, Associate Diploma, Diploma and Advanced Diploma of Teaching and Bachelors degree. Within each of these, a range of qualifications can be obtained. For example, at the certificate level, there are Certificate in Staff Training and Development, Certificate IV in Workplace Training (Category 1 & 2). At the associate diploma level, one can obtain Associate Diploma in Vocational Instruction, Associate Diploma in Education (Adult/Vocational) and Associate Diploma in Training & Development. Diploma in Education, Diploma in Training & Development and Diploma of Education & Training form a suit at the Diploma level. Advanced Diploma in Vocational Education & Training is on offer at the next level. Associate degrees in Further Education & Training and Training & Development are offered by some universities. Bachelors degrees for VET teachers/trainers are marketed in 15 different names belonging to two broad groups of Bachelor of Education and Bachelor of Adult & Vocational Education (or Training).

TRAIN THE TRAINER PROGRAMS

'Train the Trainer' type programs evolved from the introduction of the Training Guarantee Act and the Training Guarantee (Administration) Act of May 1990. Workplace trainer qualifications were introduced to accomplish the Act's main aim:

. . . to increase, and improve the quality of, the employment related skills of the Australian workforce so that it works more productively, flexibly and safely, thereby increasing the efficiency and international competitiveness of Australian industry (Training Guarantee (Administration Act 1990, p.1).

Many RTOs recognise a 'Train the Trainer' qualification as the minimum teaching/training qualification of delivery staff. 'Train the Trainer' type programs are currently being offered primarily by RTOs, but more recently some universities have also added these to their list of programs. Examples of 'Train the Trainer' type activities on the national register include:

- Certificate IV in Train the Trainer
- Course in Accelerated Learning - Train the Trainer
- Course in Seafood Industry Workplace Instructional Skills (Train the Trainer)
- Course in Train the Trainer (Category 1 - comprehensive)
- Course in Train the Trainer (Category 1 - off the job)
- Course in Train the Trainer (Category 1)
- Course in Train the Trainer - Workplace Trainer (Category 2)
- Course in Train the Trainer - Child Care
- Course in Train the Trainer

The accreditation period for most of the current courses on the national register will expire by December 1999 and they will be superseded by the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training. Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training complies with revised competency standards to match those stipulated in the new NTP.

The duration of 'Train the Trainer' programs ranges from one day sessions to some that extend over two weeks. Individuals who are not employed by any RTO, but intend to teach/train are the major enrollees pursuer the Train the Trainer qualification to enable them to meet the minimum criteria for a teaching/training position.

ON-GOING STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Activities for on-going staff development are numerous and on offer at regular intervals, timetabled or made available on a needs basis. Universities as well as RTOs are the major providers. Current on-going staff development activities have been grouped into three categories: those that support professional teaching practices (many leading to a formal qualification); activities that relate to reforms in VET; and activities that support systemic operations.

ACTIVITIES THAT SUPPORT TEACHING PRACTICES

Learning activities that support professional teaching practices fall predominantly within the domain of universities. More recently universities have developed customised programs for VET teachers/trainers for example programs in the Bachelor of Vocational Education and Training; Graduate Diploma of Vocational Education and Training; Graduate Certificate in Tertiary and Adult Education; Graduate Diploma in Education (Tertiary and Adult Education); and Master of Education for Teachers - Tertiary and Adult Education. Teachers/trainers have access to programs leading to qualifications at the associate diploma, advanced diploma, bachelors degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma, postgraduate certificate, postgraduate diploma, masters and doctorate degree levels. Modules/units within the higher degrees are tiered so as to allow several exit points, thus offering a range of articulation possibilities.

Some RTOs also offer courses that support teaching practices. Among the range of courses, the more structured ones lead to formal qualifications such as the Graduate Certificate in Advanced Professional Practice and Graduate Certificate in Training (offered by the Canberra Institute of TAFE). Workshop sessions where teachers gain new knowledge and skills, have potential for credit towards courses that contribute to a teaching qualification. In addition, action learning and work-based learning projects such as those under Framing the Future and LearnScope provide opportunities for teachers/trainers to enhance their teaching practices.

Industry experience serves another avenue for VET teachers/trainers to enhance their teaching mainly through updating of skills and knowledge about current industry practices and new technologies. While some RTOs coordinate and manage industry experience opportunities for their teachers/trainers, others let individual staff organise their own.

Industry Training Advisory Boards and professional bodies/associations also play a significant role in organising activities that form part of on-going staff development for teachers/trainers. For example, the Workplace Trainers and Assessors Body has provided staff development workshops and information sessions around Australia. They have assisted VET staff in many States to establish networks that meet on a regular basis to share information and discuss relevant issues. Teachers/trainers who belong to formal or informal networks have opportunities to add to their professional expertise through exchange of ideas and views with members of such networks. In recent times, the availability of technology such as the internet has extended their interaction with national and international members of the various networks.

ACTIVITIES RELATING TO REFORMS IN VET

Staff development activities initiated in response to national reforms in the VET sector are largely managed and coordinated by ANTA or its subsidiary bodies or contractors. Activities such as workshops, information sessions, action learning projects and work-based projects are organised across the nation. Staff development activities relating to reforms in VET appears largely to be the responsibility of the RTOs with some support from national bodies such as ANTA and Department of Employment Education Training and Youth Affairs.

ACTIVITIES TO SUPPORT SYSTEMIC OPERATIONS

Staff in the VET sector work in an environment of constant changes in policy and practice. While some of these changes affect all staff at systemic levels, others impact only on the functions of teachers/trainers. On-going staff development in this category are mainly designed and facilitated locally by individual RTOs or teams of staff from more than one RTO. Certain specialised workshops (eg. use of new technology or softwares) are sometimes out-sourced to business service providers. There are three broad categories of activities that support VET teachers/trainers in their performance in systemic/operational activities of their institute: activities that facilitate administrative functions; those that facilitate operational functions and those that enhance personal development. Activities to support systemic and operational functions are usually delivered as workshops lasting only a few hours. Certain workshop sessions are mandatory for all staff and are scheduled at regular intervals, while others are optional and organised on demand. Training sessions and workshops for personal development, for example interview techniques, stress management, time management, skill development plans and preparing for retirement are optional. The provision of funding for staff development activities to support systemic operations is largely the responsibility of the RTOs.

FUNDING SOURCES FOR STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Teachers/trainers in the VET sector have various avenues to access funding for their development. Those employed by the public sector have wider access in comparison to teachers/trainers working in the private sector. Teachers/trainers employed by the private sector are expected to take most responsibility for their on-going development, as very limited or no support is provided. However, they are eligible for partial funding from ANTA through the competitive tendering process to undertake action learning or work-based projects within Framing the Future and LearnScope.

In Queensland, under the Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, teachers/trainers in the publicly funded RTOs are entitled to funds equivalent to 2% of their annual salary for purposes of staff development each year. The management of this allocation varies among RTOs. While some allow individual staff to decide on the nature of staff development activities they undertake, eg. to pursue formal study programs, attend conferences/seminars or undertake informal activities for their development. However other RTOs have set guidelines linking to their strategic and operational plans at the systemic and faculty or department levels.

In some States (eg. Queensland and ACT) public RTOs also offer study awards to partially support studies undertaken by individual staff. The funding for such awards is provided from an allocation of State based funds. Applications are based on set criteria such as:

- The need within the institute for the qualification pursued.
- Evidence of previous study undertaken by the applicant in his/her own time.
- Evidence of previous continued interest in the area of proposed study.
- Evidence of commitment and initiative by the applicant.

In New South Wales full support for initial teacher training at the Bachelor degree level is only offered to full-time teachers who do not meet the minimum requirement, but who have relevant industry experience. Assistance is also made available to full-time teachers/trainers undertaking postgraduate studies.

Throughout Australia, all full-time teachers/trainers in the publicly funded RTOs are eligible for staff development programs facilitated by their employers. While some RTOs are generous in supporting staff development activities for part-time teachers/trainers, others offer such support only to selected individuals, depending on the demand to meet certain organisational goals. The less generous RTOs expect part-time teachers/trainers to take full responsibility for their development. Private RTOs expect this of both full-time and part-time teachers/trainers.

VET staff who are permanent public servants can also access staff development from their respective Office of Public Service in two States. For example, in Queensland the Study And Research Assistance Scheme (SARAS) supports professional development of public servants through financial assistance and leave arrangements. This form of assistance is not available for initial teaching qualifications, but for on-going staff development that is of benefit to the Public Service as well as the individual staff member. The Northern Territory has similar arrangements through the Office of Commissioner of Public Employment.

In Western Australia the Department of Training - Professional Development Unit manages an extensive staff development program for their department while the State Professional Development Support Program (PDSP) focuses on work-based staff development activities which are accessible to both private and public RTO's.

Funding for staff development in the Northern Territory is contained within the resource allocations for the public provider. Each RTO is responsible for their own staff development. NTETA subsidises conferences for VET practitioners, which are open to all VET teachers/trainers Territory.

In Tasmania the Department of Premier and Cabinet has a unit that provides staff development for government employees. Participation in any course or training program provided by the department is managed by the RTO for which the participant works.

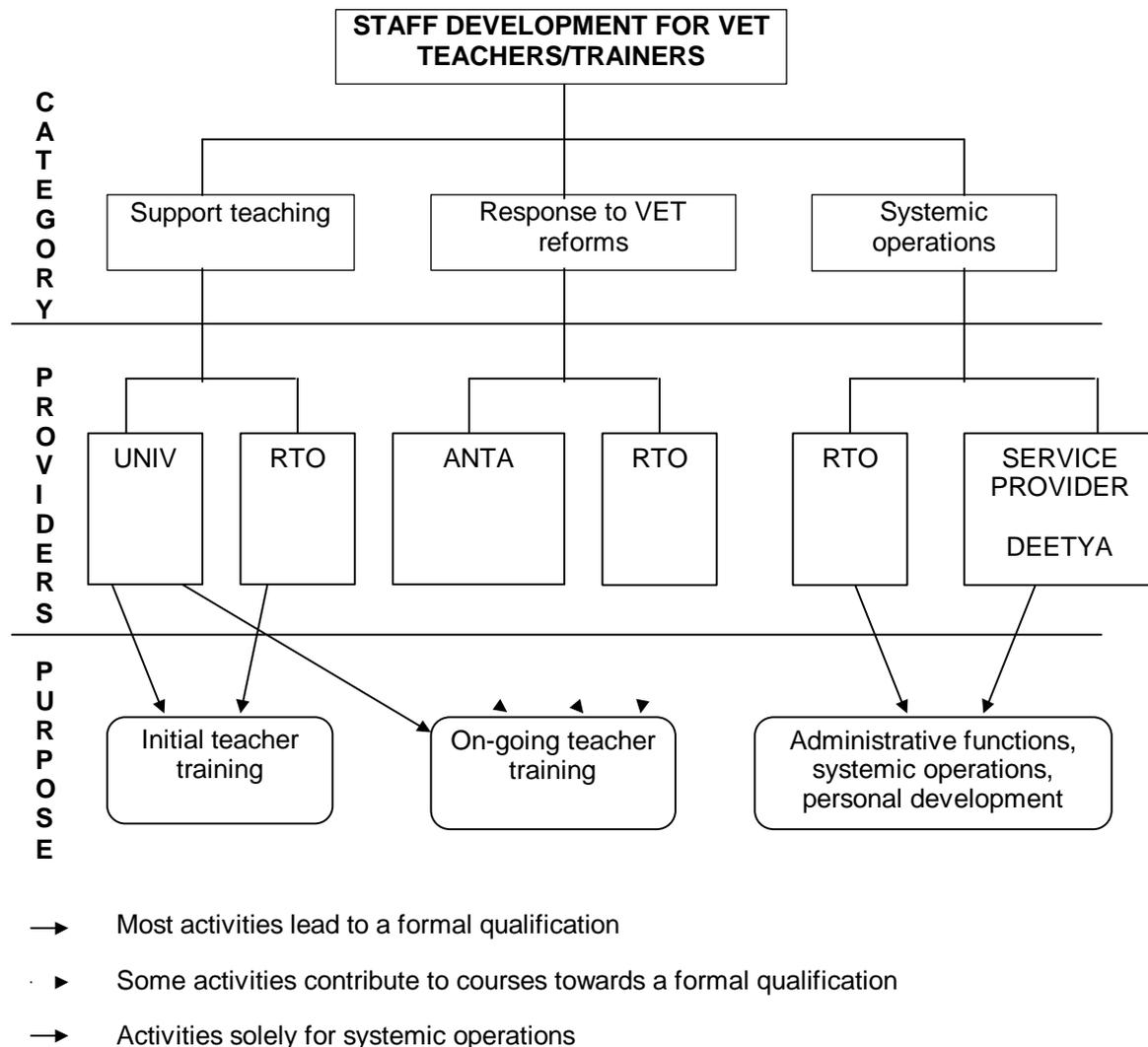
The primary source of staff development funds in Victoria, lies with the individual RTO. Each has their own sets of policies, procedures and management practices. The Office of Training and Further Education (OTFE) has a Staff Development Policy and Priorities Framework for the State Training Services (currently 1997-1999) which sets out the terms of its staff development initiatives. These projects are determined by a State Training Service Staff Development Advisory Body consisting of representatives from key stakeholders. OTFE provides project-based staff development funds to selected RTOs on a competitive merit-based basis with focus on targeted priority areas. Their arrangements are similar to ANTA's Framing the Future and LearnScope projects.

The Australian National Training Authority provides partial funding for staff development relating to reforms. For instance, up to 50% of funds (to the sum of about \$15,000) for staff developments under the Framing the Future and LearnScope projects are offered by ANTA while the RTOs are expected to meet the remaining costs in kind. Application for such funding is through a competitive tendering process. Professional development under the LearnScope projects for example focus on action learning and flexible delivery. Within these projects there is much emphasis on the implementation of the National Training Packages and knowledge of the VET system.

Teachers/trainers who are not able to access funds through their RTOs or other sources, have to meet the costs of activities for their own development. Among them, some do not meet the RTOs criteria for funding applications, others pursue fields of study that are considered to be of no immediate relevance or benefit to their employer. Some others undertake study programs to enter completely new areas of practice which is not supported by the RTOs. This applies mainly to those who plan to change their area of expertise.

An overview of current staff development arrangements is summarised in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2 CURRENT STAFF DEVELOPMENT ARRANGEMENTS FOR VET TEACHERS/TRAINERS



Discussion

Data collected have revealed many inconsistencies both across the States/Territories and within some States with regard to the provision of staff development for VET teachers/trainers. In the public sector there is provision for staff development opportunities for teachers/trainers by individual RTOs. However, within the private sector, staff development is seen to be largely the responsibility of the individual teachers/trainers.

This project identified inconsistencies in the minimum qualification requirements for teachers and trainers within the VET system. With the introduction of National Training Packages the emphasis has been on the minimum human resource requirement for delivery and assessment, which in most instances is a Category IV Workplace Trainer competency. There has been very little discussion to date with regard to teacher competencies. Inconsistencies are likely to have implications on the quality of outcomes from the delivery of VET products and services. Recent work in Queensland has indicated the significance of the impact of quality of delivery on completion rates for apprentices and trainees. Low completion rates was attributed to variations in quality of delivery (Smith, 1998).

Staff development to maintain the currency of vocational knowledge can be said to have implications for the quality of teaching/training in VET. A large survey (> 500) of full time and part-time teachers at the Sydney Institute of Technology showed that maintaining knowledge and technical currency was not a major priority for most VET teachers (Holland & Holland, 1998). The survey showed those who

had been teaching for a long time were more complacent about maintaining their currency of vocational knowledge than those with limited experience or employed on a part-time basis. Holland & Holland's (1998) case study raises issues concerning the wider VET sector. The demand to update skills and knowledge currency is perhaps higher for VET teachers/trainers, in comparison to teachers in other sectors, largely because of rapid changes in industry and their role in ensuring that learners (students) are competent and ready for employment. Teachers/trainers also have a vital role in contributing to skilling a workforce that is globally competitive. Limited funding for staff development in public RTOs is attributed to be a major reason why teachers/trainers are not able to maintain currency of their knowledge and technical currency (Holland & Holland 1998). Their comments reflect an expectation that public RTOs will continue to provide funds for all staff development. This situation seems to be exasperated by expectations from teachers/trainers, industry and unions (eg. Relating to enterprise bargaining for Queensland teachers/trainers). Recent employment trends in the public sector such as casualisation and contractual agreements have allowed RTOs to relinquish several staff development responsibilities to individual employees.

Conclusions

The implementation of current and future Training Reforms within Australia will continue to have a major impact on the role of teachers/ trainers in the VET sector. Currently most of the staff development across Australia is *ad hoc*, and there is a need for consistent emphasis to be placed on targeted programs that will assist all teachers/trainers to maintain their technical competence as well as their professional teaching/training competencies. At present there are no agreed professional standards to guide the staff development process of both public and private RTOs across Australia.

All teachers/trainers need to be fully conversant with developments in VET, and the planning and resource requirements to support quality programs in their RTOs. Without any nationally funded programs there would be very little opportunity for teachers/trainers to update their knowledge and skills. Generally, evaluations revealed that early staff development initiatives focused on awareness raising and skill development and were too generic (Simons 1997; Holland & Holland 1998). Evaluations have also shown the potential of action learning approaches to have greater impact on organisational change and participant development (Kelleher & Murray 1996). Issues with this approach still remain, however (Boydell & Leary 1996, Perkins 1997).

More recent literature has argued for the development of new models that offer a reconceptualisation of the nature of staff development. Hill and Sims (1997) argue that staff development needs to embrace the development of teachers/trainers at the professional, personal and general levels thus providing educative experiences which are not restricted to specific current or future roles. Moreover, they should cater for the reality that the nature of work is in a state of considerable change. Development needs to promote the ability of individuals to grow and change in order that they be able to meet these changing demands. Staff development should form a key element linked to quality assurance statements for VET.

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