

Teachers' views and experiences of higher education in TAFE

Ann Kelly, Leesa Wheelahan & Stephen Billett
School of Education & Professional Studies



Notion of educational sectors

Might more usefully be understood as:

artefacts of history and government policy, and of government funding, in particular, rather than as being aligned to universally understood and practised conventions'. (Moodie, Wheelahan, Billett and Kelly, 2009, p. 10).

The boundaries between the higher education and vocational education sectors are becoming more permeable and are increasingly defined by the qualifications that are accredited in each and not by the type of institutions in which those qualifications are acquired, even though most institutions are still defined by their primary sectoral location.



Higher Education in TAFE overview

2008-2009

- 10 TAFE institutes offering such programs (5 in Vic; 0 in NSW, Tas & NT)
- Course disciplines include:
 - music & dance
 - film
 - bio-technology
 - forensic science
 - hospitality
 - tourism
 - business
 - engineering/construction
 - property
 - human services
 - nursing
- About 2,000 TAFE students enrolled (0.12% of 1.6m students (NC 2008))



HE in TAFE Project overview (NCVER funded)

Aimed at understanding

- the nature of HE in TAFE provision
- its impact on institutional partnerships and
- how it is perceived by participants.

Key research questions

- What HE do TAFE institutes offer? Why and How?
- What is the nature of VET and HE identities in 'mixed sector' TAFE institutes and how is the sectoral divide constituted and navigated within these institutes by staff and students?



HE in TAFE Project overview

Design

- Literature review of international and Australian experiences
- ↓
Discussion paper
↓
- 97 interviews
 - in TAFE institutes (9)
 - teachers
 - senior institute managers
 - curriculum developers
 - students
 - in two dual sector universities
 - senior institute managers
 - in state Offices of Higher Education
- ↓
Report



Foci of teacher interviews

- Whether HE in TAFE programs differ from VET and university programs
- Optimal structures and forms of support for HE in TAFE programs
- The qualifications and expertise needed to teach in such programs





Teacher interviewee features

27 teachers interviewed: 20 providing data regarding HE in TAFE programs

- 9 taught HE exclusively
- some had university lecturing experience
- qualifications
 - 3 had PhDs
 - 13 had Master degrees
 - 8 had undergraduate degrees
 - 8 others were currently enrolled in further HE degree studies



betwixt and between bifurcated identities for teachers

Situated in TAFE environment with attendant

- physical
- industrial
- resource implications

+

Mandate to liaise with industry

Requirements

- to complete post-grad qualifications
- to provide current and intellectually demanding course content and assessment regimes
- to engage in research activities



Teacher concerns

Epistemological and social demands

- Importance of relationship between theory & practice
- pastoral care
- focus on higher academic standards than for VET programs
- Appropriate resources
- Support from managers
- Physical location of teachers

Industrial and institutional conditions

TAFE award conditions

- not enough time for required preparation
- updating of knowledge
- networking
- post-graduate studies



Broader issues

Teachers are a part of issue regarding

- Not whether sectoral boundaries *should* exist but how they can be navigated in order to create wider opportunities for students and also for teachers so they remain as higher education teachers in TAFE and provide opportunities for other teachers to take on this role
- Need to implement appropriate policies and resourcing to build capacity at national and institutional levels

