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# Moving beyond training packages: first steps

Steven Hodge and Hugh Guthrie

## Two basic questions

- If training packages are to evolve or be superseded, what principles can guide the transformation of CBT?
- If training packages are to evolve or be superseded, what roles and influence should various stakeholders have?

# Training packages

- Training packages one of three pillars of the VET system since 1990s (along with the Australian Qualifications Framework and VET Quality Framework)
- Training packages relate to particular industries, e.g. Business Services, Hairdressing and Beauty Services
- Training packages gather **competency standards** relating to job roles in those industries and state rules for combining units into qualifications and skill sets

## Competency standards

- **Competency standards or ‘units of competency’ are intended to capture essential features of work**
- **Each unit describes a meaningful task, with several units required to encompass a job role**
- **Categories of information in the units derive from the structure of behavioural objectives (e.g. elements, performance criteria)**
- **Uniform format of information across multiple jobs, industries and levels of expertise**

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# Curricular focus

- **Currently a focus on tasks used in jobs in the recent past**
- **If not a task focus, then what?**

## Curricular focus

- **Future skills? E.g. collaboration, learning and adapting, digital, entrepreneurship, analysis, adding value, foundational skills, non-automatable skills, social platform skills (Australian Industry and Skills Committee, 2017)**

## Curricular focus

- **Wider than tasks? E.g. Billett's (2016) 'canonical knowledge of the occupation' (knowledge of materials, processes and methods specific to an occupation)**



## Curricular focus

- Much wider than tasks? E.g. Wheelahan's (2016) 'occupational fields' or 'vocational streams' (related occupations underpinned by a set of common capabilities)

# Questions

- **What would an occupational field focus look like in curricular terms? Would students want to study occupational fields? Would employers seek graduates of occupational fields study?**
- **Would an occupational canon approach equip learners with the ability to move across jobs and adapt to future changes in occupations?**

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## Personal domain

- **The behaviourism of competency standards sanctions neglect of the personal domain (too subjective, unobservable)**
- **But how to incorporate the personal into training packages?**

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## Personal domain

- **Generic skills overlap the personal domain (e.g. Key competencies, Employability skills, 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills, some Future Skills)**
- **Always avowed, but ambiguous status within training packages over time**

## Personal domain

- Billett's (2016) 'personal domains of occupational knowledge' (personal knowledge to mediate canonical knowledge, general capacities such as problem solving, informed personal commitment to a vocation)

Personal  
domain

- Wheelahan's (2016) 'capabilities' (capacity to act, agency) and 'functionings' (realised or practiced capabilities oriented to occupational fields)

# Questions

- How are we to analyse and represent the personal domain (e.g. capabilities) in training packages?
- Would learners want to study and develop the personal domain? Would employers seek graduates who have developed the personal domain?



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## Level of standardisation

- **Currently a strong form of standardisation across jobs, industries and levels of expertise**
- **But how to embrace flexibility of representation without losing the benefits of system consistency?**

## Level of standardisation

- **Analysis by Hodge, Atkins and Simons (2016) indicates the limitations on information that can be included in units of competency may distort or obscure representation of important features of occupations**

## Level of standardisation

- Due to focus on tasks, units fail to represent larger structures such as bodies of knowledge, processes, occupational fields
- Due to focus on observable behaviours, units fails to capture subtle aspects of jobs such as values, embodied and tacit knowledge, identities, capabilities

## Level of standardisation

- **Hodge, Atkins and Simons (2016)** argue that standardisation needs to be reduced to allow knowledge and practice structures native to occupations to be represented in vocational curricula

# Question

- **If standardisation should be reduced to allow uniqueness of occupations to be represented in training packages, what level and type of standardisation would be necessary and appropriate?**

## References

- Billett, S. (2016). Beyond competence: an essay on a process approach to organising and enacting vocational education. *International Journal of Training Research*, 14:3, 197-214.
- Hodge, S., Atkins, L. & Simons, M. (2016) Towards an epistemically neutral curriculum model for vocational education: from competencies to threshold concepts and practices. *International Journal of Training Research*, 14:3, 230-243.
- Wheelahan, L. (2016). Patching bits won't fix vocational education in Australia – a new model is needed. *International Journal of Training Research*, 14:3, 180-196.

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What would have to  
change  
in the environment of training  
packages to accommodate  
these shifts?