

narrative **history** and its place in VET research

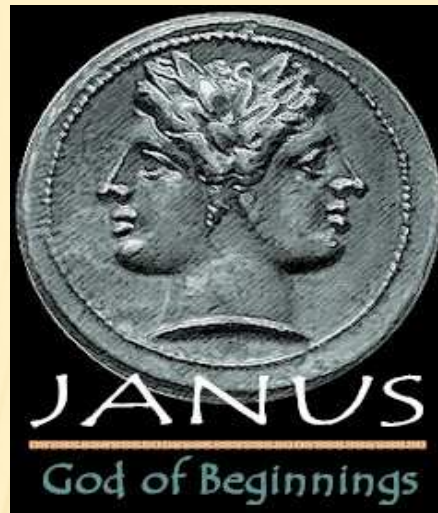
# JANUS OR CLIQ

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# The paper at a glance:

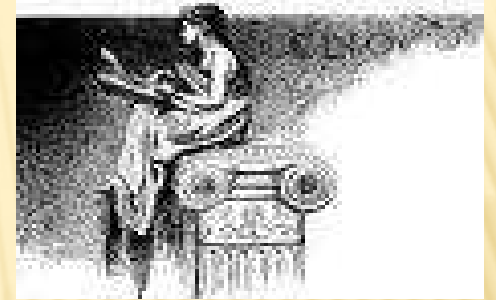
1. Janus or Clio?
2. How I write adult and vocational education history
3. Writing adult and vocational educational history: previous attempts
4. Some new ideas for writing history: thematic underpinnings of VET history
5. Discussion



Janus is the Roman god known as the custodian of the universe. He is the god of beginnings and the guardian of gates and doors. He is lord over the first hour of every day, the first day of the month and January, the first month of the year. Two heads back to back represent Janus, each looking in opposite directions. His double-faced head appears on many Roman coins. Originally, one face was bearded and one was not, most likely representing the sun and the moon. In his right hand he holds a key. He was worshipped at the beginning of planting time, harvest, marriages, births and other important beginnings in a person's life.



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Clio is one of the nine muses, personifications of the highest aspirations of art and intellect in Greek mythology. The Muses were the daughters of Zeus and Mnemosyne, the Titan goddess whose name means memory. When the Romans later separated the muses' fields of inspiration, Clio became the patron of history. Her symbols are a laurel wreath and a scroll.

Clio--The muse of history, represented with an open scroll of paper, a laurel wreath, and a trumpet.

The word "museum" originally meant a place connected with the Muses or the arts inspired by them.



While Janus is considered contemporarily as capable of looking forwards and backwards, and therefore an appropriate conference *leitmotif*, this is most likely a misreading of his role in Etruscan and Roman history. So, it is perhaps to Clio rather than Janus that we should turn to seek inspiration for the conference themes; for example, 'Reflecting back...lessons for the future', which this paper addresses.

# How I write history

- Acknowledge values that influences topic selection and theoretical and methodological underpinnings, if present)
- Neo-Rankean (also the Monash 'craft' tradition)
- Non –arbitrary narrative with inclusive analysis and explanation
- Ontological individualism (agency etc)
- Immersion in context
- Agency/structure (primacy of 'bounded' individualism as a source of 'historical authorship')
- Privilege primary sources – history does speak and the past is recoverable through them.
- Attempt to achieve verisimilitude/simulacrum
- Tell history 'how it really was'/mentalities (genetic relativism or historicism – the past is a foreign country)
- Acknowledge discursive *and* non-discursive realities (the truth is out there, and accessible through representation)

# How I write history

- Inductive (abstraction from multiple and 'grounded' data sources – building explanation and understanding from the data)
- Empiricist (truths embedded in historical artefacts 'pre-theoretically')
- Importance of endnotes and footnotes
- Bottom-up approach (challenge the 'great man' approach through neo-Marxist revisionism and critical theory)
- Embedded theory (but beware the god of tidy theory)
- Emplotment and literary style – literary (plain English)
- Privileging primary sources
- Idiographic
- Reject teleology and grand narratives but not deny knowledge building
- Emergent problem building<sup>7</sup>

# How I write history

- Distinguish between historical 'events' (what happened and when) and historical 'facts' (how it happened and why)
- Valuing historical products in and of themselves as part of the human record, but also for demonstrating historical possibilities (the durable and the contingent), and challenging distorting historical myths and traditions (the European 'settlement' versus 'invasion' is a good example – myths, tradition and heritage).
- Inform contemporary education practices  
Theorise after capturing the investigated 'realities' (but theorising for meaning and understanding rather than prediction and generalisation).



# Writing VET history: some previous attempts

Rushbrook, Peter  
(1997), 'Navel-gazing  
TAFE: from Kangan to  
VET and beyond',  
*Education Links*, no.  
54

Rushbrook, Peter  
(1997), 'Tradition,  
pathways and the  
renegotiation of TAFE  
identity in Victoria',  
*Discourse: studies in  
the cultural politics of  
education*, vol. 18, no.  
1

## A .Traditions

### 1. Traditions associated with the *purposes of technical and further education*

These include *ameliorative* traditions associated with the provision of broad-based vocational education to groups labelled by society as disadvantaged (Murray-Smith, 1966); *eclectic* traditions producing a vast range of technical and further education from adult leisure courses to middle-level and professional training. (This has brought about the unfair criticism of TAFE as the 'ad hoc' or 'etcetera' sector.); *utilitarian* traditions for facilitating the provision of practical work-based vocational training; and *nation building* traditions (Batrouney, 1985), whether as late nineteenth to mid-twentieth century citizen-workers or as late twentieth-century multi-skilled agents of the NTRA's 'Clever Country'.

**2. Traditions associated with the *provision* of technical and further education** Related to the eclectic tradition, this tradition embraces the range of provision claimed by the sector, from operative/trade/middle-level/adult with occasional incursions into the applied-professional area. Historians and sociologists have argued that from the late 'twenties a *de facto* pattern of liberal-meritocratic educational settlement was reached in which students were allocated career paths according to class, gender and ethnicity. Technical education schools and streams were claimed by the 'labour aristocracy' of skilled tradesmen, and secondary school education (including independent and senior state high schools) were claimed by the male professions. Each sector was exclusive of those who did not 'fit' each club, including women, migrants, the disadvantaged and indigenous peoples. It is only in recent years that this pattern of settlement has been seriously challenged.

### **3. Traditions associated with technical and further education organisation and administration**

*Decentralisation and community-based management* form the core of this set of traditions. Technical colleges began as initiatives from local community organisations; for example, Mechanics Institutes and chambers of commerce. Later, Victorian junior technical schools and colleges developed strong traditions of community-based council membership and sponsorship. They also led the 1970s movement across all educational sectors toward decentralised management. This tradition may explain the recent tensions developing between self-managing TAFE institutes and the demands of centralising government agencies.

## *Traditions of change*

**1. Sectoral identity** is a tradition suggested by the definitional and funding struggle of the technical and further education sector and its associated interest groups, for recognition within state, and later national, educational bureaucracies. The ability to adapt to circumstances which permit a distinct and separate identity to that encompassed by, initially, the larger primary and secondary sectors, and later by the university and private provider sectors characterises this tradition. This malleability to adjust to prevailing contingencies yet retain sectoral core values has been labelled by Murray-Smith (1965) as the sector's possession of a 'mutation gene'.

**2. Private sector legitimacy** is a tradition shaped in part by the maintenance of sectoral identity. Technical and further education's quest for private sector blessing of credentialled vocational education programs is seen as an act of sectoral legitimation. That this has not yet fully eventuated has driven TAFE to re-examine itself constantly and receive close scrutiny from government and industry. Its self-claimed 'special relationship with industry' is often held up as a trump-card of sectoral distinctiveness. Associated with this 'special relationship' is the provision of sectorally specific Competency Based Training (CBT) as a curriculum technology linking publicly-sanctioned credentials with industry

Rushbrook, Peter (2001),  
'Australia's first national  
report on technical  
education: the  
Commonwealth-State  
Apprenticeship Inquiry (the  
Wright Report) 1954',  
*History of Education  
Review*, vol. 30, no. 1

Rushbrook, Peter (2007),  
'Policy, practice and the  
construction of  
paraprofessional or 'middle-  
level' vocational education  
curriculum in Victoria,  
Australia, 1957-1975',  
*History of Intellectual  
Culture*, vol. 7, no. 1.

## **B. Melding historical and contemporary policy analysis**

The analysis of policy ... is concerned with its origins and intentions – the complexities of competing and conflicting values and goals, the explicit and inexplicit representation of objectives which spring from diverse economic and social realities. It is concerned with the policy choices that are made, the decisions made – by whom, with what timing and with what authority. It is concerned with the guidelines, the rules, the regulations, the machineries of information, the interpretation in practice, the outcomes. At its most theoretical the analysis is concerned with what happens and why; at its most pragmatically historical it asks what, in known instances, seems to have happened. (Harold Silver)

Rushbrook, Peter  
(2010), 'Bringing  
Cinderella to the ball:  
constructing a federal  
system of technical  
and further education  
in Australia, 1971-  
1975', *Journal of  
Educational  
Administration and  
History*, vol. 42, no. 1,

### **Taylor, Rizvi, Lingard and Henry:**

- Policy is more than text
- Policy is multidimensional
- Policy is value laden
- Policy exists in context
- Policy is a state activity
- Education policies interact with policies in other fields
- Policy implementation is never straightforward
- Policies result in unintended as well and intended consequences

Clemans, Allie and Rushbrook, Peter (2011), 'Competency-based training and its impact on workplace learning in Australia', in Margaret Malloch, Len Cairns, Karen Evans and Bridget N. O'Connor (eds), *International Handbook of Workplace Learning*, Sage, London, UK

Rushbrook, Peter and Preston, Lesley (2009), 'Constructing the good worker: policies, practices and assumptions informing Victorian Technical Schools Division reform, 1967-1973', *History of Education Review*, vol. 38, no. 2

## C. Class and education

While vocational education remained in the hands of the instrumental-educators, education for citizenship, however defined, stayed on the educational agenda; all courses, junior technical and college, no matter how work-specific, carried with them a liberal studies component. However, individuals and agencies representing the instrumental demands of industry increasingly challenged this agenda, particularly after the infusion into their discourse of scientific management. From the mid-1940s management 'science' claimed to demonstrate that work was more efficient and effective if the conception of a product and its execution were fragmented into management and operative tasks.



This was backed by further 'scientific' claims that individual workers possessed finite and 'natural' abilities which suited them to specific roles in a highly differentiated workforce. A consequence was the huge growth of middle-level technician courses and their defence by professional bodies as a position subservient to their own creative needs; Brian Lloyd was a powerful 'external' and articulate proselytiser of this view. The knowledge claims he represented were used to verify industry calls for a more responsive vocational education and training sector. This tension between the vocational needs of the citizen-worker and the instrumental demands of an increasingly nuanced capitalism remain well into the New Millennium. Class, it appears, continues to be the shape-shifter of vocational education provision.

To account for, and assess the place of, CBT in Australian training and workplace practice we have considered four themes within the chapter. First, we position CBT historically within the context of its intellectual origins and practice environments. Second, we map the evolution of CBT within the Australian context, including the necessary preconditions for its introduction and the tensions arising between the learning needs of the citizen and the workplace. Third, we present issues related to teaching and learning practice that have emerged through cases of competency-based workplace learning in Australia and highlight aspects of CBT that have been subject to critique for the ways in which they shape workplace learning. Fourth and finally (as our conclusion), we close this chapter by signalling issues that hold potential to enhance competency-based workplace learning.

# A new direction?

Themes we can't live without when  
exploring our history

1. British bananism
2. The Australian Constitution and the  
1942 Tax Act
3. Scientific management or Taylorism
4. The Kangan Report 1974
5. ...?

# Discussion?

