Upskilling VET practitioners: technical currency or professional obsolescence

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Professional obsolescence

“The degree to which professionals lack the up-to-date knowledge and skills necessary to maintain effective performance in either their current or future work role”

Technical currency....industry currency....vocational competency
The drivers

- Commonwealth government’s productivity agenda and push for higher skills levels
- Bradley Review’s recommendations for VET and higher education
- Workforce challenges in an ageing and increasingly casualised skills base
- Increasing demands for quality teaching
- Regulatory requirements of the Australian Qualification Training Framework (AQTF).
And....

- Limited Australian research on industry currency and how to maintain it

- Variation of understanding about what it is, how to plan an industry currency strategy and how to measure and benchmark strategy
Research purpose

- Investigate professional obsolescence in knowledge-based organizations in professional areas – allied health, human resource management and engineering

- Identify models of effective practice for the VET sector
Research methodology

- Literature review on professional obsolescence, OD and HRD, and management practice in knowledge-based organizations
- Environmental scan of associated professional associations’ websites
- In-depth semi-structured interviews with OD or HRD personnel within 12 organisations, 3 from each of 3 fields and individuals from related professional bodies engaged in addressing professional obsolescence amongst their membership
Literature Review

Causes of professional obsolescence:

- Rapid technological advances
- Previously acquired knowledge and skills outmoded and ineffective
- Constant technical skill depletion
- Never-ending competence-destroying change
Literature Review

Causes of professional obsolescence:

- Within the individual – lack of aptitude or ability to ‘keep up to speed’, lack of awareness, confidence, denial, fear
- Within the organisation – job, relationship, and systems–related
- Impacts on individual, work team and organisation
Literature Review continued...

Strategies for addressing professional obsolescence:

- Getting the climate right
- Adopting a strategic approach
- Encouraging collaborative learning
- Learning about practice, through practice, in practice
- Updating for the here and now
Challenges in addressing professional obsolescence:

- Structural or system barriers (Toze and Tierney)
- Career stage differentiation
- Dual professionalism
The environmental scan

- Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (with reference to the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Council)
- College of Registered Nurses of British Columbia
- Australian Human Resources Institute
- Human Resources Professional Association (Canada)
- Engineers Australia
- Institution of Civil Engineers (UK)
The environmental scan cont...

The six professional bodies:

- Description
- Vocational scope (membership/ target groups)
- Aims and objectives
- Strategies employed
- Measures
- Outputs
- Desired outcomes
- Regulatory drivers
The environmental scan cont...

- **Aims and objectives**: advance professional practice; promote contribution of profession to society; champion professional and ethical conduct; encourage lifelong learning
- **Strategies**: access to ongoing education; information about CPD requirements for professional registration; online recording of CPD
- **Measures**: minimum requirements for membership; amount and types of CPD
The environmental scan cont...

- **Outputs**: learning plans (nursing); regulatory oversight, career development and effective services (HRM); career advancement and CPD achieving Chartered Status (engineering)
- **Desired outcomes**: highest standards of practice; competent workforce; safe and ethical practice; increased career progression; commitment to lifelong learning; protection of reputation and public

* Nursing and engineering ➔ legislation and mandatory compliance
Conclusion

- Access to industry is vital
- Barriers can be overcome through planning, innovative approaches and individual commitment
- Bring updating to the fore in performance management
- Entrench the concept of continuous learning
- Learn from the professions