Moving beyond training packages: first steps

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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- If training packages are to evolve or be superseded, what principles can guide the transformation of CBT?
- If training packages are to evolve or be superseded, what roles and influence should various stakeholders have?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 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 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.
Dimensions of debate about where next for training package content
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?
Dimensions of debate about where next for training package content
The behaviourism of competency standards sanctions neglect of the personal domain (too subjective, unobservable)

But how to incorporate the personal into training packages?
Personal domain

- Generic skills overlap the personal domain (e.g. Key competencies, Employability skills, 21st Century Skills, some Future Skills)
- Always avowed, but ambiguous status within training packages over time
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)
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?
Dimensions of debate about where next for training package content
Level of standardisation

- Currently a strong form of standardisation across jobs, industries and levels of expertise
- But how to embrace flexibility of representation without loosing the benefits of system consistency?
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 fail to capture subtle aspects of jobs such as values, embodied and tacit knowledge, identities, capabilities
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.
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


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