

TAFE SA teacher training education requirements South Australia

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1. Abstract

To obtain a sense of the current profile of teacher qualifications in TAFE SA Institutes/Alliance for the Teacher Training Project, a comprehensive survey of staff was undertaken in September 2002. Its aim was to provide TAFE SA Directors with an overview of the educational qualifications status and preferences of their teaching staff and their implications and opportunities for TAFE SA's involvement in providing qualifications and staff development in the future.

The results of this survey should be seen in the context of the current teaching workforce employed in TAFE SA in August 2002. Of the 2 783 TAFE SA teaching and management staff issued with a questionnaire, 424 responded, constituting a sample size of approximately 15%. Fifty-five percent of respondents were Lecturers, 17% Advanced Skills Lecturers; 3% Principal Lecturers, 14% were Educational Managers, the rest comprising Hourly Paid Instructors [HPIs] (4%) and Lecturers' Assistants (4%). Seven percent had not responded to this question on their position.

Summary of key findings of the survey:

- 62% of respondents, have a formal education/teaching qualification.
- 37% of respondents are currently completing a formal qualification.
- Of those currently completing a formal qualification, 62% were contract, 10% were HPI and 28% were permanent.

Of all the structured education and training (workshops, seminars, tutorials) undertaken over the past 3 years, but not leading to a formal qualification, the following were seen to be most relevant to respondents:

- 'Updating Knowledge of Discipline Area' (80%)
- 'Industry Liaison' (73%)
- 'Updating Teaching/Training Skills' (68%)

Of the structured training undertaken, 47% was funded by the employer, 25% funded jointly by the staff member and employer and 6% funded totally by the staff member. The most common reasons given by staff as causing barriers to their participation in professional development/formal qualification programs were:

- Pressure of work (38%)
- I do not have enough funds (25%)
- Location & timing difficulties (25%)
- Family commitments (24%)

2. Introduction

TAFE offers a unique role in relation to the provision of Vocational Education and Training (VET) and this has significant implications for the type of workforce it

needs. It is pertinent, then, that the teaching and management staff at the TAFE Institutes have the teaching and educational qualifications to deliver and assess training, possess the skills to facilitate learning and have up to date, cutting edge industry skills, as well as management skills that would enable them to be high performing VET practitioners. The findings of the Harris, Simons, Hill, Smith, Pearce, Blakeley, Choy & Snewin (2001) report stated that the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training had clearly become the *de facto* qualification for teaching/training in VET and that it will “increasingly be reinforced by the common stipulation within training packages for this level of qualification and by the finding in this study that decisions on staff development tend to be influenced more by policy imperatives than by industrial relations agreements or career plans” (Harris, et al. 2001 : viii). The report had caused some concern to the TAFE SA (TAFE South Australia) Board on the teaching and management staff profile at the TAFE SA Institutes. In September 2001, the TAFE SA Directors requested that TAFEBIZSA, with the assistance of focus groups with TAFE SA Institute representation,

Provide the TAFE SA Board with options for the provision of Educational Qualifications for TAFE staff including the expansion of TAFE SA’s involvement in providing these qualifications, and facilitate bringing the Board’s preferred option/s to fruition.

There had been, so far, anecdotal evidence about the views of TAFE SA staff with regards to the best means of attaining educational qualifications. There was therefore, a need for a critical analysis of the current TAFE teacher education requirements and provision, and the identification of alternatives for the future.

A questionnaire was customised from the survey tool used by the Centre for Research in Education Equity and Work (CREEW) at the University of South Australia during their research into “The Changing Role of Staff Development for Teachers and Trainers in Vocational Education and Training”. The Institute teaching and management staff were consulted through this questionnaire, to ascertain at state-wide and Institute levels, the qualification profile of TAFE SA teaching and management staff. It was felt that by understanding the qualifications and professional development held, undertaken and required, the project would be better able to plan for, and respond to, the priorities, educational qualifications and professional development needs of TAFE SA staff.

3. Literature Review

Of all the reviews that were relevant to this project, only three, ‘The Review of the UNISA School of Education’, ‘Review of the Flinders University School of Education’ and ‘The Changing Role of Staff Development for Teachers and Trainers in Vocational Education and Training’ have been completed to date. Of these three, *The Changing Role of Staff Development for Teachers and Trainers in Vocational Education and Training* by Harris, et al. (2001), is the most comprehensive study of staff development of VET practitioners undertaken to date. Harris et al’s (2001) findings were consistent with the key messages provided by respondents to the staff survey that was administered to TAFE teachers and in the consultations with key stakeholders. The most relevant of the Harris, et al (2001) findings were:

3.1 Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training has become the *de facto* qualification for teaching/training in VET. TAFE Institutes will need to determine whether this is sufficient to meet their future standards of teaching.

3.2 There are five main barriers to participation in staff development – time, access, lack of funding, lack of information and cost. Linked to these concerns, three key trends were identified as emerging: funding, sectoral change and competition.

3.3 There is a shift in the balance of staff development activities away from individual to corporate concerns.

3.4 There is need for a greater differentiation in the roles of teachers and trainers.

3.5 There is an increasing diversity in the ways staff development needs are addressed.

3.6 The minimum teacher qualification requirements are inconsistent throughout the States/Territories in Australia and even among TAFE Institutes within a State. While the minimum requirement for teaching in the VET sector in some States is a Bachelor's degree for full-time teachers, others allow a certificate (2-year) or diploma (3-year) in teaching.

3.7 Individuals are increasingly being held responsible for their own initial training as a teacher/trainer.

3.8 Public and private providers differ significantly in the patterns of recruitment. While only 54% of TAFE providers require a minimum teaching/training qualification at appointment, 81% of commercial, 79% of community and 73% of enterprise-based providers require this. TAFE is significantly more willing to have staff complete such qualifications after appointment.

3.9 TAFE staff focus more on trade and teaching qualifications; private RTO staff focus more on non-teaching postgraduate qualifications and workplace trainer awards.

3.10 Formal qualifications are most likely to be undertaken at a university in the case of permanent staff and at TAFE by casual staff.

3.11 VET lecturers need to be made aware of the increasing expectation that they will take greater responsibility for their own technical currency, pedagogical expertise and the need to be informed and articulate with regard to contemporary developments in the VET sector.

The Harris et al (2001) report provides significant indication to the future content of staff development (including University/TAFE teacher training award courses).

Critical elements for inclusion in future teacher training programs that have been suggested, include, operating in a competitive market; keeping up to date/understanding changes to VET; flexible delivery; understanding/working with training packages and use of technology.

The *top six attributes of a VET teacher* that Harris et al (2001) considered priorities were, professionalism; flexibility/adaptability; accept / cope with / predict change; tolerance/sensitivity to student needs; customer focus and passion for teaching.

The *top six skills, in order of importance*, they found, related to delivery/teaching; industry/subject experience; assessment; flexible delivery; facilitation; develop customised programs for industry.

The *top six kinds of knowledge, in order of importance* related to, learning principles/styles; industry knowledge; National Training Framework/Training packages; labour market and where it links to TAFE; political/economic factors that could impact on VET; lifelong learning (Harris, et al 2001:15-16).

Less than 50% of existing VET teachers were seen to have these attributes, skills, knowledge and competencies.

In addition to this review, it is important to recognise the findings of Mitchell and Wood (2001), the *Evidence of High-Skilled VET Practitioners* and *High-Performing VET Organisations* and Mitchell and Young (2001) *High Skilled High Performing VET*.

High skilled VET practitioners include a wide range of personnel, from staff development and human resource management staff, to senior, middle-level and supervisory-level managers; to staff from providers, enterprises and industry bodies, to teachers and trainers, and student support officers.

Characteristics of high skilled VET practitioners include:

- Using pedagogical skills to customise Training Packages;
- Managing strategically;
- Managing change;
- Developing innovative and enduring networks with industry and other training colleagues and
- Re-designing staff development to meet the challenges of the National Training Framework.

4. Research Method

In undertaking the project, the following research, consultation, survey and review methodologies were adopted, consistent with the stated terms of reference of the projects:

Primary Research

- 4.1 The opinions of teaching and management staff within TAFE SA regarding educational qualifications were canvassed through a questionnaire that was sent to all teaching and management staff in the seven TAFE SA Institutes/Alliance.
- 4.2 A wide range of organisations and their staff and various individuals in the VET arena were interviewed/consulted to gather information for the project.

Secondary Research

4.3 A review of the various research/inquiries/documents was undertaken, to consider their implications for educational qualifications/professional development of TAFE teachers.

4.4 Desktop research was done, to identify:

- Professional development for VET teachers;
- Adult and Vocational Education courses that are available through a range of Tertiary Institutions and
- Educational qualification requirements within public Registered Training Organisations in other states and territories.

5. Findings and Discussion

Of the 2 783 TAFE SA teaching and management staff issued with a questionnaire, 424 responded with representation from each Institute, constituting an overall sample size of approximately 15%.

Fifty-five percent of respondents were Lecturers; 17%, Advanced Skills Lecturers; 3% Principal Lecturers, 14% were Educational Managers, the rest comprising Hourly Paid Instructors [HPIs] (4%) and Lecturers' Assistants (4%). Seven percent had not responded to this question on their position. In summary, the key findings of the survey related to this project were:

5.1 Current Formal Qualifications

At the time of their response, 37% of the respondents were currently completing a formal qualification. Of those currently completing a formal qualification, 62% were contract, 10% were HPIs and 28% were permanent.

Of the 424 respondents to the survey, only 418 (99%) provided details of any qualifications they have. The survey results showed that 63% of teaching staff in TAFE Institutes have a formal education/teaching qualification, while 55% were identified as having the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training.

The survey also provided an analysis of the percentage of respondents from each of the TAFE SA Institutes, TAFE SA key program areas, and classification levels who indicated if they were currently completing a formal qualification, and the type of support they received, if any.

Thirty-seven percent (156) of the respondents stated that they were currently completing a formal qualification while 57% (241) said that they were not. Six percent (27) did not respond to the question. This figure is comparable to the Harris et al (2001) findings, which showed that of the TAFE staff surveyed, 34% were completing a formal qualification. Of the 156 (TAFE SA survey) who had said they were currently completing a formal qualification, 8% were Lecturers' Assistants; 59% were Lecturers; 12%, Advanced Skills Lecturers; 3%, Principal Lecturers; and 14%, Educational Managers. Four percent did not specify their position.

5.2 *Support from Institute*

Fifty-five percent stated that they were receiving support of some kind – a fixed amount of paid time (36%); assistance with HECS/course fees (71%) and assistance with the cost of books/materials (20%). There were other forms of support listed by the 13% who had said they received support, but had not chosen the given options, which included mentoring, accommodation and travel costs, information sessions, and use of resources such as the computer, internet and the printer.

5.3 *Reasons for Completing Formal Qualifications*

Of the ten reasons provided for completing formal qualifications, the following were ranked as the five most important – acquire qualifications (53%); keep up with current job (47%); learn/update teaching/training skills (44%); learn/update industry knowledge and skills (40%) and enhance qualifications already achieved (38%).

5.4 *Other Professional Development*

Of all the structured education and training (workshops, seminars, tutorials) undertaken over the past 3 years, but not leading to a formal qualification, the following were seen to be most relevant and important to respondents:

- Updating knowledge of discipline area (80%)
- Industry liaison (73%)
- Updating teaching/training skills (68%)
- Training packages (68%)
- Enhance qualifications achieved (64%)

The professional development undertaken and considered of least relevance included:

- New apprenticeships (30%)
- User choice (20%)
- Research skills (20%)

Of the structured training undertaken, 47% was funded by the employer, 25% funded jointly by the staff member and employer and 6% funded totally by the staff member.

Structured education and training were provided by either another TAFE SA Institute (49%), the TAFE they have been employed by (66%), University (15%) or Industry/Enterprise (33%).

In addition to these, another 70 different organisations provided structured training to TAFE staff over this period. It is difficult, however, to determine the value/quality of this training, but it does underline the breadth of professional development sources.

5.5 *Staff Development Barriers*

The most common reasons given by staff as causing barriers to their participation in professional development and/or formal qualification programs included the pressure of work (38%); not having enough funds (25%); location & timing difficulties (25%); and family commitments (24%). However, when asked what barriers had prevented

them from participating in structured education and training activities, a different set of reasons emerged, except for pressure of work (43%); and location and timing difficulties (41%). No replacement of staff (27%) and the Institute not having enough funds (24%) were the other two main reasons provided by staff as causing barriers to their participation in structured education and training activities.

5.6 *VET Environment*

Skills necessary for the Emerging

Although interesting, it is however logical, and expected, that the skills and understandings that staff considered most important to their success in VET in the future, varied with their positions. For example, Lecturers, Advanced Lecturers, Principal Lecturers and Educational Managers ranked 'up to date/cutting edge industry skills' as important. However, the Lecturers' Assistants did not see this as important as their need for other skills such as 'managing students/classroom', 'training and assessing at the workplace' and 'understanding learning psychology'. Although Principal Lecturers saw 'up to date/cutting edge industry skills' as important, they ranked 'understanding and compliance with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)', 'project management' and 'working in partnership with industry', as equally important, to succeed in VET in the future.

5.7 *Emerging VET Environment*

Educational Qualifications for the

The survey also investigated those skills and understandings that staff considered most important to their success in VET in the future, and level of expected study:

- Up to date/cutting edge industry skills 68 % (Informal Study)
- Flexible learning 68 % (Informal Study)
- Computer assisted learning 59 % (Informal Study)
- Understanding adult learning principles 59 % (Degree)
- Competency based training 58 % (Informal Study)
- Facilitating on line learning 58 % (Informal Study)
- Skills recognition (RCC/RPL) 54 % (Informal Study)
- Developing assessment tools from TPs 53 % (Cert IV)
- Plan, prepare and conduct assessments 52 % (Cert IV)
- Counselling skills 52 % (Informal Study)

It is most significant that seven of the ten priorities for skill and understanding development preferred in the "informal study mode" centred on structured education and work-related training activities. They are designed to develop employment related skills and competencies but do not necessarily lead to a formal qualification.

5.8 *Pathways to Obtaining Educational Qualifications*

The survey asked respondents to select a 'pathway package' that would best suit their needs, should they not have formal qualifications and wanted to teach in the VET sector. The most preferred option for pathways to be adopted in TAFE for staff to undertake formal educational qualifications is: "Suite of Courses: Certificate IV, Diploma, Graduate Certificate, Graduate Diploma developed specifically for TAFE/VET staff" (27%). The least preferred option for pathways is, "Certificate IV

issued by another Institute, Diploma Issued by another Institute, Degree Issued by a University, Post Graduate Studies” (6%).

Staff were also asked what changes they would make to the content and delivery of formal educational qualification programs they have undertaken to make these more appealing and relevant to teachers in the VET sector.

The greatest number of comments related to the Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education they had undertaken. The key messages included the need for the course to

- be more relevant to today’s VET practitioner;
- be delivered by University lecturers who had recent industry experience;
- include more work- place based assignments and
- adopt more on-line discussion.

Consultation with the various organisations and individuals revealed the following common concerns. Many of the issues and concerns they raised also reinforced the findings of the various reviews undertaken, the Harris et al (2001) in particular, and the TAFE teacher survey results.

5.9

Professionalism and Qualifications

Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training has become the *de facto* minimum requirement of a TAFE Lecturer/VET practitioner in South Australia. The concern is that a minimum qualification has become the norm and has led to the devaluation of a Bachelor of Education degree or its equivalent and has lowered the status of the TAFE lecturer/VET practitioner. It was the view of many that it was now time to ‘raise the bar’ in terms of the minimum educational qualifications people should have as a prerequisite to teaching in TAFE. It was also mentioned that there were no real incentives for TAFE SA teaching staff who currently had no teaching qualifications, to obtain them or undertake further professional development/study.

Further, questions were raised as to the likelihood that ‘the high performing VET practitioner’ could be the norm without teachers having professional educational training and qualifications. Settling for Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training for TAFE staff, rather than a teaching qualification as the qualification standard for TAFE, was seen to undermine the quality of the service/product that is offered at TAFE Institutes. Typical of the comments made were:

“I don't believe the Certificate IV in Workplace Assessment and Training should be the minimum teaching/training qual for TAFE teaching staff. It doesn't address enough issues about learner psychology, pedagogical issues, textbook creation and issues, but just purely how to train, how to assess, how to manage the AQTF. There should be a diploma level course... It scares me that the TAFE of the future appears to be nice buildings full of lecturers who have RPL'd through their Certificate IV in WPA, and nobody around, except EMs who do admin, that actually have any sort of teaching degree.”

A TAFE SA Lecturer

6. Conclusions

The project, and the survey conducted as part of the project, provided an opportunity to ascertain the current TAFE SA teacher profile; make a critical analysis of the current TAFE teacher education requirements and provision, and the identification of alternatives for the future. It also provided an opportunity to analyse the standards, quality and competitiveness of the TAFE SA system. Private providers, for example, are far keener to recruit staff who are already qualified, whilst TAFE SA is prepared to recruit/appoint first, and then allow staff to complete their teaching/training qualifications upon appointment. Is TAFE then unfairly bearing the burden of providing qualified people for the VET sector, and if so, at what cost? Can TAFE claim to be competitive and offer superior quality, when fewer (proportionately) of its staff have professional educational/teaching qualifications than their private RTO counterparts? These were questions that were put to the TAFE SA Board of Directors, as part of the recommendations in the research report that was presented to them in December 2002.

The recommendations outlined the need for TAFE SA to work in partnership with Universities, to develop a program that best suited the needs of the TAFE SA Lecturer and was recognisable across educational sectors, as well as, be both nationally and internationally portable. Future training of TAFE SA lecturers by Universities should include the high quality input of existing, appropriately qualified TAFE or TAFE SA lecturers regarding pedagogy of VET teaching, and should use state of the art technologies and methodologies. In addition, a more flexible approach to the delivery of educational qualifications should be adopted, to accommodate TAFE SA staff who wish to stay within their region, and to assist them to integrate what they are learning, into their work environment.

There should be a clearer and stronger relationship between TAFE lecturers' professional development/educational qualifications to salary progression levels. These should provide the necessary incentives for people aspiring to higher classification levels to undertake further professional development/study/research.

The research also recognised the need for funding and recommended that TAFE SA Directors approach Commonwealth and State Governments to fund the participation of TAFE SA lecturers in teacher development education programs. It was also suggested that the professional development funding at the Institutes be directed at developing the teaching skills of their staff through their preference for 'informal study'. It was recognised that TAFE/VET lecturers needed to assume a professional approach to taking greater responsibility for their own technical currency, pedagogical expertise and being informed and articulate, with regard to contemporary developments in the VET sector. In addition to providing opportunities for TAFE SA staff to gain educational qualifications, Institutes need to ensure that they maintain and continue to upgrade their 'technical' or industry qualifications and expertise.

The research also recommended that any developments in the establishment of educational qualification or registration requirements should be considered in light of national developments. There are considerable inconsistencies across states in terms of what TAFE systems require of their teachers'/lecturers' qualifications and therefore, a more consistent, national approach should be adopted. As a number of

states are reviewing their TAFE system and their lecturer capability profiles and the role of a VET practitioner, the findings from this survey will not only be of significant value to the TAFE system in general, but will also have a significant impact on the kind of professional development needed to enhance the role of the TAFE lecturer and the VET practitioner. These findings will also provide an opportunity for the nation's TAFE system to seek joint funding to develop and deliver a flexible professional development program, that will best meet the needs of its lecturers and VET practitioners, as well as prepare them for the challenges of a fast-changing global economy.

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