

Crafting capacity in VET:

Towards an agenda for learning and researching in the VET workforce

Terri Seddon, Monash University

This paper is prompted by the call for submissions to the Rudd government's 2020 Summit in April 2008. It analyses the impacts of VET reform on the VET workforce in order to identify strategies that might inform an agenda to build the workforce capacity to support economic and social innovation. The paper argues that VET reforms disturb VET teachers and managers work. Uncertainties in working life, plus top down reforms and funding constraints, drive innovations. Yet these are often unsustainable because new initiatives-identities cannot compete with established identities in the competition for recognition and resources. The effect runs counter to government efforts aimed at engineering change in VET. This model of reform is not followed by other countries, which recognise and deploy teaching expertise in productive ways to build capacities for innovation amongst young and older worker-citizens. The paper concludes with pointers towards an alternative model for Australia.

In early 2008, the newly elected Rudd Labor Commonwealth government announced that a Summit was to be held, where 1000 of the 'best and brightest' in Australia would address key policy challenges confronting Australia. My aim in writing this paper has been to draw on my research and professional engagement with VET since the early 1990s in order to clarify the message that I would put to the Summit. The paper is organised in four main sections. In the next section I outline my claims to be presented to the Summit. The remainder of the paper outlines the arguments and evidence that underpins these messages. I first indicate the conceptual basis for this argument anchored in the concept of 'occupation'. The next section considers the impact of VET reform on the VET workforce. Finally, I note the way the VET teachers are being addressed overseas relative to the Australian model. In concluding, I draw the three-step argument together in a draft summit submission.

The 2020 Summit and the VET workforce

The 2020 Summit, held in April 2008, focused on 10 main policy challenges. Matters relating to education and training were identified under the first challenge, the economy. This topic explicitly drew attention to the importance of high-skilled work; the quality of teaching in formal education and training institutions to prepare Australians for work, life and citizenship; and the processes of knowledge transfer and innovation within Australian workplaces.

Yet none of these policy challenges can be met without an appropriately educated and trained workforce. Every economy and society depends upon and is made through the work of its inhabitants.

Equally, the necessary development of human capacities is compromised if the workforce that supports learning, the occupation of 'teaching', is not supported.

'Teacher' is a generic occupational category that exists in many contexts. Today, teachers are mostly identified with school education, but they also do their job under

other titles – lecturer, trainer, as instructors and preachers working in companies and communities, human resource developers and personnel managers. The category of ‘teacher’ also flags a division of teaching labour in the development of human capacities. There are teachers doing face-to-face teaching and also administrators, student support people, counsellors, managers and leaders who support and coordinate that work.

The challenge for Australia, and the core task of the teaching occupation, is to prepare its people so that their capacities, particularly their capacities for innovation, can sustain Australia as part of a global knowledge economy and as a tolerant and safe society, in a world that is far more globally interconnected than in the past.

Yet the conditions that support innovation are compromised because there are contradictions at the heart of Australia’s economic policy:

- Innovation requires a culture of questioning. It is incompatible with our current culture of control.
- Innovation requires capacities for critical thinking, learning and researching, courageous actions and responsible use of power. It is incompatible with the run-down of ‘teaching’ occupational expertise that enables this capacity-building.

Other countries are moving forward by recognising and developing occupational expertise. This includes occupational expertise in the teaching workforce that supports and enhances learner’s capacities for questioning, learning and researching, which underpins innovation.

By contrast, Australia risks innovation-failures. This is because the contribution and capacity of education and training to sustain occupational expertise that anchors and supports innovation has been eroded. These constraints on education and training are most acute in vocational education and training (VET). Yet, VET services the learning needs of all Australians, almost 16 million people, who are not at school (in 2006, 3.4 million students) or university (900,000 students) (ABS, 2008).

In the remainder of the paper I elaborate these claims. The next section outlines the concepts that have informed this analysis.

Key concepts

My argument builds upon my funded research in VET since the early 1990s and my professional engagement with VET sector organizations, particularly around professional education with teachers and managers in VET. This body of work is anchored in sociological and sociology of knowledge research in education and work.

Richard Sennett (1998) argues that contemporary flexible capitalism has corroded character that was once anchored in work and working life. The changes accompanying developments in the global economy and increased global interconnectedness have reconfigured occupations. Once, ‘butcher’, ‘baker’ and ‘teacher’ defined distinct occupations and occupational identities, which were valued for their contribution to self and others. These occupational identities were formed through work-related education that provided entry to specific occupational communities and through participation in the occupation.

Today such occupational practices, and their interfaces with learning, are ambiguous and are often lived ambivalently. Sennett argues that this is because, in a short-term world where everything seems fluid and with no definite value, there is little firm anchorage for mutual responsibility, commitment and trust. These trends are clearly

evident in education and training. Teachers' work and voice has been undercut by the assertion of corporate and managerial imperatives, alongside a significant diversification and de-centering of learning beyond the formal institutions of education and training (Ferguson & Seddon, 2006).

These institutional changes create new terms and conditions for (collective) agency that shake employees self-understanding in profound ways. The ideas of occupations and occupational orders are compromised when the image of success is the individual entrepreneur – the go-getting, risk taking, mobile individual who engages in individualised self-management, disregarding context, community and cultural norms, while pursuing free choice and economic gain. This re-norming of working life repositions occupational identities as individual choosers who are expected to direct their own lives but within an 'illegible regime of power' (Sennett, 1998: 10) – that is, within power relations that operate through re-organised means of control, which are unfamiliar and therefore hard to read and respond to.

Sennett (1998: 31) suggests that, with uncertainty woven into the everyday practices of capitalism, the endorsement of the entrepreneur over prior occupational identities is accompanied by disconnection that is commonly experienced as a deep disquiet. The disturbing experience of having "No long term" disorients action over the long term, loosens bonds of trust and commitment, and divorces will from behaviour' (Sennett, 1998: 31). These changes eat into the 'sustainable sentiments' that serve our character by anchoring durable traits that create and define the interface between self and others. In these conditions people's sense of disquiet can become a focus for articulating what is happening. They come together to speak 'out of inner need' in what can become a transforming politics (Sennett, 1998: 148).

These themes of 'disturbed work', 'disturbing work', and 'transforming politics' provide a model for understanding contemporary politics (Seddon, Henrikkson, & Neimeyer, 2007 (forthcoming)). There is a relationship between work disturbed by flexible capitalism and experienced as disturbing working life. This disturbed and disturbing work provides a basis for 'speaking out of inner need', which prefigures dialogue, rethinking and, potentially, the coalescing of identities around collective projects. In our research on changing occupational and educational orders within human service work (teaching, nursing, social work) in Europe, Australia and the US, we documented evidence of transforming politics. This politics was directed at fragmenting occupations through, for instance, changing job categories and employment conditions, and also the emergent practices that are actively fabricating 'we's and offer some promise of alternative futures.

In applying this model to VET it was necessary to problematise the concept of 'VET workforce'. This policy term has become the established way of talking about the people who work in VET. Yet the concept of 'workforce' refers to all the people employed, an aggregated mass of individuals, without distinguishing between them or recognising their relationships, social structure and culture. This policy term, anchored in Australian Bureau of Statistics discourse, contributes to the dis-endorsement of occupations that Sennett talks about.

I prefer the concept of 'occupation' over 'workforce'. An occupation is a locus for collective action. They are the way people make their living by deploying their working knowledge in an ongoing system of identities and activities with a distinct social structure, culture and patterns of agency. The research on occupations since the 1800s shows that:

- ‘Occupations’ create their work and are created by it through collective agency
- Expertise is anchored in occupational identity and culture, its organisation in space, through offices and roles, and its renewal over time
- Expertise underpins license and recognition, and the occupation’s claim to mandate within a societal division of labour
- Jurisdiction is negotiated through boundary work relative to wider social (external) forces and inter- and intra-occupational conflict (internal forces)
- Boundary work makes delineations of insiders (I-we) and outsiders (we-others). It constructs inclusions-exclusions.

In conditions of flexible capitalism, the links between occupational expertise and identity, and with authority and voice, are undercut. This is partly linked to social re-norming that affirms the individualistic entrepreneur. It is also associated with social and political processes that downplay occupational expertise and its claim to authority (ie. professionalism) relative to organisational expertise, which is tied to vertical authority relations anchored to the employment contract (ie. managerialism).

These cultural and structural processes create conditions that reconfigure politics in three ways. First, there is politics of fragmentation as occupational identities are disrupted. This is accompanied by various kinds of identity work, which include alienation but also efforts to create coalescings, forming groups, conversations, networks, that begin to fabricate ‘we’s. Forming ‘we’s involves people re-finding cultural anchorpoints, and doing the boundary work, that enables them to claim ‘we’ (and even ‘I’).

Second, these politics of fragmentation and fabrication support innovations that sustain identities. New initiatives, engineered through organisational-managerial relations (eg. ‘team-building’) and through occupational relations, co-create new identities. These innovations include teaching experiments, partnerships and networks, and strategies for inducting people into these organisational and occupational collectivities.

Finally, these new identities-initiatives engage with other emerging and established identities with a view to maintaining and sustaining their work and cultural anchorpoints. This politics entails formalising organising practices through boundary work that consolidates a sustainable organisation. It involves engagement in both vertical relations based in the organised management of labour relations and in horizontal relations and inter- and intra-occupational conflicts of expertise. What is at stake in these political engagements is recognition and resources – the terms and conditions of work that will sustain the identity-innovation. And these politics become increasingly toxic as demands on resources and recognition outstrip supply.

In Australian education and training, there is abundant evidence of these connections between disturbed and disturbing work, and transforming politics. VET has the longest history of these trends but they affect all sectors. Across the board there is evidence showing occupational fragmentation and fabrication, substantial and significant innovations, and toxic workplace politics as funding constraints have been ratcheted up as a consequence of State and Commonwealth government policies.

Disturbing and transforming VET

Disturbed work, disturbing working life

The history of VET reform since the 1980s has been as a vanguard of economic rationalist reform. Initially award restructuring focused on education and training as a means to prepare internationally competitive workforces. These agenda were progressed through the national training reform agenda, which transformed the system of publicly funded TAFE Institutes into VET. VET is an open training market comprising training enterprises that operate within purchaser-provider relations with industry and government.

National training reforms have been substantial. They include market coordination and increased commercial project-based work; disendorsement of TAFE and public education provision; industry-led VET aligned to industry priorities and new 'job families' (Buchanan, 2006); international education export and growing on-shore international students; increased access, especially learners outside school-university norms; generalization of a competency-based approach to training and assessment which fragmented prior curriculum anchored in occupational knowledge practices; increased VET reach and extension of applied learning across sectoral boundaries; expanded demands and expectations of VET workforce; and changing conditions and routines-non routines at work.

The effect has been to change the scope and character of VET by redrawing sectoral boundaries in relation to service delivery and decision-making. For VET this represents an expanding role and increased legitimacy in line with industry and government's economic and social development priorities. For other agencies, it can be an opportunity to get particular learners or stakeholders off their backs and permit more focused business development agenda. The decision-making boundaries were redrawn early with the construction of VET as an 'industry-led' system. It began as a corporatist agenda involving employers and unions but became increasingly employer-led system.

The consistent feature since the late 1980s was a disregard of the VET workforce and the special occupational expertise that teachers and managers brought to the work of vocational, applied and second-chance learning. Funding constraints, market pressures around price of training and efficiency dividends have justified changes in employment conditions and reduced training requirements for teachers who work in VET. These pressures have been most acute in TAFE Institutes. Institutes have been pressed to diversify their profile but alongside an erosion of workforce qualification requirements and recognition of expertise amongst teachers.

The trajectory of VET reform from the 1980s to today indicates that some important reconfiguring of Australian education and training to meet the challenges of a global economy with social inclusion has occurred. However, the prospects for the future are not good. Already, skills shortages, an aging VET workforce and limited recruitment in younger age groups suggests that managed reform and diversification of the VET sector to meet multiple and conflicting needs and expectations have had effects that are not entirely effective or attractive.

These reform outcomes are compounded by the reduced occupational capacity of the VET workforce. This has been achieved by the institutionalisation of the 'industry trainer' as the normative model informing investments in the development of 'teaching' expertise and culture in VET. While this outcome may be logical in an 'industry-led' system, it fails to recognise the specialist expertise that teachers bring to their work with learners (young and old), and the social significance and legitimacy of this kind of work as a contribution to Australia's economic and social future.

These changes have had a particularly significant impact on TAFE Institutes. TAFE is where occupational expertise and identities in teaching vocational education were consolidated. Institutes continue to prepare 75% of VET learners for work, life and citizenship. Yet the price of training on a contact hour basis in TAFE Institutes has been systematically cut back in the name of efficiency and effectiveness, with 'effectiveness' defined relative to the norm of industry trainer.

Disturbing work, innovative practices

Official policies and managed reforms have disturbed the work of teachers and managers. They are disturbing in terms of working life and prompt problem-solving and occupational agency that drive a practical politics of work. Some of these practical politics are oriented to defending past practices and others to finding new ways of negotiating the present.

This diversification of response drives inter- and intra-occupational politics and boundary work, which becomes more transparent and toxic as resources constraints cut home. For in these circumstances boundaries are mobilised to create, protect and defend 'we's. But it is only some 'we's that matter. 'We's are judged in relation to endorsed power relations by those who are authorised through the vertical organisational relations tied to the employment contract. Managerialism drives a wedge into the teaching division of labour to create managers who manage and worry about the budget, and teachers who are repositioned as contracted service deliverers according to industry training norms. So the 'we's that matter are those 'we' like – those that do what we want, that respond to official demands and budget pressures, that make us look good relative to others.

Disturbing work fuels uncertainty amongst employees that creates openings for rethinking occupational practices, identities, and the norms that anchor good practices. These conditions encourage innovation, along with an intensification of work and emotional labour. But this innovation comes up against established power relations. Anchored in formal structures and privileged cultural norms and identities, these power relations underpin and constitute the established order. This order, its routines and taken-for-granted assumptions, tends to just roll on in the old ways. This is not always an intended outcome, but often just a matter of institutional inertia, although it is a visionary leader who will commit funds to an initiative when routine work is under pressure.

Caught in the scissor movement of escalating funding constraints intended to break established practices and the established practices of powerful interests, it is innovation that fails. Local problem-solving carried by individuals at their own expense, rather than through institutionalised arrangements, is ultimately repositioned as just another kind of work intensification. Such innovation-failures bolster defensive politics around the *status quo*, rather than steering reform towards more innovative practices through selective recognition and resourcing.

Towards capacity-building

Since the early 1990s, I have documented these processes of disturbing and transforming work in VET, and their effects in generating innovative practices but often with only modest sustainability. Reflecting across these cases, it is clear that innovations in VET are sustained where occupational identities and cultural norms remain well anchored and clear, and where relationships, formalised agreements and processes of institutionalisation are negotiated between identities that are parties to

the initiative, rather than where identities become unanchored and blurred. In these conditions of sustainable innovation,

- New skill demands and job families within the world of work are recognised in terms of learning needs and taken up by teachers and managers in VET. This cross-border work develops through horizontal relations between communities of practice who are proud of their work and its contribution to problem-solving and the common good.
- Occupational identity is consolidated by recognising and endorsing the specialist expertise. This supports the identities that are brought to these new challenges by different parties and creates resource-sharing arrangements to mobilise these different working knowledges and other resources. These relationships, and the resources that they make available, further develop expertise and endorse occupational identity by affirming the contribution that the expertise makes to addressing client or public needs.
- There is effective coordination of activities. This coordination knits the new learning challenges and the deployment of expertise-identities to address them together. It also involves boundary-work that profiles the innovation to build vertical relations to those in positions of power and trades the glamour and/or economic benefits of innovation in exchange for resources, recognition and legitimacy.

‘Capacity-building’ (Seddon, 2000) is the term that I have used to capture this top-down and bottom-up mix of openness to change, approaches that develop and endorse specialist expertise and occupational identity, and effective coordination. It is a form of applied adult education that builds capacities of actors within a framework of cultural understandings and transparent organisational processes, in ways that acknowledge different institutional priorities and imperatives, cultural practices and economic necessities. Importantly, this capacity-building remains focused on community contribution rather than self-interest or private gain. In Marx’s terms, the relationships and what flows within them is oriented towards use-value rather than exchange-value (Marx, 1976). Let me illustrate:

In the mid-1990s, I documented the impact of economic reforms in TAFE Institutes. In a number of cases, different organisational units were supporting their staff to navigate through policy changes by building innovative relationships with clients and colleagues, supporting development of staff working knowledge, and creating coordinated contexts for new ways of doing teaching and learning. Teachers described the way these changes had turned the department into a business, yet they found morally defensible ways of working productively in this environment while continuing to address and support student learning needs (Seddon, 2000). Equally, there were Institutes where them-us divisions were mobilised in politics that defended the status quo and cut off innovative developments by people who were not like ‘we’ (Seddon, 2001).

Breathing Life into Training (Sefton, Waterhouse, & Deakin, 1994) describes an innovative industry training program. It supported capacity-building amongst shopfloor workers by endorsing their working knowledge as a means of developing their literacy, numeracy and self-confidence. The training led to competency-based qualifications but was taught through a process of grouping competency standards into larger knowledge-skill mixes. These competency clusters were described as ‘holistic competence’ necessary to do the job and secure occupational identity. The

authors emphasise that building the capacity of workers depended upon a mindset that rejected deficit models of learners and, instead, worked with the learner's 'strengths, abilities, attributes and workplace competencies of workers' (p.19).

This approach to training made significant demands on teacher's pedagogical capacities. As the authors' note (pp 324-5), such 'integrated training' means working in mixed teams, including teachers, trainers and stakeholders, to develop 'sophisticated understandings and strategies which support workplace learning and change processes'. They express concern that 'training for many workplace trainers goes little further than presentation skills on the assumption that this is all that is required to deliver pre-packaged modules' and note the need for professional development which supports critical and collaborative curriculum development 'with the stakeholders who stand to benefit from the program'. Equally, there were challenges for workplace teachers. The integrated mode of training requires teacher to become experts in 'applied adult education'. It means that teachers need to relinquish a comfortable place teaching their particular discipline, to 'explore how their expertise may apply within the context of the workplace'. What counts is 'the teacher's capacity to see how his or her particular understandings and expertise may be used to support effective workplace learning and change' (Sefton *et al*, 1994: 324)

Research on social partnerships reveals the challenges of coordination in capacity-building (Department of Education and Training, 2002; Seddon & Billett, 2004; Seddon *et al.*, 2008). Partnership initiatives bring stakeholders and applied adult educators together to support learning, particularly amongst young people at risk of social inclusion. Cultural work is key feature of effective partnerships. It includes sensitivity to cultural differences and also capacities to work through these differences by acknowledging, respecting and trust-building, rather than through blurring differences. These processes require the deployment of interpersonal and organisational practices to structure, recognise and endorse identities. Carefully managed relationships enable transactions that support knowledge and resource sharing across cultural boundaries. This boundary-work requires more than cultural understanding. It requires a sharp sense of the way knowledge and power are co-produced and enacted through cultural/organisational practices and an awareness of the importance of structures, clear agreements and transparent processes in navigating through difference to agreements

Since the late 1990s, my colleagues at Monash have been offering Bachelor (1998) and Masters programs (2003) that build capacities in capacity-building. They develop knowledge and skills in applied adult learning and organisational development by working in partnership with those who benefit - the employers (TAFE and industry) and the individuals who enrol as students - to create a knowledge-sharing environment. This learning space supports networking, good relationships and builds capacities for big picture and strategic thinking, critical analysis and reflective engagement in global-local changes in work and education. We focus on the development of academic capacities in learning, researching and critical questioning, but we use activity-based teaching strategies that encourage people to build their confidence in thinking work by working on the relationship between university perspectives and their own everyday working lives. These programs have been successful, maintaining individual enrolments from individuals working in small business, corporates, community providers and TAFE Institutes, and getting repeat business from employers who contract with us as part of their workforce development agenda.

Since 2005, I have been working in an EU funded cross-national partnership with European colleagues in the field of lifelong learning and work (CROSSLIFE, Socrates-Erasmus funding, see: www.peda.net/veraja/uta/vetculture). Our university partnership (Monash, Tampere (Finland), London Institute of Education, Malta, Zurich and Copenhagen) has provided a framework for designing, implementing and evaluating an experimental program for VET professionals enrolled in research Masters and Doctoral programs. The program brings these students together in 3 cross-national workshops to learn, research and work together on topics related to the globalisation of work and education. I was able to support four Australian student/professionals to attend the London and Finland workshops using EU and Monash funding. They have each endorsed the value of the workshops and their 'travelling pedagogies', and their extended networking opportunities with VET professionals from other countries. However, it has been difficult to access funding to support this initiative or student's participation in the three workshops.

These few examples of innovations that support Australian VET have been prompted by official policies, managed reforms and the negotiation of disturbed workplaces and occupational identities. They all move well beyond what is commonly described as 'locked in' education and training practices. They are all alert to policy imperatives, actively engage in cross-border and collaborative working beyond silos, and support innovative capacity-building that enhances Australian industry and communities, directly or through building enhanced capacities for learning, researching and teaching in the VET workforce.

Yet each of these innovations have proved vulnerable to policy whim, short-term resource constraints, changes in personnel and inter- and intra-occupational competition and conflicts. This boundary work sets the limits of the possible by defining insiders and outsiders, and determining proximity and distance to structures of power. These processes determine the life source and, hence, sustainability of such innovations and the identities that make them.

Is this pattern of innovation and its undercutting a feature of global times? Or is it a peculiarly Australian feature of national institutional redesign justified in terms of global imperatives? Lets look briefly to Europe.

VET teaching overseas

My work in Europe convinces me that other countries have woken up to these innovative capacity-building strategies and their dependence on sophisticated knowledge and skills in applied adult education earlier than Australia. It seems Europe mobilises and supports capacity-building as an aspect of soft power (Nye, 2004) rather than rhetorically advocating education and innovation while exercising hard power (resource constraints and managerialism) as in Australia.

The European Commission affirms the place of lifelong learning in building Europe as an advanced knowledge-based economy. Economic performance is seen not just in terms of preparing workers who learn, but also learning citizens; 'capacity to function as a democratic, tolerant society requires the active promotion of citizenship and equality of opportunity' (DGEAC, 2006)

Finland stands-out, partly because of PISA. Its approach to education and training is distinctive compared to Australia because it does not deny occupational expertise and identity. The Finnish orientation to education prepare learners for working life by building on 'knowledge and creativity plus values such as equity, tolerance, gender

equality, responsibility for the environment and internationalisation. Everyone has an equal right to participate in education according to ability and in keeping with the principle of lifelong learning' (Kyrö, 2006: 11).

Excellence and equity is applied to VET as well as school and university education. For instance, pay levels for teachers in vocational schools and polytechnics are higher than teachers in other schools and universities. Entry to teaching in VET as well as general education requires teachers and principals to complete a Masters degree (5 years study). Student teachers are required to develop knowledge of teaching and learning that can be generalised to all forms of education and training (p. 46). This means that teachers working in VET have a broad knowledge of education across education contexts, have expertise in adult education, and are trained in researching as well as teaching. Qualifications maintain a clear occupational distinction between adult educators and industry trainers. The teaching workforce is regulated, while trainers in apprenticeships and industry trainers are deregulated.

This pattern of endorsing the expertise and identity of the teaching occupation is also evident in countries with Anglo-Saxon rather than Germanic education traditions. The Malta College of Applied Science and Technology (MCAST) requires its teachers to complete a 2 year Diploma level qualification, the BTEC Certificate in Further Education Teaching, double-badged by BTEC and MAST. The Handbook developed by the Professional Development Centre within MCAST emphasises developing 'an educational foundation for a career in teaching in FE and adult education', which makes an 'indirect but significant contribution to the nature of employment within the Maltese industry'. This requires skills in 'informed judgements', 'confident, autonomous decision-makers' and 'analytical and evaluative skills as well as their critical awareness of educational practice' (MCAST, 2007: 7).

Even in the UK, 2007 regulations now govern the training and registration of learning and skills teachers who work in further education colleges, universities and other lifelong learning settings. These regulations require teacher registration with the Institute for Learning to access qualified or associate licensed practitioner status. The license to teach depends upon Diploma-level qualifications and professional formation activities that ensure that teachers are up to date in their professional learning and able to apply that learning in professional activities (LLUK, 2008).

These trends are also endorsed beyond Europe. The Hangzhou Declaration (2004) was signed at a UNESCO International Meeting on Innovation and Excellence in TVET Teacher/Trainer Education. This declaration, agreed by participants from 25 countries, argues for Masters-level degrees in Teacher and Trainer Education.

And across Europe, innovation and internationalisation are actively encouraged and supported through mobility programs for students and staff across education and training. They are funded through programs, like Erasmus and Grundvig, that bring professionals and researchers to work, learn and research together across national boundaries. This travelling pedagogy has been made available to existing employees and to young people just entering careers. The European Masters in Lifelong Learning (2008) brings young people from around the world to Europe to learn about lifelong learning and work. In the process, students work together, enrich their capacities for cross-cultural collaboration and its applications in innovative teaching. Meanwhile, Europe accesses a cohort of adventurous young people who, after two years, have become familiar with Europe, well networked, and enthusiastic about lifelong learning as a future career.

Conclusion

Dear Mr Rudd, Australia's future as an innovative knowledge economy is threatened. Organisational authority and control has denied occupational authority and expertise. The renewal of occupational expertise has been hollowed out by the failure to recognise the 'teaching' expertise required to build capacities for innovation. Yet there are many examples of innovative practices that could have been built on. With an aging VET workforce, with a declining levels of 'teaching' expertise necessary to build human capacities that support economic and social innovation, it means there is little time to redress these imbalances.

Other countries have not followed our path. They have, instead, recognized the contribution of teaching expertise and identity to building a successful knowledge economy with social inclusion. Those countries acknowledge and endorse their teaching workforces, recognize their expertise in applied adult education and support its renewal. They have intelligently targeted funds for early career and professional development programs that take advantage of the traveling pedagogies that are now possible in a globally interconnected world. They are harnessing the occupation's passion, mobilizing occupational commitments to building human capacities, preparing learning workers who are also learning citizens, and enabling them to make contributions to national economic and social development. And in this process, they are creating careers in teaching that are attractive to young people.

Australia needs a better balance of organisational-occupational power to support a culture of questioning. It also needs to recognise and renew teaching occupational expertise that builds and sustains capacity for innovation. There are many initiatives to build on. Surprisingly, there is also considerable goodwill amongst teachers who continue to pursue their vocation, building human capacities as learning worker-citizens, despite difficult working conditions. The human resources needed to support innovation are therefore available. Their deployment to support economic and social innovation depends upon recognition, endorsement and resourcing that supports good practice. The sustainability of this working knowledge in applied adult education depends upon using these resources and recognition to also attract young people who want to contribute to the common good by moving into teaching careers.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Lea Henriksson, Beatrix Niemeyer, John Pardy, Phoebe Palmieri, Gail Fitzsimons and Damon Anderson for their insightful contributions to the preparation of this paper. I also acknowledge the support of the Australian Research Council, NCVER and the European Commission for funding the projects that have been profiled in this paper.

References

- Australian Bureau of Statistics 2008 The Yearbook of Australia, www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/MF/1301.0/ (Accessed 8/4/08)
- Buchanan, J. (2006). From 'skill shortages' to decent work: The role of better skill ecosystems. Canberra: NSW Department of Education and Training.
- European Commission, Directorate General for Education and Culture (DGEAC) 2002 *A European area of lifelong learning* <http://www.europa.eu.int/comm/images/language/lan...> (May 2006)
- European Masters in Lifelong Learning (2008) Shaping the future of learning, www.lifelonglearningmasters.org (Accessed 8/4/08)
- Ferguson, K., & Seddon, T. (2006). Decentred education: Suggestions for framing a socio-spatial research agenda. *Critical Studies in Education*, 48, 1, pp. 111-129

- Hangzhou Declaration (2004) UNESCO international meeting on innovation and excellence in TVET teacher/trainer education <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0014/001480/148003eo.pdf>
- Kyrö, M. 2006 Vocational education and training in Finland, Cedefop Panorama series; 130, Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities,
- LLUK 2008 Lifelong learning UK – Initial teacher training, www.lluk.org/ittreforms/2986.htm
- Marx, K. (1976). Capital, Volume 1 (B. Fowkes, Trans.). Harmondsworth: Penguin.
- MCAST (2007). Professional Development Handbook, Malta, Malta College of Applied Arts and Sciences, <http://www.mcast.edu.mt/> (Accessed 8/4/08).
- Nye, Joseph S. (2004). Soft power: the means to success in world politics New York: Public Affairs.
- Seddon, T. (2000). Capacity-building: Beyond state & market. *Pedagogy, Culture and Society* 7, 35-53.
- Seddon, T. (2001). Identity formation within neo-liberalism: Continuity or change? *Education et Societe: Revue Internationale de Sociologie de L'Education*, 6, 139-166.
- Seddon, T., & Billett, S. (2004). Social Partnerships in Vocational Education: Building community capacity. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Seddon, T., Billett, S., Clemans, A., Ovens, C., Ferguson, K., & Fennessy, K. (2008). Sustaining Effective Social Partnerships. Adelaide: NCVER.
- Seddon, T., Henriksson, L., & Neimeyer, B. (2007 (forthcoming)). Disturbing work, transforming politics. In L. Henriksson, B. Neimeyer & T. Seddon (Eds.), *Disturbing work: Reconfiguration of occupational orders*: Peter Lang.
- Sefton, R., Waterhouse, P., & Deakin, R. (1994). *Breathing Life into Training: A model of integrated training*. Melbourne: Workplace Learning Initiatives.
- Sennett, R. (1998). *The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism*. New York: Norton.