OCCASIONAL PAPER

Professional development
in the vocational education
and training workforce

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About the research

Professional development in the vocational education and training workforce

Hugh Guthrie, NCVER

This paper is based on one prepared for South Australia's Training and Skills Commission. It comes at a time of strong interest in the quality and professionalism of the vocational education and training (VET) workforce. This interest is underpinned by research into what constitutes quality teaching, as well as initiatives such as the strategic audit of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment under the auspices of the National Quality Council.

Guthrie argues that professional development is just one approach to improving the quality of the VET workforce. A strong professional culture in the workplace and better approaches to recruitment, job design, industrial relations, workplace and performance management also need to play their part. Whatever the approach, professional development needs adequate resourcing if it is to be effective.

Guthrie does not shy away from two areas surrounded by controversy—the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and the registration of VET practitioners. On the former, Guthrie's view is that the certificate IV is a sound qualification as long as it is taught well and adequate support is provided. On the latter, he opposes mandatory registration but notes that under the Australian Quality Training Framework it is possible to audit so that providers not only have staff with the necessary qualifications and skills profile but also have an ongoing professional development program in place that helps the organisation run—and improve—its core business of teaching and learning. Perhaps these audit requirements should be particularly rigorous for providers issuing teaching qualifications.

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

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Context

The vocational education and training (VET) sector is part of Australia's tertiary education sector, but the boundaries between VET, adult and community education (ACE), higher education and schools are blurred. This paper will primarily concern itself with professional development in VET.

The quality of the VET workforce—its vocational currency and the quality of teaching and learning experiences it provides—is crucial to the workforce capability of all other industries it services (Innovation and Business Skills Australia 2010a). VET has key responsibilities in preparing individuals for work and life. VET's learners are drawn from increasingly diverse backgrounds, including marginalised people and 'at risk' groups. In addition, to meet the needs of both industry and of individual learners, the VET workforce needs to be increasingly flexible, innovative and responsive (Skills Australia 2010). These issues all pose their own challenges for the skills VET staff need now.

The VET workforce is also receiving national attention. The Productivity Commission has begun significant work on VET workforce issues and has just released an issues paper (Productivity Commission 2010). Skills Australia (2010) has recommended an investment of $40 million per annum over the next six years to develop and implement a workforce development strategy for the tertiary education sector.[1] It notes:

> The strategy should explore, and provide support for, ways to expand the engagement of industry with the education and training workforce. These might include industry and provider staff exchanges, joint industry/provider staff appointments and industry sabbaticals and return to industry placements for teaching staff. Research, development and diffusion of distinctive VET and higher education pedagogies should also be a priority.
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> (Skills Australia 2010, p.66)

While the focus here is on industry engagement and pedagogies, a case might also be made for an additional emphasis in the strategy on workforce development approaches which will help VET address the needs of its diverse learner groups, many of whom have needs and issues beyond the experiences of many staff.

The VET workforce, like that of the broader tertiary sector, has many strengths, but it also faces a range of challenges. It is ageing, with potentially large workforce replacement issues, especially in its public providers (Skills Australia 2010; Guthrie 2010). A high proportion of its workforce is also highly casualised, with many of its staff probably only having a marginal attachment to the sector (Simons et al. 2009).

Other challenges include attracting, developing and retaining the VET workforce. Also, given the diversity and wide range of learning needs of students, it is critical that the VET workforce has the required skills and support to deal with learners whose needs challenge traditional ways of teaching and learning. This involves devising innovative teaching and learning strategies in institutional and workplace environments as well as off campus and through e-learning technologies. However, the great majority—about 75%—of delivery still takes place in traditional institutional settings (Knight & Mlotkowski 2009; Skills Australia 2010).

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[1] However, this proposal was not taken up in the recent (2010) federal budget.

This paper will focus primarily on public and private registered training organisations (RTOs). It has three major purposes:

✧ summarising the significant amount of current research and other initiatives on workforce and professional development, including those used in other jurisdictions, as well as overseas

✧ discussing the professional development requirements of the various groups employed in VET, with a focus on those involved in delivery, auditing and assessment services

✧ proposing strategies to drive change for Australian VET and tertiary education practitioners.

To do this the paper will:

✧ outline the range of research and other initiatives related to training VET staff and providing continuing professional and workforce development

✧ discuss the key issues underpinning professional development as well as proposing a set of features that should inform a comprehensive VET workforce development strategy

✧ consider a range of initiatives and ways forward. In particular the paper will give attention to:
  ◆ examining what a comprehensive workforce development strategy for the VET workforce might look like
  ◆ discussing the suitability of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as the entry-level requirement for trainers, and how practitioners can be encouraged to pursue pathways from VET qualifications to higher education and postgraduate qualifications
  ◆ discussing the issues and options relating to the introduction of an occupational registration system for trainers and other practitioners such as auditors and technical advisors
  ◆ examining how the regulatory framework can best be used to drive quality outcomes, for example, compulsory pre-registration sessions, mandatory minimum professional development (PD) days per annum, regular exchange programs between providers and industry, regular monitoring of new registered training organisations and high-risk areas.

Current research and initiatives

Currently there is a wide range of activity in and associated with the issues of VET workforce and professional development. Much of this is focused on teacher quality and development.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) managed a consortium of research focused on VET provider capability. The research program was directed by Roger Harris, Berwyn Clayton and Clive Chappell. It examined a diverse range of issues: career pathways for VET provider staff, teaching and learning, organisational cultures and structures, learning through work, human resource development, leadership and workforce development. This work can be accessed on NCVER's website at http://www.ncver.edu.au/research/projects/10345.html.

In addition, there is a range of other relevant research and activities, much of which is ongoing research or not yet in the public domain, including:

✧ NCVER's work on national VET workforce numbers and characteristics (Guthrie 2010)

✧ the review of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (hereafter, CIV TAA), the development of the new Training and Assessment Training Package (TAE 10) and supporting resources, and the discussion paper on a proposed new diploma program to complement the new Training and Assessment Training Package (Innovation and Business Skills Australia 2010b).

✧ the strategic audit of the CIV TAA commissioned by the National Quality Council (NQC) and being overseen by Western Australia's accreditation agency[2]

✧ Berwyn Clayton's work on the CIV TAA, which aims to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of teachers, trainers and registered training organisation managers about how this qualification adds value to their skills in training and assessment; a paper discussing the issues has already been published (Clayton 2009). The project report will be published later this year

✧ Guthrie and his colleagues' current research on the range of approaches and qualifications used for providing initial VET teacher training within the sector. They are:
  ◆ identifying the key teaching qualifications currently available for initial VET teachers being delivered across Australia
  ◆ interrogating relevant higher education and VET databases to determine uptake of these various qualifications, learner characteristics, trends in participation and completion, as well as evidence of prior study—particularly in relation to other teaching qualifications already held
  ◆ using course documentation and, where appropriate, having discussions with key program staff to identify and document key attributes of these various programs
  ◆ accessing relevant policy and other documents and identifying any qualifications requirements related to teaching in relevant industrial awards and agreements across public and private providers

✧ a project being conducted by a team led by Leesa Wheelahan from the L.H. Martin Institute at the University of Melbourne, which is researching the quality of VET teaching; VET teacher qualifications and continuing professional development (CPD); the impact teaching has on the

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[2] This report is with the National Quality Council now. Previously, the Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board (VETAB) in New South Wales conducted, and published, a strategic audit of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment in that state (Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board 2008).

quality of the VET student experience and student outcomes; and how this can be evaluated. To date they have published a comprehensive literature review (Wheelahan 2010)

✧ John Mitchell and John Ward's work on VET capability development and, in particular, the capability of its practitioners (Mitchell & Ward 2010). This is firmly linked to their work for the National Quality Council (entitled *Carrots, sticks or other options*) to scope the feasibility of options for a systematic approach to capability development of trainers and assessors in the VET sector. This latter work was undertaken for the National Quality Action Group on Quality of Assessment and has just been released (TVET Australia 2010).

✧ Erica Smith and her colleagues' report on workforce development for VET practitioners in service industries published by Service Skills Australia (Smith et al. 2009)

✧ Work by the Productivity Commission focused initially on the VET workforce,[3] which has just begun to examine:
  ◆ current and future demand for the workforce, and the mix of knowledge and skill required to meet service need
  ◆ current and future workforce supply
  ◆ the structure and mix of the workforce and its efficiency and effectiveness
  ◆ workforce planning and development in the short-, medium- and longer-term, as well as any effects sectoral boundaries have in limiting workforce planning, development and practices.

In addition a range of relevant reports have been cited elsewhere in the paper. The most active jurisdictions appear to be Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria.

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[3] They have released an issues paper (Productivity Commission 2010). Their final report will be submitted to the Australian Government in April 2011.

Key issues and principles underpinning professional development

In this chapter a range of the issues that affect the development of the VET workforce will be canvassed. These issues are drawn from the literature and consultations and form the basis for proposing a set of key features of an approach to VET workforce development.

Issues affecting the development of the VET workforce

We lack basic information about the size and nature of the VET workforce both nationally and by states. A range of attempts have been made to gather such information (NCVER 2004; Guthrie 2010). Unfortunately what data are available are not comprehensive. Even the most basic data on the workforce in private and enterprise registered training organisations is lacking, while that for the public VET sector is difficult to collect and consolidate on a whole-of-year basis. This is a consequence of a number of issues, including levels of casual employment and the possibility of such staff being employed by multiple providers. The most recent estimates of national VET workforce numbers vary widely and depend on the approach used and the breadth of the definition of the VET workforce employed. It might even be well in excess of 440 000 people (see Mlotkowski & Guthrie 2010). The estimates of national TAFE staff numbers vary according to collection method, but are estimated at between 57 800[4] and 70 800.[5]

What is known is that the VET workforce nationally is ageing and casualised. Numbers of casual staff are hard to determine with any accuracy. NCVER's study estimated that, nationally, over half of TAFE's practitioners were casual, while non-teachers and professional staff were far more likely to be permanent (Nechvoglod, Mlotkowski & Guthrie 2010). Whatever the level of casualisation, a key issue is that they generally have less access both to ongoing support from other VET staff and to professional development opportunities.[6] Smith and Hawke (2008), for example, suggest that teaching staff, particularly those on contract or who are employed on a casual or sessional basis, have less opportunity for working in cross-functional or project teams than their managers. Other research supports this (for example, Stehlik et al. 2003).

TAFE's workforce is long serving. Around 33% of TAFE's workforce have been employed for ten years or more, with about 10% having 20 or more years of service (Nechvoglod, Mlotkowski & Guthrie 2010).

Little information is available about the qualifications held by VET staff. What there is suggests that TAFE staff are generally more highly qualified than those from other VET providers (Mlotkowski & Guthrie 2010). Unpublished data gathered for the Nechvoglod, Mlotkowski and Guthrie (2010) study suggest that TAFE's permanent staff tend to be more qualified than those who are casual.[7]

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[4] Based on point-in-time staffing data collected from jurisdictions by NCVER for 2008 (Nechvoglod, Mlotkowski & Guthrie 2010).

[5] Based on Survey of Education and Training data for 2005 (Mlotkowski & Guthrie 2010).

[6] Hugh Guthrie has once heard someone characterise training casual staff in any occupation as like 'polishing a rental car'.

[7] These data—while having limitations—show that about 79% of permanent staff have qualifications at diploma level or higher. About 57% of casual staff have equivalent qualifications.

VET is a substantial and diverse 'industry' in its own right. However, it is not treated—and does not treat itself—as such. It has a substantial workforce when conceptualised at its broadest. However, many of its 'members' are hidden, but are trainers within other industries. VET is also a component of delivery in the adult and community education, schools and the higher education sectors. Vocational education and training embraces a large number of people working in a very wide range of contexts and circumstances. It is a diverse sector, and consequently meeting its diverse workforce development needs is challenging.

The professional standing of VET staff in relation to those in other education sectors, particularly its teachers and trainers, is an issue. There has been, and continues to be, a parity of esteem issue for VET teachers and trainers, caught as they are between school and higher education. While a number have higher education qualifications, including at doctoral level, many have VET-level qualifications, which are at the appropriate level for them to practise in the vocational areas in which they teach. It is a question of whether professionalism is defined solely by qualification level, or whether the attributes and practices of those who teach and train in VET are similar to those that characterise other professions.

The standing and comparability of the courses offered for training VET teaching and training staff by comparison with those available—or required—in other sectors is an issue. This goes beyond Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) level, and is more dependent on the soundness, fitness for purpose and range of qualifications on offer for 'professional' educators in the particular sector. The VET sector is very diverse, and it is likely that it is more diverse than both the schools and higher education sectors. At the end of the day, the diversity of potential qualifications and skills required in VET is a reflection of the diversity of the sector's mission and the variety of the interest groups and clients it supports. Thus, multiple and 'fit for purpose' entry points (with associated training solutions and qualifications) may be more appropriate. If so, what then becomes important is facilitating career and qualifications pathways and providing readily available opportunities to build a rewarding career, as well as acquire additional skills, knowledge and formal qualifications, if appropriate.

Another issue is the appropriateness of having VET teachers and trainers registered to practise in the same way school teachers are; however, alternative models should be explored, such as those used by professions such as accountants (for example, the certified practicing accountant), which are rigorous in their requirements for continuing professional development. This issue will be picked up again later in the paper. Registration is not an issue in higher education, although there has been an increasing recognition of the need for higher education lecturing staff to have some educational knowledge and skill. Hence, graduate certificates and diplomas have been developed to address this, and in a number of universities they are required for promotional purposes, or for gaining tenure.

The nature and diversity of teachers' and trainers' work is changing. A range of research (NCVER 2004) suggests that, for VET teachers and trainers:

✧ work roles and places have expanded

✧ work roles have diversified

✧ the balance between work roles has changed

✧ dilemmas and tensions in their work are increasing.

VET teachers and trainers are required to work in an increasing range of contexts—institutes, schools, online and in a wide variety of workplaces. They are also called on to develop relationships and work collaboratively with a range of specialist service providers, to develop skills in career advice and work placement, and to take greater responsibility for administrative functions, such as managing budgets. They may also act as consultants within individual enterprises, tailoring training to meet specific needs. They need skills in translating training packages into training programs and assessing the outcomes of that training well. They need to be able to develop resources for their

students and make appropriate use of available learning technologies. This role expansion has occurred alongside changes in the nature of the student profile (NCVER 2004). These changes have included older learners as well as school age students, those from overseas, with disabilities or mental health problems, and those who are required, but not motivated, to become involved in training. The 'Future now' report (Guthrie, Perkins & Nguyen 2006) suggests that VET practitioners need to become highly skilled professionals who:

◇ have a sophisticated pedagogical repertoire

◇ use more learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused approaches, rather than traditional transmission pedagogies

◇ can work with multiple clients, in multiple contexts and across multiple learning sites

◇ understand that the integration of learning and work is a major feature of the contemporary work environment.

However, not all VET teaching and training staff will need the same knowledge and skills sets. Not all need to become 'superheroes', capable of being all things to all people. The skills sets needed by any individual will depend on the stage in their career, their aspirations and context within which they operate. It is also important to acknowledge that needs may be met by appropriately balancing the skill sets of work teams and business units within individual providers.

VET practitioners still report considerable tension between their core teaching and training activities and the pressure to become involved in other work functions such as revenue-raising and administrative tasks. There can also be tension between the call to act flexibly to meet customer needs and the drive to comply with Australian Quality Training Framework requirements and ensure consistency of outcomes (Guthrie, Perkins & Nguyen 2006).

Defining the exact nature of these new 'VET professionals' has been one which a range of work has explored. This has included the development of capability frameworks which complement the competency standards contained in the Training and Assessment Training Package (see Corben & Thompson 2001; Cort, Harkonen & Volmari 2004; Callan & Mitchell 2005; Harris, Simons & Clayton 2005; Guthrie, Perkins & Nguyen 2006; Callan 2006; Smith et al. 2009; Mitchell & Ward 2010; Wheelahan 2010 amongst others). However, Mitchell has been particularly active in looking into the work of the advanced and specialist VET practitioner. This is consistent with the idea of developing and then consolidating a set of foundation skills in early career. The development of advanced skills competencies and skills sets follows as careers and work preferences develop and business needs and other opportunities become available to seed further development as professionals. Mitchell and Ward (2010) identify nine skill sets[8] and propose a framework based around a set of foundational skills that can lead to a set of advanced practice and specialist skills. This approach has resonance. However, a key aspect that also needs to be in the mix is vocational currency.

It is important to balance improved pedagogical skills against the maintenance of vocational currency. Industry currency is seen as being of the utmost importance in VET (Smith et al. 2009). This is the case for learners and trainees, who want to make sure they are learning current skills, and also for enterprises—who want to have confidence in the currency of the VET system. Thus, one of the professional development issues that emerges time and time again is getting the balance right between maintaining vocational currency and fostering skills to improve teaching, learning and assessment practices. If the former is ignored, then the danger is that vocational skills will be imparted well, but these skills may not be effectively meeting current individual and industry needs.

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[8] These are: generic skills, learning theories, foundation learning facilitation (including for equity groups), foundation assessment skills, advanced learning facilitation and assessment skills, learning styles, course organisation and student management, commercial skills and educational research.

Maintaining vocational currency is not cost-neutral. Using staff who maintain a work role in both VET and their substantive vocation helps,[9] and such staff can be used to help update the currency of long-serving permanent VET staff. In addition, a range of other approaches is often proposed: monitoring international trends and changes in technologies and work practices; using the opportunities afforded by providing workplace training in enterprises; undertaking industry placements, action learning and other project work; maintaining industry licensing or registration; subscribing to industry publications; undertaking study tours and site visits; staff exchange programs; and being active in industry networks.

Most recently Toze and Tierney (2010) looked at the industry currency of trainers in Queensland. They conclude that:

✧ It helps teachers and trainers to maintain their vocational and professional identity.

✧ There is a wide variety of levels of understanding of the concept; however, a number of organisations have quite sophisticated approaches to maintaining it.

✧ It needs to be a planned and continual process involving a rich variety of activities.

✧ It may not be an issue for some VET teachers and trainers whose work does not involve strong industry connections (for example, those teaching in teaching English as a second language programs).

✧ The Australian Quality Training Framework could be used more effectively to focus registered training organisation attention on maintaining vocational currency.

✧ Further work is required to see how effectively the increased focus on workplace delivery can be used to help maintain vocational currency.

Another issue is the extent to which teaching skills have to be developed through the lens of the teaching and training culture of particular occupations and the personal characteristics and abilities of those who seek careers in these occupational areas. If this is true, this suggests that there may be a place for introducing programs focused on how practitioners might best deliver vocational training to those in their particular industry. As yet, there has been little or no research in this area, apart from a study by Harris et al. (1999), but such research might be valuable. In addition, developing professional development programs focused on the most appropriate approaches for teaching and training for specific occupations could be worth exploring, either in consolidating foundational skills or developing more specialist and advanced skills. At the very least it may contextualise their training when undertaking VET teacher or trainer training.

Any approach to professional development should be part of a wider and holistic approach to improving the quality of VET. Arguably, staff are a provider's most important resource. They are the basis on which its capability is built. What constitutes capability, however, may have a cultural dimension, and the conception of capability may vary across large and culturally diverse public, private and other providers.

Effective professional development also needs to embrace the majority of staff, and particularly those having direct contact with clients. This is especially so if professional development is seen as *the key means* of improving a provider's performance. However, the issue is whether professional development and workforce skills really are always the major barriers to performance improvement, or only one of a number of issues which need to be addressed simultaneously and coherently. Professional development should not be seen as the 'one trick pony'.

VET providers need to effectively coordinate and manage their various resources, including:

✧ the 'tangible'—their financial and physical resources

✧ the 'intangible'—their reputation and culture

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[9] And is probably not a major issue for many enterprise providers.

✧ the 'human'—the leadership and management skills of their senior staff as well as the specialised skills and knowledge of other staff and the way they all interact, communicate and share knowledge (Guthrie & Clayton 2010).

Improving capability also depends on the extent to which learning is part of the provider's broader organisational culture. Organisational learning processes require critical reflection, continuous improvement and organisational renewal. They include being flexible and innovating, taking risks and allowing mistakes. They also require effective teamwork, sound professional and workforce development approaches and good leadership, not only just within business units, but also across the whole organisation. Mitchell et al. (2006) note the importance of managing quality systems and indicators, and the importance of creating cultures which stimulate continuous improvement. This is—or should be—the spirit in which the Australian Quality Training Framework operates.

What processes really get to the heart of the skills, knowledge and support VET staff—particularly its teachers and trainers—need? At its simplest it is:

✧ a foundational set of teaching and assessment skills

✧ strong initial development, including good induction, and then ongoing support and professional development[10]

✧ a willingness by the VET sector's teachers and trainers—accompanied by the incentives—to engage in ongoing professional development.

In fact, some teachers and trainers may not be 'beginners'. They may already have worked in the role before, but the currency and level of their skills may be variable and will affect the level of training needed initially. Even working in a new provider which uses different teaching and learning approaches and has a different student demographic, philosophy or organisational culture will affect the mix of skills required. Figgis and Hillier (2009) suggest that developing an organisational culture which encourages mainstream practitioners to reflect on what they are doing and then take action is what is needed, not a focus on 'star innovators'. In addition, they believe the most effective change may not be through radical reform, but through incremental improvements.

How new teachers and trainers enter the VET sector and how they see themselves and their relationship with it is important. Harris et al. (2001) described an emerging model of a differentiated VET workforce that comprises a smaller core of permanent practitioners alongside a 'peripheral' group of contract and casual staff. The relative sizes of these groups have probably shifted quite significantly with time, and certainly since the time when diploma and, later, degree-level courses were seen as the major teaching qualification at entry level, in the early 1990s.

Simons and her colleagues (2009) suggest that most new staff enter the VET sector as sessionals or casuals. Permanency, if ever attained, comes later. Little is known about how these sessional and casual staff do their work. The quality of induction and ongoing support they receive on entry from their employer is also variable and will affect their ability to perform well as they begin their work as VET teachers and trainers. Therefore what level of qualification and other support do they need to begin practice? At present, this is the CIV TAA, but does this have the right content for these staff? What other support is needed, and to what extent is that support given by the providers who employ them? These questions are being addressed in a range of studies focusing on the CIV TAA, and teaching quality more broadly.

Approaches to initial training and ongoing professional development *might* be different, depending on the circumstances and motivation of VET's teachers and trainers. For example, do they:

✧ want to earn some extra money

✧ want to contribute to their industry by passing on their current skills and knowledge—but only on a casual basis

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[10] However, some VET staff are employed by more than one provider in any one year.

✧ want to dabble in a possible alternative career to see if they like it

✧ want to get another set of skills and experiences that may help them move on in their occupational area or career

✧ see themselves as a career teacher or trainer.

This is not a comprehensive list. In fact, there is a diversity of reasons for working in VET providers, and there are different risks for providers when they invest resources in the professional development of these different 'types' of staff. Staff intentions and their career aspirations will also help determine how much of a personal training investment they are prepared to make—initially at least. The nature of formal qualifications and professional development will be explored below.

Levels of teacher preparation and the extent of professional development had been undermined, but there now seems to be a renewed focus on it. Improving the professionalism of VET teachers, particularly through mechanisms to promote continuous learning and development, are consistently emphasised in policy documents and research (Harris, Symons & Maher 2009). Harris et al. (2009) also point out that the centrality of VET teachers and trainers in reform movements occurring in Europe seems to be in rather sharp contrast to the experience of VET teachers and trainers in Australia, where levels of teacher preparation and development have been progressively undermined. Happily, this trend now seems to be turning around and Australia is placing a renewed emphasis on the quality of its VET practitioners. However, the quality of management and workforce development practices is key.

Leaders and managers play a key role in supporting professional and workforce development. Hawke (2008) reports that middle managers in large public providers, who hold the greatest responsibility for implementing many important elements of workforce development policy, carry heavy workloads. As a consequence, strategic workforce development matters often fail to get the attention they deserve. These managers—and often their staff—can also be reluctant to participate in professional development; for example, given limited human and financial resources, it can be difficult to backfill staff undertaking professional development. In addition, providers cannot necessarily guarantee that the workforce development policies and strategies they determine at executive level are always implemented with fidelity or consistency (Hawke 2008).

Managers also have a role in performance management and review, and how effectively this is linked to professional development is very important. Hawke (2008) notes that staff confidence in management's ability to provide them with useful guidance on their own career direction is low. He points out that most of the staff interviewed said that they made decisions about their own learning and development solely or primarily on the basis of their own assessments and from discussions with colleagues. Better performance management approaches appear to be needed to ensure a more effective and more meaningful alignment of personal aspirations and business needs, particularly in public providers. Performance management approaches appear to be oriented towards professional development rather than to assessing work performance, although some organisations were moving towards a more performance-oriented approach and the use of a broader range of tools, such as 360-degree appraisal processes (Smith & Hawke 2008). Hawke (2008) also suggests that professional development can be inappropriately linked to remedial or corrective training. This is seen by staff is a deficiency-oriented model rather than one which provides a positive professional development experience for the staff member concerned. Clearly, there is variation in the quality of practice and this might merit attention.

For the most part, things are far more informal in private providers, especially the smaller ones. For them, cultural fit is an important selection criterion for staff, and the loss of key staff can have a significant impact on operations (Guthrie 2008). The challenge for these providers is when they grow and consequently their workforce development practices have to change to become more formalised (Smith & Hawke 2008).

Finally, it is important to invest in developing managers and leaders. The approaches used to develop management and leadership skills include formal courses, programs and events offered by a range of institutions (for example, the L.H. Martin Institute based at Melbourne University), agencies, networks and professional associations. Other processes in use include: using diagnostic and self-assessment tools; learning on the job through key projects; coaching and mentoring using internal or external people; and staff rotations, shadowing arrangements and secondments (Callan et al. 2007). Callan and his colleagues identify a range of enablers and barriers to leadership and management development. The key enablers at organisational level include the existence of a learning culture; the redesign of systems, structures and processes to support new ways of working; involvement in and ownership of professional development; and the opportunities afforded by existing strong networks and communities of practice, both within and outside the organisation. In contrast, they noted that barriers include: non-supportive organisational climates with little access to development opportunities; workloads and responsibilities not easily transferred to others; and development being focused upon information-giving rather than allowing participants to work actively on issues and problems in their own contexts (Callan et al. 2007).

How adequate is the current minimum requirement to practise as a teacher and trainer under AQTF 2007—the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment—for the needs of contemporary professional VET educators? This issue is interesting, because the level of the required minimum qualification says something about esteem for that occupation. A certificate IV is not a particularly high level of qualification, but may be adequate for some—or even most—teachers and trainers beginning their practice, especially those who do not identify strongly with a career as a teacher. Simply, these initial teachers and trainers may not want to invest heavily in higher-level and more time-consuming qualifications if they do not see their career in the longer term in VET teaching. Once the balance between their vocational identity and that as a teacher or trainer changes, then the question of what level of teaching or training qualification is appropriate probably changes too. The CIV TAA may be an adequate qualification for many to perform their work role. Others will need further and higher work skills and knowledge as they take on more responsibilities. This is because they will not only be involved in undertaking teaching, managing and mentoring other staff (including casuals), helping learners learn, assessing their competence and the effectiveness of their learning, they will also be heavily involved in the underlying design and management of the whole teaching and learning process. This requires skills at a much higher level, supported by a range of appropriate skill sets and higher-level qualifications.

Berwyn Clayton is investigating the extent to which practitioners believe that the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment provides an effective foundation for the delivery and assessment of training. The project's background paper (Clayton 2009) provides a history of the CIV TAA. It also outlines some of the key issues surrounding this qualification: uneven quality, inconsistencies in delivery and the perceived inability to meet the skills and knowledge needs of trainers in workplaces on the one hand and teachers in institutional settings on the other. In her research, Clayton is looking at a small number of those who have completed the CIV TAA—both on completion and some time after, when they have had subsequent teaching experience. She has found that:

◇ When taught well, the CIV TAA can provide important foundational training and assessment skills for practitioners entering the field.

◇ To enhance the confidence and effectiveness of new VET practitioners, the certificate IV requires a greater focus on the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching and the time to practise and apply teaching skills.

◇ Without ongoing professional developmental activities and the support of experienced colleagues in the period after completion, novice practitioners may have difficulty meeting the diverse needs of the learners with whom they are confronted.

In addition, the danger is that qualifications like the CIV TAA become victims of the political and consensus-based process of their creation. Elements of the package's content may therefore not be what is 'mission critical' to the work role, but is included because it makes some key interest group

happy. Content emphases may also not be appropriate when the qualifications are delivered. Of itself, it will not be an adequate preparation for the role: good induction and support, the opportunity to participate in appropriate concurrent teaching and training experience—as well as ongoing professional development—are also important.

Unpublished work from NCVER suggests that:

✧ The CIV TAA is widely offered. A large number of providers nationally have the qualification on scope, well in excess of the 270 or so from which NCVER gathered data in 2008.

✧ According to data published on Innovation and Business Skills Australia's website, over 26 250 students were participating in the CIV TAA in 2008. There were nearly 11 500 completions in that year.

The introduction of the new Training and Assessment Training Package and other reviews offer opportunities for real improvements in the quality of teacher/trainer preparation and ongoing development. In May 2010 the new training package was endorsed to replace the CIV TAA. It is seen as representing an evolution, not a revolution. It comprises seven core and three elective units. The core units are:

✧ Plan assessment activities and processes

✧ Assess competence

✧ Participate in assessment validation

✧ Plan, organise and deliver group-based learning

✧ Plan, organise and facilitate learning in the workplace

✧ Design and develop learning programs

✧ Use training packages and accredited courses to meet client needs.

There are 14 potential elective units that cover assessment; delivery and facilitation; language, literacy and numeracy; training advisory services, as well as six imported units. In addition, there is also a range of related qualifications at diploma and vocational graduate certificate levels, covering international education, language, literacy and numeracy and management competencies. It will be important to use the introduction of this new award positively to address issues with the previous package and to ensure that the quality of initial teacher and trainer preparation is as high as possible throughout Australia.

In addition, more comprehensive and accurate data—and additional insights—on the CIV TAA are likely to be provided by the review into this qualification being conducted under the auspices of the National Quality Council. A range of other suggestions will be made later in this paper in relation to how issues in the quality of provision of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment might be addressed. The present review of the Diploma in Training and Assessment being conducted by Innovation and Business Skills Australia also offers a window of opportunity for improvement in practices.

A wide range of other formal programs are available to train VET teaching and training staff at diploma level or above, but we know very little about them or their quality. Diploma-level and above qualifications are offered by a range of VET institutions and university providers. Victorian TAFE providers offer the Diploma in VET Practice. The present Diploma in Training and Assessment specifies the competencies required to engage in advanced training and assessment practice, which may also include competence in one or more of the following areas: development of training products; provision of training advisory and consultancy services; and leadership and coordination of training and assessment services. It requires the completion of 12 units packaged as five core units and seven elective units. However, the diploma has not been taken up widely and its enrolment numbers are quite low relative to the CIV TAA. Unpublished data from NCVER suggests that

around 730 participated in the Diploma in Training and Assessment nationally in 2008. (There were 213 completions nationally.)[11]

The discussion paper prepared to assist the redevelopment of the diploma award (Innovation and Business Skills Australia 2010b) points out that a qualification with multiple streams or a series of linked skill sets may be an option, and proposes a core of four units and options drawn from skill sets covering advanced facilitation, advanced assessment, learning design and educational leadership. The paper proposes that other skill sets could be added as part of the continuous improvement process for the qualification. Such approaches may open new training markets internal to the VET sector itself, but assuring quality of provision will be important.

About 14 higher education providers nationally (of which ten are in New South Wales or Queensland) are presently providing relevant teaching and training programs for VET and adult education staff at associate degree, degree and graduate certificate and diploma levels. In total, just under 2000 people were participating in these programs nationally in 2008.[12] No higher education qualifications are available in the Northern Territory, the Australian Capital Territory or Tasmania. The higher education sector now has limited capacity, and there are certainly far fewer drivers than there once were for VET staff to pursue studies at this level.

University-level qualifications relevant to VET teachers and trainers have received little attention in the research and policy literature. There is also little information on their quality. Most research effort and critical comment have been directed at the CIV TAA. This is unfortunate, because it has directed attention away from the role such programs could most usefully play in ongoing teacher preparation and development. Guthrie's work, due for completion later this year, may provide some useful insights.

The role of industrial relations agreements in promoting professional or workforce development is significant. There are drivers for ongoing professional development, and these differ across jurisdictions. Again, we know little about the incentives in private providers beyond what is in the generic industrial award for their staff (see below). Within the public sector the range of 'carrots and sticks' employed by a range of jurisdictions include:

✧ the linking of salary incremental points to qualification requirements, usually those with a teaching focus and at least at diploma level

✧ release time and funds to support individual professional development

✧ release time and funds (usually refunding course fees) to support obtaining additional qualifications

✧ different pay rates for casual staff between those who have the CIV TAA and those who do not.

In some cases this development support would only apply to permanent staff.

In a range of jurisdictions public provider staff may not be expected to hold the CIV TAA on commencement, but to be undertaking it concurrently with teaching and training. They are expected to complete it within a specified period, typically a year or two.

In South Australia, for example, an agreement with TAFE staff was recently concluded. The lecturer descriptors indicate that the first two levels (1 and 2) are internship positions where mentoring is a feature and during which they acquire the CIV TAA. Movement to levels 3 and 4 requires that the Diploma in Teaching and Assessment and/or relevant formal qualifications in their field of expertise be progressively acquired. The Diploma in Teaching and Assessment or an educational qualification deemed equivalent is required to progress to level 5. Positions at levels 7

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[11] According to Innovation and Business Skills Australia's discussion paper on the diploma award (2010c) about 134 providers have the qualification on scope nationally.

[12] From Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations data, higher education collection; not yet verified by internal NCVER checking procedures.

and 8 are merit-based appointments requiring that the Bachelor of Education (Adult, Vocational and Workplace Learning),[13] or qualifications deemed equivalent, be held. Positions at level 6 and above have a mentoring and career development role with more junior staff as well as a key role in assuring the quality of service delivery.

While private providers may make their own industrial relations arrangements, a number will make use of the Educational Services (Post-Secondary) Award 2010. The award recognises a range of different staff types: academic teachers, teachers employed in English language colleges or in teaching English as a second language courses, and tutor/instructors (who are most similar to traditional VET staff and require the CIV TAA).

The award makes little mention of professional development requirements and support except, perhaps, within the context of the annual staff development and performance review. The award is silent on any precise entitlements to and organisational support for professional development and training, apart from its role in acquiring new skills, knowledge and experience in line with organisational requirements, and to ensure continued satisfactory performance.

One possible approach that might be used industrially (or in registration or regulatory requirements) is mandating a certain number of professional development days per year for each staff member. While simple, this may be too inflexible and may not encourage high-quality professional development to be offered. It is a volume, not necessarily a quality, guideline. A more flexible approach may be to mandate that a percentage of gross salary be expended on professional development, but this would need to take account of the lessons learned from the implementation of the training guarantee.

Who pays? What are the incentives to train for both the individual teacher and trainer, and their employer? The issue of 'who pays' is an interesting one, especially given the proportion of sessional and casual teaching and training staff employed in the sector. The literature tells us that such staff often do not have the same access to funded professional development of all types as permanent staff. The issue, then, is whether it is in the personal interest of these staff to undertake lengthy and possible expensive teacher training courses and ongoing professional development programs, which require considerable sacrifice on their part, especially if access to permanent or promotional positions is limited.

Alternatively, employers have a responsibility to make sure that their staff are properly trained to perform their duties. More information is needed about the relative contributions being made by VET staff and their employers to relevant training, including reimbursement of fees to those who successfully complete qualifications and other required personal development and any mandated time off for professional development. It also needs to be established whether these arrangements are being fully utilised and are suitably flexible. Alternatively, wage levels could be lifted, and staff made responsible for undertaking their own professional development. This may be particularly attractive to casual staff.

The VET sector may not be focusing appropriately on workforce and professional development opportunities with the most impact. Workforce development is concerned with managing the size and composition of the workforce, retaining and managing that workforce and skilling it (Hawke 2008). This is in contrast to the rather more individually focused concepts of professional development. Much of this so-called professional development is oriented around events run by various agencies.

While often valuable, it might be argued that an 'events' approach does not necessarily change core practices, and approaches are needed which develop a shared vision of professional learning aimed at helping to shift the mental models staff have about their work. This requires their active engagement in the process, using such approaches as interest groups, networks and communities of practice, which give greater encouragement to reflective practice. It may even involve redesigning

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[13] This is the qualification offered by the University of South Australia.

jobs at provider level. Both casual and support staff need to be bought in from the cold and ways found to develop their skills and better value the work they do, as they, too, are a key ingredient of provider quality. Such approaches will not be funding-neutral, and will require investments well in excess of existing allocations.

What are the key features of a comprehensive workforce development strategy?

In considering a set of features for a comprehensive workforce development strategy, a good starting point may be the set of five key principles Western Australia has developed. These are repeatedly raised as representing best practice professional development (Department of Education and Training 2009):

Principle 1—Taking a holistic approach: this includes formal and regular performance assessments, setting informed goals, measuring outcomes, using a variety of approaches and customising professional development and other strategies to meet particular needs.

Principle 2—Focusing on measurable outcomes: this is to ensure that the outcomes sought are achieved and the professional development initiatives have been successful

Principle 3—Providing flexibility and variety: use a variety of approaches that suit the needs of particular individuals and groups. Promote a range of alternative pathways

Principle 4—Recognising informal learning: informal learning is probably the most common form of professional development, but often goes unrecognised and is not measured. It involves exploiting the professional development opportunities the workplace provides in a more conscious way.

Principle 5—Empowering individual practitioners: professional development opportunities will be taken up more enthusiastically by practitioners if they are involved in their development and in shaping their direction. A sense of ownership needs to be engendered.

While it is important that all those in the VET workforce have access to professional development, priority in accessing any state or national funding should be given to those in registered training organisations and particularly those training organisations whose principal business is providing education and training services to individuals and other clients.

Any professional development for the VET workforce needs to be part of a comprehensive approach to improving the quality of VET delivery and client outcomes. This includes appropriate levels of funding at both jurisdictional and provider levels to support individual and work team development. It also requires that 'carrots and sticks' be used effectively to promote better practice. Key levers include:

✧ industrial relations agreements and human resource management practices (including approaches to workforce development and performance management)

✧ the Australian Quality Training Framework.

Some key features and strategies that might characterise the approach might also include the following:

✧ Gather better and comprehensive data about the Australian VET workforce and use it effectively to advise workforce development practices. While this might be done more readily for the public providers, gaining cooperation and support from the private sector may be more problematic. A key enabler may be access to funds to support their professional development or other funding solutions which support quality improvements as well as directly funding delivery.

✧ Develop a typology of VET staff based on their level engagement with the VET sector, their discipline area and their job role in an attempt to define more precisely the professional and

workforce development—and the associated skills sets and knowledge—that may be required for particular components of the VET workforce.

✧ Link professional and workforce development strategies strongly to organisational business strategies and, more broadly, to the VET sector's diverse roles.

✧ Ensure that professional and workforce development approaches are effectively linked to the performance review system. They need to be fit for purpose, and not be a 'one size fits all' approach.

✧ Ensure that a proper balance is struck between maintenance of vocational currency and its further development and the development of appropriate and higher-level teaching and training skills.

✧ Explore ways to recruit—and retain—the best possible staff. Amongst other things, this will require attention to job design, industrial terms and conditions (including wages), quality of working life, respect for the professionalism of staff and their work, and appropriate professional and workforce development to provide career options.

✧ Ensure that there is an effective process of staff induction, and that staff are mentored as required. This involves recognising and making sure that the role of workplace mentors is properly legitimised within the system and that their role supported by appropriate training and rewards.

✧ Develop a wide range of opportunities to undertake formal professional and workforce development. Such development needs to be re-oriented to make better use of informal and non-formal but structured learning opportunities, both of which must also be recognised more formally than at present. The key is devising approaches which embed improved practice. Nevertheless, such approaches need to be flexible and fit for purpose, not formulaic.

✧ Human resource management (HRM) practices need to be developed that encourage a planned as well as a serendipitous[14] approach to professional and workforce development—for both individuals and work teams. This involves processes where staff are:
  ◆ challenged
  ◆ encouraged to learn, and learn by doing
  ◆ exposed to new ideas
  ◆ able to consolidate their learning by immersion in the process and active reflection
  ◆ able to network both within and outside their organisation
  ◆ encouraged to undertake appropriate formal programs to maintain or improve the levels of both their teaching skills and their vocational currency (See Department of Education and Training nd).

✧ Develop and maintain a network of organisational/professional development practitioners across the sector. This should involve both public and private providers, and such networks should play a key role in coordinating professional and workforce development initiatives.

✧ Implement processes which evaluate and measure the effectiveness and outcomes of professional and workforce development initiatives.

Leaders and managers—particularly those in providers—need to play a key role in supporting professional and workforce development for both themselves and their staff.

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[14] That is, one that takes advantage of unforseen development opportunities.

Initiatives and ways forward

While a range of initiatives might be considered here, this paper focuses initially on a number of key ones, including:

✧ the suitability of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as a foundational teacher training qualification

✧ pathways to other teaching qualifications; however, this issue also needs to be seen in the context of career aspirations and development, as well as with reference to the opportunities provided for ongoing formal and non-formal professional development

✧ an occupational registration system for trainers and other practitioners such as auditors and technical advisors

✧ changes to the regulatory framework; these can best be used to drive quality outcomes, for example, compulsory pre-registration sessions, mandatory minimum professional development days per annum, regular exchange programs between providers and industry, regular monitoring of new registered training organisations and high-risk areas.

Each of these will be considered in turn. However, the issues have to be seen in the context of a more comprehensive VET workforce development strategy. One thing that was emphasised during the consultations and which informed this paper was the recognition that any solution must be holistic rather than one that made particular changes without considering their broader consequences—good and bad—on the system overall. A view put forward was that solutions which are comprehensive and balance the use of 'carrots' and 'sticks' as levers for changing practice are likely to have most impact.

Developing an comprehensive VET workforce development strategy

The last section in the previous chapter considered what might be required to develop a comprehensive workforce strategy and outlined a number of the key elements.

There is potentially much that can be learnt from examining the approaches taken in Western Australia, Queensland and Victoria. The keys to using the funding approaches adopted in the states most effectively are:

✧ establishing agreed priorities for workforce development

✧ having generous levels of funding available to help support the strategy

✧ having a group of individuals or networks who can implement the strategy

✧ moving from an events focus to one based on changing practice locally, or in key groups

✧ developing sound measures to judge the effectiveness of the implemented programs.

The suitability of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

The evidence available suggests that:

✧ *The CIV TAA qualification should only be seen as a foundational one, which must be enhanced by further experience, formal training and professional development.* The current Australian Quality Training Framework arrangements really do not act effectively enough as a 'stick' to encourage further formal training or even ongoing professional development. More stringent requirements on providers could be made, but appropriate 'carrots' will be required for providers to see this as a positive step rather than a requirement to do more with less yet again.[15]

✧ *The qualification serves a very wide market.* Those undertaking this qualification have a variety of prior qualifications: unpublished NCVER data on those undertaking the CIV TAA suggest that about 72.5% have qualifications beyond secondary school.[16] Of these, nearly 76% already have a qualification and certificate IV or higher. Many of these—just over 40%—have a bachelor degree. The practitioners also vary in the amount of training they have conducted. The purpose and motivation in undertaking the award and its intended use are also very broad. One of the issues emerging from Clayton's work is the variety of backgrounds in the classes. One possible approach might be to encourage providers to establish student cohorts who have more uniform backgrounds and aspirations.

✧ *The CIV TAA appears to be a sound qualification if taught well.* However, Clayton's work suggests that there needs to be more concentration on teaching and assessment issues; that is, issues of direct concern to teaching and learning quality rather than those that are more peripheral. Some participants also lack access to authentic training environments to enable them to consolidate what they are learning.

✧ *Those undertaking the CIV TAA require adequate support both during and after completing the qualification.* This should probably come from their employer, but a network or professional association of VET teachers and trainers might also perform such a function and act as a focus for both informal and more formalised professional development. Supervised practicum would be valuable during the course, or as part of induction or initial professional development by an employer, especially if they have had little training experience prior to being employed in that role.

✧ *There is an argument for placing more significant limitations on which providers can deliver the CIV TAA.* This is suggested because it is a underpinning qualification for the quality of what the VET system offers. Providers might be subject to a more rigorous audit before they are allowed to offer the course. Those with the qualification on their scope might be subject to the likelihood and expectation of a higher audit and risk assessment regime, especially if they are enrolling large numbers. The qualifications held by those running the courses should probably be considerably higher than the CIV TAA, as should their experience. Perhaps the minimum requirement might be a relevant diploma qualification or above.

✧ *Develop a scheme to identify and recognise high-quality provision of the program.* Such a scheme might, as a conceptual basis, adopt the approach developed for the Institute of Trade Skills Excellence,[17] such that high-quality provision of the new Training and Assessment Training Package could be recognised with a symbol or star rating system. This would enable potential consumers to be attracted to those providers offering high-quality programs. Such a scheme would need to charge providers to undertake this recognition process, but these costs might be offset by marketing advantages or access to government funds—in contrast to those not having this recognition of quality.

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[15] This point was strongly made by a representative of the private provider sector.

[16] Interestingly, therefore, a number (27.5%) undertaking the qualification have no underpinning post-school vocational qualification. There are a number of legitimate reasons why this might be so, but this part of the demographic and their reasons for undertaking this award need to be understood better.

[17] Which recognised the quality of provision of particular areas of study in the trades.

✧ *Some of those currently undertaking the whole CIV TAA may only need skill sets or a certificate III level qualification because of the training or assessing work they do.* This is because their training role is limited, or they are only involved in assessment tasks, possibly using prepared strategies. Even possessing the certificate IV may be unnecessary in some instances.

✧ *The VET sector needs to consider—and act appropriately on—the outcomes of the National Quality Council's strategic audit of the CIV TAA.* An important trigger point for assessing what actions might be appropriate will follow the release of the outcomes of the national audit of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment being conducted under the auspices of the National Quality Council. The introduction of the new Training and Assessment Training Package provides the impetus for improving the quality of foundational training for the VET workforce, particularly its teachers and trainers.

Pathways to career options, other teaching qualifications and ongoing professional development

While one professional development focus is on the available qualifications, element 1.4 of the Australian Quality Training Framework puts this issue into a broader context. It states:

> Training and assessment is delivered by trainers and assessors who:
>
> (a) have the necessary training and assessment competencies as determined by the National Quality Council or its successors, and
>
> (b) have the relevant vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered or assessed, and
>
> (c) can demonstrate current industry skills directly relevant to the training/assessment being undertaken, and
>
> (d) continue to develop their VET knowledge and skills as well as their industry currency and trainer/assessor competence.

Thus, this element emphasises the maintenance of industry currency. It also requires staff to continue to develop their VET knowledge and skills. It is how this element is interpreted at audit by auditors,[18] and what evidence is being required to demonstrate compliance that are the key issues. This element provides the regulatory tools that require further professional development, qualifications, skills and experience. It is a matter of using them to greatest possible effect.

The evidence available suggests that:

✧ *An appropriate mix of 'carrots' and 'sticks' is needed to promote pathways and their uptake.* The Australian Quality Training Framework, applied appropriately, has the 'stick' of element 1.4 to encourage ongoing professional studies, including gaining further qualifications. Another driver is to use the performance management system to better effect to promote the uptake of further professional development and studies. More at issue may be the adequacy of the range of incentives—the carrots—offered to individuals and groups of staff to pursue such a path: increased levels of provider and program funding; the availability of promotion positions; contribution to the costs of study or ongoing professional development; time off to pursue studies or undertake other professional development; access to a suitable range of awards or programs to develop key knowledge and skill sets in a timely manner, for example. It is also a matter of balancing individual aspirations and interests with work group and institutional needs.

✧ *Pathways and qualifications need to be aligned appropriately with career opportunities and fit well within the nature of the work roles and jobs in the sector.* While a range of broad-ranging or more specialist qualifications (such as in literacy and numeracy, teaching English as a second langauge, VET educational management etc.) would continue to be offered, particularly by universities, the

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[18] As well as how consistently the element is being interpreted, what evidence of compliance is being requested by auditors or offered by providers at audit.

skills set approach proposed for the new VET diploma program seems to offer an engaging and alternative way forward. Key to its success will be the availability of appropriate programs of study aligned to the skill sets and job roles that exist in providers. Such an approach will offer two advantages: it enables individuals to develop skills in key areas as needed while beginning to assemble the elements of a higher-level qualification. Another key element may be to add further flexibility by having a generic unit of competency (such as Maintaining and developing skills as a VET teacher/trainer) which will allow a range of structured learning and other experiences to be counted validly as a contribution towards a higher-level qualification. What is really needed is a consolidated and agreed typology of teacher/trainer skills that can form the basis for developing the elements of these ongoing programs. It is also possible that existing and new providers would come on line to develop and offer such programs to the sector.

✧ *The local tertiary system may currently have relatively little capacity to offer higher-level qualifications after the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment has been completed.* In 2008, relatively few undertook studies at diploma, bachelor or graduate diploma level. The issue is the capacity of the tertiary sector to scale up to any increased demand which might arise. As with the move from the old CIV TAA to the new Training and Assessment Training Package, so it will be important to ensure that the Diploma in Training and Assessment's successor becomes a more attractive option for higher-level VET study and that it integrates appropriately with further study options, especially at university level. It might also be worth considering what further role, if any, vocational graduate certificates and diplomas might play in the available qualification mix.

Implementing an occupational registration system[19]

The issue of implementing such systems for teachers and trainers and other practitioners such as auditors and technical advisors has been raised in a number of quarters.

In relation to the registration of individual teachers and trainers:

✧ *The case for such a scheme*:[20] the case for such an approach is that it represents a process for developing professional standards and ensuring that those working in the area adhere to those standards and undertake appropriate development to maintain and enhance their skills and knowledge. This approach would introduce what Mulcahy (2003, p.5) describes as '*par excellence, a developmental model for teacher learning and development*'.

It could extend or duplicate the registration system which is used for secondary teachers. It would have to come with obligations to have qualifications at particular levels, and to undertake an appropriate amount and type of professional development annually.[21]

There could also be different levels of registration, dependent on work role (for example, an institution-based VET teacher or a workplace trainer) and level of attachment to the VET sector. It would be best if it were national rather than jurisdiction-based, although the latter would be appropriate as long as there was mutual recognition nationally.

The United Kingdom has a compulsory national registration system for further education teachers and other teaching staff in the learning and skills sector. Standards have been developed by Lifelong Learning UK and also cover a range of support staff: including those working in career guidance, community learning and development, higher education, further education, libraries and other bodies. Teachers are now required to register with the Institute for Learning as their professional body. Such a system might be examined for adaptation and use in Australia. However, the system is not without its critics, being seen by some as over-regulated and expensive (Wheelahan 2010).

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[19] The paper by Mitchell and Ward commissioned by the National Quality Council, entitled 'Carrots, stick, a mix or other options' and due for release later this year, is understood to have considered this issue in some detail. In addition Leesa Wheelahan's work on VET teacher quality has also looked at registration issues (see Wheelahan 2010).

[20] An alternative is to have a regulation-based scheme at provider level. This option is considered later in the paper.

[21] Other professions have such registration systems which might serve as potential models for the VET sector.

Other alternatives are the provision of a voluntary scheme only; however, this becomes a de facto registration system if the voluntary registration or membership becomes a condition of practice formally required by employers (Wheelahan 2010).

✧ *The case against such a scheme*: given the way the VET sector is set up, it is important to gauge whether there is more leverage in improving practice through the registration of individuals or the regulation of VET institutions. There seems little point in setting up such registration systems in individual jurisdictions right now, given that national regulation is just around the corner. The complexity of the VET system may also make it difficult to devise a scheme that can be readily administered. In addition, registration may be seen as yet another barrier that discourages potential sessional or casual staff from bringing their knowledge and skills to the sector.

If the scheme were not compulsory, but more developmental in its orientation, it would run the risk of insufficient uptake unless the rewards and recognition for participation are sufficiently attractive or the penalties suitably severe. It may merely reward the committed, rather than attract less committed staff to participate. Some schemes which acknowledge the role of the principal or advanced skills lecturer are a way of encouraging professional development and the undertaking of further qualifications, but if access to these levels is restricted by staffing formulae, some will adversely assess the cost–benefit of undertaking such development.

On the whole, the weight of opinion suggests caution with the application of a registration scheme for teachers and trainers, when other regulatory approaches may be as, or more, potent. The issue requires careful consideration.

On the other hand, there may be a stronger case for the registration of auditors, technical advisors and other consultants. In relation to auditors sound initial training is required, along with ongoing professional development, including moderation and benchmarking processes, to ensure consistency of audits and improvement in auditing practice and to contribute to the development of sound but flexible auditing guidelines. With the move to national regulation the costs and benefits of adopting a registration scheme at the state level would need to be considered carefully. It might be better to advocate for the development of such a system at the national level, especially as auditors would be likely to operate across the tertiary sector nationally. Likewise, a register of technical advisors and consultants might be considered, with their remaining on the register subject to audit and their participation in an ongoing program of professional development to ensure that the advice they are providing is current and appropriate.

Changing regulatory arrangements

Changing the regulatory requirements at provider level using the Australian Quality Training Framework is another way of influencing practice. This can also be achieved by providing clearer guidelines to auditors and providers alike about how existing elements should be interpreted. An earlier section in this paper suggested that VET and other providers with the CIV TAA and other VET teaching awards, such as the diploma, on scope may potentially attract a higher level of regulatory scrutiny because of the key importance of such awards. This would be particularly so for those providers with large numbers of participants in the program or those who are offering it on a fee-for-service basis and to others apart from their own staff. It has also been proposed that staff teaching in the program should hold higher qualification requirements to avoid the situation of those holding only the CIV TAA offer training in it.[22] This would be allowed under element 1.4 of the Australian Quality Training Framework—taking the words 'at least' in the element quite literally.

Two other options exist which would further strengthen regulatory requirements.

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[22] The same requirements might also be adopted with the implementation of the new Diploma of Training and Assessment requiring university-level studies as a minimum.

First, the present Australian Quality Training Framework mandates a minimum qualification for all staff—the CIV TAA and now the new TAE 10 (or being able to demonstrate equivalent competencies). An option under element 1.4 of the Australian Quality Training Framework is an audit of whether or not the provider has a staff qualifications and skills profile that is appropriate for it to run its core business of teaching and learning effectively. This would require that, collectively, the organisation has (or has access to) staff with the range of qualifications—as well as the broad set of knowledge, skills and attributes—to 'teach' or 'train', assess and manage the processes needed to ensure teaching effectiveness. This would include having staff with the qualifications, skills and knowledge to run the learner support systems and undertake program design, resource development or adaptation, assessment design and other key provider functions related to the quality of service delivery.

Second, element 1.4 could be deemed to require that providers demonstrate that they and their staff are undertaking an appropriately comprehensive program of workforce and individual professional development to meet their business needs and also to ensure that their staff are maintaining industry currency and enhancing their VET skills and knowledge, particularly in relation to teaching and learning.

Again, my personal view is that any increase in regulatory 'sticks' need to be supported by appropriate 'carrots'.

In summary

A comprehensive and well-supported VET workforce strategy is required. It needs to encompass both entry-level training and ongoing professional and workforce development. This development should be aimed squarely at enabling staff to critically reflect on practice and ensuring improvement where appropriate. Such approaches will certainly require greater investment centrally, and probably by individual providers as well. Element 1.4 of the Australian Quality Training Framework offers the opportunity to be more stringent in assuring both suitable development processes and levels of investment.

The CIV TAA appears to be a sound foundational qualification if taught well and with appropriate support and experience for those undertaking it. It has a diverse market, and some of those undertaking it at present may be ill advised to undertake this qualification if they only require a lower-level qualification or skill set. The introduction of the new Training and Assessment Training Package offers an opportunity to introduce tighter requirements and audit regimes to those offering initial VET teacher qualifications. A scheme that recognises those providers offering quality programs should also be considered.
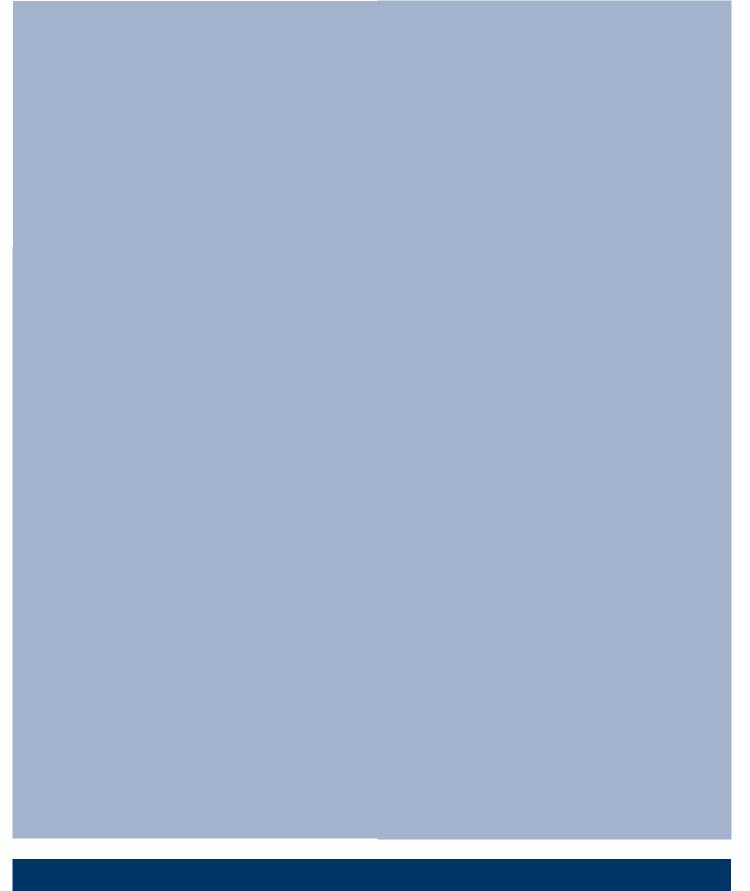
Other professional development—both formal and informal—needs to be available. This needs to be fit for purpose. The proposed new Diploma of Training and Assessment, with its focus on skill sets, has considerable potential for driving sound continuing professional development. However, a wider range of skill sets than those presently proposed needs to be available.

On the whole I do not favour registration of individual practitioners at this time as an option, although the issue should be kept under review. I think there is a more immediate priority and potency in exploring options to improve professional and workforce development practices, mandated through the Australian Quality Training Framework or by enshrining them in industrial awards or improved approaches to human resource management.

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