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DISCUSSION

Practitioner experiences and
expectations with the
Certificate IV in Training and
Assessment (TAA40104):
A discussion of the issues

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About the research

NCVER

Practitioner experiences and expectations with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104): A discussion of the issues

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The Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104) has become the standard teaching qualification in the vocational education and training (VET) sector. Therefore the extent to which it provides competency in training and assessment, arguably the key element of being an effective teacher, is a fundamental issue. Berwyn Clayton is investigating the extent to which practitioners believe that this certificate provides an effective foundation for the delivery and assessment of training in the VET environment.

Through interviews and surveys with teachers, trainers and registered training organisation managers, this project is designed to explore individual practitioner experiences and expectations upon completion of the TAA40104 qualification, after approximately a six-month period of application in the field and then, approximately 12 months after completion, a final reflection.

This background paper provides a history of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and reviews the limited research on this qualification. The paper also outlines some of the key issues surrounding TAA40104, such as uneven quality, inconsistencies in delivery and the perceived inability to meet the skills and knowledge needs of trainers in workplaces or teachers in institutional settings. These issues provide the impetus for a review of TAA40104 being undertaken by the skills council, Innovation & Business Skills Australia (IBSA).

A key message emerging from this background paper is that the position of TAA40104 as the key qualification for VET practitioners is under pressure. This is highlighted by the availability of other relevant qualifications now available to practitioners and by industry concerns about assessment approaches and assessment decision-making.

The project is due for completion in late 2010.

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

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Discussion of the issues

Introduction

Practitioner expectations and experiences with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104) is a research project designed to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perceptions of the teachers, trainers and registered training organisation (RTO) managers in regard to the certificate IV in the Training Package for Training and Assessment (TAA04). The focus of the study is on whether practitioners believe that the qualification provides them with an effective foundation for the delivery and assessment of training in the vocational education and training (VET) environment. It will also endeavour to determine whether practitioners and their managers believe that the TAA04 qualification enables practitioners to make confident judgements, over time, about the kinds of training and the assessment strategies required to meet the needs of diverse student groups in a range of training settings.

This discussion paper outlines some of the key issues surrounding the certificate IV and reviews the limited research and other literature on this foremost qualification for teachers and trainers in the VET sector. It also draws on studies into teacher preparation undertaken in other educational sectors, both in Australia and abroad.

Background

Competency standards for workplace trainers were endorsed in 1992, with national standards for assessors following shortly thereafter. In the period 1992 to 1996, these were used by training providers to develop accredited courses of training for people involved in the delivery of vocational education and training. With the advent of training packages in 1996, competency standards and qualifications became fully integrated, and as part of that process the standards for workplace trainers and assessors were reviewed. The outcome was the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ40198), which was endorsed in 1998. While the training package was largely developed to address the developmental needs of trainers in workplace settings, many registered training organisations chose not only to deliver the certificate IV but also to use it to train their own teaching staff. As a consequence, the qualification became a broadly recognised, if not mandated, yardstick for teachers and trainers across the various settings in which vocational education and training was being delivered.

Review of Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ40198)

By 2001, in response to the growing disquiet about the qualification's structure, focus, quality and relevance amongst policy-makers, regulators and practitioners alike, a review of the BSZ40198 training package was initiated. Extending over more than three years, the review was managed by National Assessors and Workplace Trainers (NAWT), a division of Business Services Training Australia (as it then was). The evaluation process involved, amongst other things, a functional analysis of roles and skills, extensive research, a validation questionnaire and a comprehensive

series of consultations with key stakeholders in vocational education and training across Australia. The full extent of engagement with interested parties is well described by Grace (2006, p.3) with her comment:

> The consultations undertaken as part of the initial review were unprecedented. Approximately 1000 people including VET practitioners, managers, consultants and personnel from VET authorities participated through face-to-face consultations or questionnaires.

The outcomes of the review were clear. The limitations of the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ40198) were that the language used was far too complex, jargon-laden and open to interpretation. As indicated by Grace (2006, p.4) 'language and terminology concerns' were allocated an entire section within the body of the report. Elsewhere it was acknowledged that the competency standards contained a degree of duplication and ambiguity and the qualification as it was structured offered minimal opportunity for pathways (Vetassess 2001).

Extensive information provided during consultations indicated there were both structural and delivery problems with the BSZ40198 training package (Smith 2004). In particular, the National Assessors and Workplace Trainers report highlighted that the focus of the certificate IV qualification was on delivering training in the workplace and the units clearly described competencies pertaining to that context. Competencies such as 'Train small groups', 'Plan and promote a training program', 'Plan a series of training sessions' and 'Deliver a training session' did not necessarily suit the needs of or provide the skills and knowledge required by those practitioners working away from the workplace in institutional settings. The coverage and relevance of the training package was not seen to be sufficiently inclusive of the broad range of people who were actively engaged in using it in their day-to-day work in the sector. Given these circumstances, Hase and Saenger (2003, p.4) suggested that one of the key recommendations of the review was that the content be revised 'to meet the requirements of a broader range of practitioners from those skilled practitioners in registered training organisations to the part-time assessors in organisations'.

The first stage review report (National Assessors and Workplace Trainers 2001, p.1) suggested that the certificate IV qualification was critical to the sector because it not only provided standards for trainers and assessors, but was also 'providing the structural supports for national quality assurance arrangements of RTOs'. However, important questions about the quality of delivery of the qualification had been raised throughout the review process, and major concerns were constantly being expressed about the lowering of teaching standards when the certificate IV was seen to be the benchmark for delivery under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF).

Significant competency gaps were evident in the qualification, particularly around pedagogy. These deficits were clearly acknowledged in the 2003 Teaching and learning scoping study, *Doing it well, doing it better* (Centre Undertaking Research in Vocational Education, Canberra Institute of Technology and University of Ballarat 2003, pp.36–8). Respondents to the survey with only a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training identified enhancing learner autonomy, using problem-based learning approaches, language and literacy, learning styles of different learners and customising learning for different training contexts as challenging to implement. A smaller number with the certificate IV responded that they did not know enough about these same aspects of teaching and learning to confidently address them in their day-to-day training activities.

Research into the certificate IV by Simons, Harris and Smith (2006) examined understandings about learners and learning in the delivery of the qualification across a sample of registered training organisations. Amongst a number of concerns, the authors noted the absence of any reference to learning theories or broad discussion about diverse needs of learners within BSZ40198 and expressed concerns about the generic or context-free approach that was generally being adopted in the preparation of teachers and trainers. The authors cautioned that:

> … the absence of approaches to teaching and learning which take into account specific contexts can leave the way open for simplistic technical approaches (such as the uncritical

application of learning styles across all settings) to be applied where there is little existing empirical support to suggest that these interventions will promote quality teaching and learning. (Simons, Harris & Smith 2006, p.7)

Simons, Harris and Smith (2006, p.41) also found 'troubling signs in relation to understandings of teaching and learning' in the courses examined and concluded that in the development of the new qualification consideration needed to be given to 'how teaching and learning might embrace the learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused approaches' deemed so crucial to improved outcomes in the sector (p.7).

With such a lack of emphasis on the crucial elements of teaching and learning in BSZ40198, some technical and further education (TAFE) institutes established arrangements with universities to deliver more comprehensive teacher education programs (Dickie et al. 2004). Moreover, many TAFE institutes continued to deliver programs to their own staff using accredited curricula specifically designed to enhance teaching knowledge and skills beyond those covered in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Given the extent of the concerns about the linchpin qualification of the system, the impetus for change was significant. But, was the development of the revised qualification going to be sufficiently comprehensive to ensure quality teaching and learning and greater confidence in education and training outcomes?

Training and Assessment Training Package (TAA04)

In an article for the *Australian TAFE Teacher* early in the redevelopment process, Carnegie (2002, p.20) outlined the focus, goals and intent of the new training package. As manager of the review and development process, she described the scope and intent of the new qualification with the statement:

> The aim is to create a Training Package that reflects the full range of work roles and functions carried out in a VET environment. If the recommendations on content change are accepted, the Training Package will support the needs of
>
> ✧ new practitioners, both part-time and full-time
>
> ✧ existing practitioners seeking higher levels of knowledge and skills
>
> ✧ practitioners seeking linkages to higher education
>
> ✧ practitioners responsible for coordination/management.
>
> We are endeavouring to create a Training Package that provides an initial set of minimum benchmarks for entry and which can represent, and give recognition for, ongoing skills and professional development needs and career options.

Confirming this view, Down, De Luca and Galloway (2009, p.3) suggest that 'the training package was generally regarded by the vocational education and training sector as an opportunity to lift the standard of qualification'. With this in mind, and after an extensive development process, the revised TAA04 Training and Assessment Training Package was approved for delivery in 2005. It included the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104) and the Diploma of Training and Assessment (TAA50104). In acknowledgement of the concerns about 'the absence of an emphasis on pedagogy' (Smith 2004, p.76), more of the content of this new qualification focused on teaching and learning issues such as e-learning, developing learning programs, and fostering and promoting an inclusive learning culture. Significantly, there was a strengthened focus on what could be conceived as 'advanced teaching practice' particularly in relation to the diploma-level qualification (Smith 2005, p.346).

The training package (Innovation & Business Skills Australia 2004, p.8) consists of 39 units of competency with a further 16 units imported from elsewhere. The competencies are grouped in eight fields of competence, namely:

✧ Field 1: Learning environment – 5 units

✧ Field 2: Learning design – 7 units

✧ Field 3: Delivery and facilitation – 10 units

✧ Field 4: Assessment – 6 units

✧ Field 5: Training advisory services – 5 units

✧ Field 6: Coordination, management and quality of training and/or assessment services – 5 units

✧ Field 7: Language, literacy and numeracy practice – 1 unit

✧ Field 8: Imported – 16 units

To attain the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, a candidate must complete 12 core competencies and two elective competencies.

Key features of the training package are stated to be its cohesiveness, its focus on learning and its capacity to support the needs of multiple audiences (Innovation & Business Skills Australia 2004). In respect to this latter point, it is suggested:

> The audience may range from the 'novice' trainer or assessor who will be using this Training Package to develop specific competencies to commence training and/or assessment practices to experienced practitioners using the Training Package for ongoing professional development and career development. (Innovation & Business Skills Australia 2004, p.8)

Thus, as the new training package was rolled out, expectations were raised that the new certificate IV qualification would provide a more adequate teaching and learning toolkit for new entrants to the field. And, as suggested by the above statement, within registered training organisations across Australia many experienced practitioners holding teacher education qualifications from universities, and with considerable experience in vocational education and training, would also undertake the qualification or choose to upgrade from the BSZ40198 certificate IV.

The several versions of the Australian Quality Training Framework have further reinforced the position of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as the yardstick qualification for trainers and assessors in the sector, and as a consequence employers of VET practitioners have been less inclined to support initial teacher education programs delivered by universities (Smith 2005). Despite this, a cursory examination of accredited courses in the National Training Information Service (NTIS) reveals a plethora of qualifications undoubtedly designed to enhance practitioner knowledge and skills both generally and in areas of technical specialisation. For example, graduate certificates and graduate diplomas in vocational education and training, adult vocational education, educational leadership, educational design, international educational services and the like are identified in the scope of various registered training organisations in most Australian states and territories. The position of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as the linchpin would, therefore, appear to remain a tenuous one.

Key concerns about the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment

In focusing on some of the key concerns about the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, Smith (2004, p.73) emphasised the fact that the training of people teaching in the VET sector is highly complex, particularly as trainers and assessors are operating in diverse settings and contexts

and under a range of employment agreements and conditions. As a consequence, Smith suggests, the preparation of teachers and trainers is not likely to be as straightforward as it might be for teachers in other educational sectors. Extreme diversity and complexity ensure that a 'one size fits all' approach to teacher education in the sector is unlikely to work.

Acknowledging these circumstances, it is unsurprising that a number of commentators have identified a range of problems in the implementation of the TAA04 Training and Assessment Training Package and in particular with the certificate IV. Generally these centre on the relevance of the qualification, the quality of its delivery and the adequacy of the content in developing the requisite knowledge and skills for teachers and trainers in the sector.

Relevance

In developing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, considerable effort was placed on making the qualifications much more inclusive of the broad range of people engaged in teaching and assessing in the highly diverse and complex VET sector, which includes technical and further education institutes, private training providers, enterprises, registered training organisations, government departments, the adult and community education sector, secondary schools, and universities. In areas of educational specialisation, however, relevance was seen to be a critical issue. For example, Plumridge (2005) expressed concerns about the appropriateness of the certificate IV qualification for teachers of literacy and numeracy, suggesting:

> Certificate IV in Training and Assessment was designed to qualify content specialists who are trained teachers to undertake the instruction of apprentices and trainees. It is neither a substitute for, nor equivalent to, a teaching qualification. (Plumridge 2005, p.5)

In relation to the descriptors supplied in the *Australian Qualifications Framework Implementation Handbook* (2002, p.9), the author emphasises that the in-depth acquisition of a significant and coherent body of knowledge required by a bachelor's degree is somewhat different from the requirement to 'demonstrate understanding of a broad knowledge base incorporating some theoretical concepts' and to apply their skills and knowledge 'to a wide variety of contexts with depth in some areas' in a certificate IV (Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board 2002, p.33).

Confidence in the quality of delivery and outcomes

In a recent investigation of industry's expectations of assessment in the VET sector by Precision Consulting (2008), the consultants found that there were considerable concerns about assessment approaches and assessment decision-making. Much of the feedback focused on the lack of technical/vocational competency of assessors and the dearth of recent experience and contact with industry. Amongst a range of aspects nominated as requiring consideration were two questions directed specifically at the TAA04 training package and the certificate IV in particular. They were:

> What, if any, changes are required to the content, structure and delivery of the TAA04 Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to increase industry confidence and to widen the skill development and options available to workplace assessors? Should a national strategic audit of TAA04 be conducted to provide more data? (Precision Consulting 2008, p.5)

Many of the respondents included in this study 'advised that they had little faith' in the certificate IV (Precision Consulting 2008, p.19). Emphasising this point, the report's authors note:

> Some interviewees claimed that there were RTOs awarding a Certificate IV in TAA [Training and Assessment] on completion of a two-day program. This qualification is seen as the VET system's linchpin. If assessors perceive that there is no rigour involved in the qualification for their own job, it is unlikely that they will in turn model rigour in the assessments they conduct. (Precision Consulting 2008, p.18)

One strategy for increasing confidence in assessment was identified as 'more quality in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment' (Precision Consulting 2008, p.6), although how this might be achieved was clearly beyond the brief of the consultants undertaking the study. Concerns about the delivery of the qualification are seen to be paramount; however, it is difficult to see how a training package might by itself regulate the system.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (2008) also expressed concerns about both the quality and consistency of some of the assessment being undertaken in the sector. While the focus in this instance was on assessor currency in relation to industry competencies, the National Quality Council confirmed that the assessment units within the Training and Assessment Training Package, together with the vocational competence to the level that was being tested, were all that was required by assessors.

Further consultations with key stakeholders, including state and territory training authorities, industry skills councils and training provider representatives, undertaken for the National Quality Council (NQC) late in 2008, revealed similar concerns associated with assessor capability in the sector. These included:

✧ limitations in the three assessment-related competencies in the TAA04

✧ the relatively low level of the qualifications for VET trainers and assessors and lack of pathways for higher level skill development

✧ variations in delivery of the qualification in relation to time, cost, mode and assessment

✧ lack of mentoring, coaching and support.

Another major issue raised in this research was that the TAA04 training package does not provide a framework to support and promote the ongoing professional learning of assessors and those responsible for establishing, operating and maintaining assessment systems (National Quality Council 2008). This perception had emerged despite the commentary in the training package that it had this potential (Innovation & Business Skills Australia 2004, p.8). A common theme emerging from the consultations undertaken for the National Quality Council on the quality of assessment was that the certificate IV should not just be seen by students as an end in itself, but rather should provide the foundation for stepping off into additional, more in-depth learning about education and training.

Adequacy in relation to development of required knowledge and skills

Since the introduction of the earlier Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ40198), through to the development of the present Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAA40104, there has been controversy and debate about whether the certificate IV should be deemed as an adequate minimum qualification for those responsible for building the vocational skills and knowledge of the Australian workforce (Smith 2004; Guthrie 2009).

Authors such as Mitchell et al. (2005) and Guthrie (2009) have highlighted the importance of VET practitioners having a much broader range of skills and more in-depth knowledge to meet the needs of the diverse learners with whom they are working. In emphasising this point, Guthrie (2009 p.28) reiterated that practitioners working in the sector need to:

✧ have a sophisticated pedagogical repertoire

✧ use learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused approaches, rather than traditional pedagogies

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

In a paper entitled 'Capabilities of the emerging advanced VET practitioner', Mitchell (2008) set out 15 features and attributes that he suggests should be acquired by practitioners for use in the world

in which they are now required to work. With their focus on lifelong learning, business acumen, professional judgement, innovation in the development of products and services, capacity to cope with complexity and ambiguity, and commitment to the maintenance of pedagogical and technical expertise, very few of Mitchell's features and attributes are evident in the content or coverage of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.

Robertson (2008) also questioned whether the certificate IV provides opportunities for learners to build the skills and develop the knowledge bases required. He suggested that the minimum requirement of a certificate IV in an increasingly complex education and training environment where 'teachers need to make sophisticated pedagogical decisions' is problematic, particularly when in other educational sectors teachers are required to undertake university qualifications as preparation for entry. Moreover, there is consistent and ongoing evidence from the field that practitioners now require high-level pedagogical capabilities in areas such as learning technologies, the design of workplace training and assessment, and the systems and strategies that are now demanded by a diversity of clients in a range of contexts (Mitchell 2008; Guthrie et al. 2006).

And while Robertson (2008, p.2) argued that there has been considerable discussion about whether the qualification has the capacity to effectively prepare people to teach in the sector he also made the critical point that 'there is an absence of critiques that are based on understandings of teachers' knowledge and expertise'. Given this dearth of critically reflective analysis within the Australian VET sector, an examination of views in other sectors and other countries as suggested by Robertson (2008) might provide valuable insights into the preparation of VET practitioners.

Teacher knowledge and preparedness

A Ministry of Education report for the Government of Quebec (2001, p.23) suggested that 'teaching is characterized by ambiguity, fuzziness, complexity, uncertainty and indeterminacy'. Given that this is the case, the report goes on to suggest:

> one of the underlying principles of professional training is polyvalence. Professionals are expected to have developed various competencies that allow them to perform a variety of duties and tasks and take charge of complex professional situations.

> For teaching professionals, polyvalence must reflect the nature and range of the competencies to be developed, the professional environment in which they will be exercised, and the areas of teaching practice that must be mastered.   (Ministry of Education, Quebec 2001, p.25)

In addition to being highly complex in nature, it is also suggested that teaching is a 'creative act' in which the proficient teacher draws on a breadth of experience and teaching and learning strategies to determine the most appropriate for use in the particular circumstances (Turner-Bisset 1999). Therefore, the same author cautioned against concentrating on professional competencies or standards, as such an approach 'ignores the complex reasoning, thinking and synthesis which underpins the best teaching' (Turner-Bisset 1999, p.52).

Successful teachers, Darling-Hammond (2006) contended, are those who have the ability to understand what learners know and understand when introducing the new. They are guides or facilitators who generate opportunities for applying new knowledge and provide feedback which informs further and individualised learning in a way that enhances learner performance. Furthermore, they undertake these activities while:

> juggling the social and academic needs of the group and of individuals, the cognitive and motivational consequences of their moment-to-moment teaching decisions, the cultural and community context within which they teach, and much more.   (Darling-Hammond 2006, p.8)

For teaching to be effective, therefore, the proficient practitioner has to rely upon an extensive professional knowledge base.

Knowledge bases

A number of key authors in the field of initial teacher education have presented conceptualisations of the knowledge bases required by student teachers as part of their professional training. Chief amongst these is Shulman (1987), who identified seven specific knowledge bases and the content that each of these covered (table 1).

Table 1   Shulman's seven knowledge bases required by student teachers

Knowledge	Coverage
Content knowledge	The principles of conceptual organisation and of enquiry in the subject and the substantive (the factual information) and syntactic (the variety of ways in which basic concepts and principles of the subject are organised, and the ways in which validity and invalidity, truth or falsehood, are established) structures of the subject matter.
General pedagogical knowledge	The broad principles and strategies of classroom management and organisation applicable to teaching in general.
Curriculum knowledge	The materials and programs that are teachers' 'tools of the trade'.
Pedagogical content knowledge	The knowledge which enables teachers to frame their content knowledge in a context specific way, which helps them to communicate the subject matter effectively.
Knowledge of learners and their characteristics	The social and cognitive knowledge of learners, including understanding of how age, behaviour, student–teacher relationships and contexts influence learning.
Knowledge of educational contexts	Teaching and learning contexts, including influence of policy, dynamics of learner groups and characteristics of communities and cultures.
Knowledge of educational ends, purposes, values, and philosophical and historical influences	Including short-term goals of specific learning activities to the long-term goals of intrinsically valuable experience or eventual value to a society.

Source: Shulman (1987, pp.1–22).

Building on the work of Shulman, Turner-Bisset (2006, p.6) proffered a more comprehensive model of knowledge bases for teaching, which include the following:

✧ substantive subject knowledge

✧ syntactic subject knowledge

✧ beliefs about the subject

✧ curriculum knowledge

✧ general pedagogical knowledge: generic/learned from practice

✧ knowledge/models of teaching

✧ knowledge of learners: cognitive

✧ knowledge of learners: empirical

✧ knowledge of self

✧ knowledge of educational contexts

✧ knowledge of educational ends.

This model, she suggested, can 'act as a mental map for understanding the complexity of teachers' professional knowledge' (Turner-Bisset 1999, p.41). In addition, she maintained that what is most important in the quality of teaching is the interaction between these various knowledge bases. Teachers with considerable expertise use all or most of these knowledge bases, often at the same time, while teachers who are just stepping into their careers tend to approach teaching in a much narrower frame because fewer of the knowledge bases can be brought into play (Turner-Bisset 1999).

While the focus of both Shulman's and Turner-Bisset's research was on teachers in schools, Robertson (2008) asserted that it has equal application to teachers engaged in vocational education and training (and he does emphasise that his focus is on teachers rather than trainers). With minimal research on knowledge bases in the Australian VET sector, Robertson undertook an examination of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to determine the extent to which the qualification contributed to the development of VET teachers' knowledge bases. He confirmed that the environment in which VET teachers are operating is as previously described—uncertain, complex, ambiguous, and demanding creativity and high-level thinking skills as well as the ability to take charge of complex professional situations. As a consequence, Robertson (2008, p.18) concluded that:

> VET teachers require a full complement of teachers' knowledge bases in order to be able to practice [*sic*] at an expert level in routine and non-routine situations. Such abilities are consistent with the development of pedagogical content knowledge.

In his analysis of the certificate IV, Robertson (2008, p.19) found that while teachers brought some of the knowledge bases into the teaching environment from their working experiences in industry and some could be developed through undertaking the certificate IV, in the course a 'more limited opportunity is provided to develop a knowledge of learners and general pedagogical knowledge'. Nor did the certificate IV offer participants the opportunity to develop pedagogical content knowledge. On the basis of these findings, Robertson concluded that, in completing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, a beginning teacher would develop only foundational skills and knowledge, and considerably more professional learning would have to occur before the pedagogical content knowledge of the expert could be more fully developed.

Accepting that this is the case, what is the likely impact on the confidence and sense of preparedness of novice practitioners in the VET sector? With little research existing in Australia into the initial preparation of VET practitioners, and virtually none that includes direct accounts drawn from the experiences of beginning teachers and trainers, research from other educational sectors and beyond Australia could provide some important insights.

Self-efficacy and teacher preparedness

In the literature on teacher education for school teachers, much has been written about both self-efficacy and beginning teacher preparedness. The concept of self-efficacy or 'belief in one's capacity to organize and execute the courses of action required to produce given attainments' was first introduced by Bandura (1997, p.3), and then developed by Onafowora:

> Teacher self-efficacy is the realization of one's self-judgments and capabilities to create and organize instruction that motivate student learning.   (Onafowora 2004, p.36)

Various writers have highlighted teacher behaviours related to this sense of self-efficacy. For example, Protheroe (2008, p.43), citing the research findings of Jerald (2007), suggested that teachers with a strong sense of self-efficacy or competence exhibit greater levels of planning and organisation, are more open to new ideas and are more willing to be innovative. They also have greater persistence, even when things do not go as planned, and are more understanding when learners make mistakes.

Preparedness and self-efficacy, it is suggested, are inextricably linked. Darling-Hammond, Chung and Frelow (2002), for example, examined the perceptions of preparedness of over 3000 beginning teachers and found:

> that teachers' ratings of their overall preparedness are significantly related to their sense of efficacy about whether they are able to make a difference in student learning. Teachers who felt better prepared were significantly more likely to believe they could reach all their students, handle problems in the classroom, teach all students to high levels and make a difference in the lives of their students.   (Darling-Hammond, Chung & Frelow 2002, p.15)

In marked contrast, the novice teachers who felt less well equipped were more likely to feel uncertain about their ability to meet the varying needs of the diverse learners in their classrooms.

Darling-Hammond (2006, pp.61–3) described some of the principal elements in preparedness as the ability to:

✧ teach the concepts, knowledge and skills of your discipline(s) in ways that enable students to learn

✧ understand how different students are learning

✧ use instructional strategies that promote active student learning

✧ relate classroom learning to the real world

✧ help students become self-motivated and self-directed

✧ give productive feedback to students to guide their learning.

In an Australian study, the Australian Council for Educational Research conducted a survey of teachers who had graduated from pre-service training programs for both primary and secondary teachers in 2002. The focus of this study by Ingvarson, Beavis and Kleinhenz (2004) was on the extent to which initial teacher education programs in Victorian universities offered beginning teachers the opportunity to learn in the following four areas.

Opportunity to learn content knowledge and how it is taught

This area included questions relating to the opportunity to:

✧ gain a deep understanding of the content knowledge you are expected to teach

✧ make clear links between content or subject matter units and units about how to teach the content

✧ make clear links between the theoretical and practical aspects of teaching

✧ develop a sound understanding of how students learn the specific content that you are expected to teach

✧ learn how to probe students' prior understandings of content you are about to teach

✧ learn how to present content in ways that build on students' existing understanding

✧ learn methods of teaching specific to the content you are expected to teach.

Opportunity to learn the practice of teaching

This area included questions relating to the opportunity to:

✧ see models of expert teachers in action

✧ observe models illustrating new teaching practices

✧ learn methods for reflecting on your teaching

✧ analyse and reflect on examples of your practice

✧ use teaching standards to identify specific areas of practice that you need to develop

✧ develop and test new teaching practices

✧ analyse your teaching in relation to standards for good teaching practice.

Opportunity to learn via feedback from university staff

This area included questions relating to the opportunity to:

✧ practise new teaching skills, with feedback from your university tutor/lecturer

✧ receive useful feedback about your teaching from your university tutor/lecturer.

Opportunity to learn assessment and planning

This area included questions relating to the opportunity to:

✧ examine student work in relation to standards for student learning

✧ learn how to diagnose students' achievements in relation to expected learning outcomes

✧ plan and prepare units of work collaboratively

✧ assess and monitor collaboratively students' progress against standards for student learning

✧ plan and assess in accordance with the Curriculum Standards and Framework of the Victorian Certificate of Education (Ingvarson, Beavis & Kleinhenz 2004, p.4).

Summarising the research findings, the authors (Ingvarson, Beavis & Kleinhenz 2004, pp.89–90) noted:

> Teachers who reported that they felt well prepared to meet the demands they faced in their first year of teaching … had completed courses that gave them deep knowledge of what they were expected to help students learn, and how students learned it, as well as skill in diagnosing students' existing levels of understanding of the content to be taught, planning activities that would promote further development and assessing the extent to which development had taken place. These professional capabilities appear to remain the necessary, though not sufficient, foundations in preparing teachers to meet the wider demands of the job, from establishing a productive learning environment to working effectively with parents.

All four areas identified as important in this research have considerable relevance for those engaged in the delivery of vocational education and training. Feeling in possession of the skills and knowledge of how to teach, how to teach content and how to assess and plan is critical to the success of the novice VET teacher or trainer.

Conclusion: Expectations and the certificate IV

When the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ40198) was endorsed in 1998, its intent was to provide the basic skills for trainers engaged in the delivery of training package qualifications in workplace settings. Many institution-based training providers elected to encourage staff to undertake the certificate IV in order to build their understanding of training packages and competency-based training and assessment. It was also seen as a means of shifting mindsets and changing cultures within registered training organisations. Expectations of the qualification were, therefore, immediately raised beyond its original intent.

By 2001 questions were being asked about the relevance of BSZ40198 to the broader VET community who were now engaged with it and, with the dearth of content on teaching and learning and concerns about the quality of delivery, the training package came under review. It was suggested that it had not met its original expectations.

Down, De Luca and Galloway (2009, p.2) contend that the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment was:

> introduced as an essential strategy in ensuring that VET teaching and training practitioners understood their roles and possessed the necessary capabilities to design, deliver and assess

programs which met their students' needs and prepared them for the skill and knowledge requirements for specific roles within their chosen industry setting.

However, there has been a significant shift in thinking and while the certificate IV was to provide an ideal set of what were called 'minimum benchmarks' for entry into the field of VET practice, it was also proposed that it should address the needs of 'existing practitioners seeking high levels of knowledge and skills' (Carnegie 2002, p.20). Reinforced by the requirements of the Australian Quality Training Framework, further expectations were placed upon the qualification in relation to the assurance of quality of VET delivery.

In 2009, the same concerns expressed about the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training (BSZ98) have been applied to the certificate IV (TAA40104). Uneven quality and inconsistencies in delivery remain major issues, and there is sufficient evidence to indicate that it meets the skill and knowledge needs of neither trainers in workplaces nor teachers in institutional settings. In response to these concerns, Innovation & Business Skills Australia has initiated a review of the certificate IV. Significantly, the associated consultation paper *Review of Certificate IV (TAA40104) Training and Assessment with a revised model for consideration* (Innovation & Business Skills Australia 2009) affirms the original view that the qualification remains 'an entry level qualification' and suggests:

> It is unrealistic to imagine that such an entry level qualification will provide a VET trainer and assessor with everything they need to know and be able to do. What it should do is provide both the essential elements of what is needed and a firm foundation on which to build further knowledge and skills, whether that comes from on-the-job experience, or further learning or both.

In some respects, the Innovation & Business Skills Australia consultation paper tackles a number of the issues raised by various critics of the qualification, in particular the deficits in the units of competency associated with assessment and the dearth of competencies dealing with the sector's key role—delivery. While suggesting changes that bring the content back to something more like BSZ40198, with the focus on training in the workplace, the paper also makes the critical point that the certificate IV qualification is but one of many qualifications that VET practitioners can work towards if they wish to build their skills beyond those provided by the certificate IV.

What remains at issue, however, is how well the certificate IV provides novice teachers and trainers with the knowledge bases and a sense of self-efficacy and preparedness as they enter the field. The *Practitioner experiences and expectations with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA40104)* project is designed to explore individual practitioner experiences and expectations:

✧ upon completion of the qualification

✧ after approximately a six-month period of application in the field

✧ upon a final reflection of the usefulness and impact of their training in the certificate IV approximately 12 months after completion

Through an online survey and in-depth interviews the research will explore:

✧ to what extent practitioners believe that the certificate IV qualification provides them with an effective foundation for the delivery and assessment of training

✧ initial perceptions about the utility of the qualification and if this changes as practitioners gain further experience applying their knowledge and skills

✧ whether practitioners and their managers/supervisors believe that the qualification enables them to make confident judgements about the kinds of training and assessment strategies that are most appropriate to meet the needs of diverse student groups in a range of training settings.

The outcomes of this research will bring the authentic voices and experiences of novice teachers and trainers into the national debate, and will add a level of richness that will complement the review being undertaken through the auspices of Innovation & Business Skills Australia.

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