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**Missing From the Current Vocational Education Policy Equation: Highly
Qualified Teachers/Trainers and Quality Vocational Teacher Education ®**

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Abstract: Increased international competition and the globalisation of world trade create the need for a highly skilled Australian workforce. Australia's efforts in producing appropriate numbers of those with substantial vocational education qualifications is seen as lagging behind many other OECD countries (Cullen, 1997). While there appear to be serious federal government concerns about this, current government policies and initiatives appear to be contradictory. The importance of quality teacher/trainer education appears to be largely neglected and more and more untrained or inadequately trained part-time and casual teachers are being employed in the vocational sector. This paper examines a range of relevant issues including the proportions of part-time teachers in two of the largest TAFE systems, current requirements for employment as vocational teachers and the need to increase vocational teacher/trainer skills to meet the challenges of a knowledge society. It also draws upon case studies of two formerly large vocational teacher education centres to focus upon a loss of critical mass of experienced vocational teacher educators in these centres and to question the wisdom of policies allowing loss of such bodies of knowledge and skill.

The Need for a Highly Skilled Australian Workforce

Increased international competition and the globalisation of world trade in conjunction with ongoing technological, economic and social revolutions have created the need for a more highly skilled Australian workforce. Thurow (1992) has argued in fact that in an age in which reverse engineering has become an art form, and a wealth of natural resources no longer conveys considerable advantage, the only sustainable resource lies in developing skills.

Australia's efforts in producing appropriate numbers of those with substantial vocational education qualifications is seen as lagging behind many other Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries and contributing to the relative decline in Australia's performance over the period 1994-7 (Cullen, 1997). In 1996 Australia's ranking against 22 other OECD countries stood at the relatively high level of five for degrees, the mid level of eleven for post-secondary education but at an unsatisfactory ranking of fifteen on the 'all post-compulsory' qualifications measure. The conclusions drawn by Cullen (1997)

were that there needed to be continued attention to the production of graduates but that much more attention had to be directed towards increasing the numbers of those with relatively high post-compulsory, that is vocational education and training qualifications. It is a basic premise underlying this paper that this increased number of more highly qualified vocational education and training graduates can only be produced by highly skilled and qualified vocational educators.

There is evidence that the Australian federal government through its relevant authorities, the Department of Employment and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) has heeded the warnings contained in such OECD comparative data as analysed by Cullen (1997). There is currently much concern at government levels about the quality of learning and training which is occurring in Australia and attempts to develop a training culture. The commissioning of the report *Think Training* is evidence of one such attempt, although the failure to publish this report because it was deemed 'too negative' (Osmond, 1998, p. 7) is also indicative of major problems in acknowledging the absence of and developing a training culture. The development of policies centred upon the earlier Training Reform Agenda and now via workplace learning and assessment policies centred upon Training Packages is further evidence of attempts to revolutionise training in Australia (Hawke & Cornford, 1998).

There are a number of specific problems which relate to the creation of a more highly skilled workforce and the role of vocational educators in this. These include inconsistent and poorly conceptualised policy formulation in vocational education, the apparently deliberate attempts to stifle debate over issues affecting the total community through vocational education policy change and implementation, failure to appreciate the importance of well qualified vocational educators in developing a highly skilled workforce for the future, and inadequate establishment and monitoring of education courses for vocational education and training teachers. It is the neglect of the training and development of vocational educators which is the main thrust of this paper but the other issues need to be considered as they provide a context for explaining this.

Inconsistent Government Policies and Inadequate Conceptualisation

The history of vocational education in Australia has been characterised by long periods of neglect and failure to recognise the importance of vocational education's contributions to national prosperity (Goozee, 1995). The technological, economic and social revolutions which have stemmed from information technologies have now created awareness of the importance of this educational sector but social class biases which value university education over other forms of post-compulsory education remain to be overcome (Ainley, 1993; Cornford, 1998). Dawkins' attempts in the late 80s to revolutionise the education of the workforce in the previous federal Labor governments were focused almost exclusively upon university education, and it was only when the excessive demand for university places created political problems was there commencement of recognition of the importance of the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) system in developing a highly skilled and effective modern workforce. The Karpin Report (1995) reinforced the importance of the TAFE systems in updating the skills and knowledge of small managers/owners business, but that report appears to have been largely neglected by federal ministers and bureaucrats.

Reliable data in the area of vocational education and training would seem an important basis for policy making. However, partially as result of previous neglect of the vocational education and training area, obtaining reliable and current data is often difficult, if not impossible (McDonald, Hayton, Gonczi & Hager, 1993). Recent research into the use of research by Selby Smith, Hawke, McDonald and Selby Smith (1998) has highlighted the fact that, even when research is available, it is often not used effectively by decision makers. Of the

vocational education and training decision makers involved in one facet of their study, 'two thirds considered that, in reaching decisions, that political and strategic decisions played the greatest role, with research-based information being used (in half the cases described) to support or validate a decision taken on other grounds' (Selby Smith et al., 1998, p. 8). Furthermore, the depth of experience of bureaucrats who are involved in policy formulation and direct administration appears a major issue. Hawke (1998), in one of his studies, found that almost half of those decision-makers involved with vocational education had come from non-vocational education and training backgrounds, while even amongst those with this background, many had had limited contact with direct delivery and were chiefly involved in administrative roles.

Despite evidence of concern at government level about development of a highly skilled workforce, there is also ample evidence that many of the issues affecting vocational education in Australia have not been properly recognised. For example the report commissioned by the National Board of Employment, Education and Training undertaken by Candy, Crebert and O'Leary (1994), *Developing Lifelong Learners Through Undergraduate Education*, was focused upon the university sector. This despite the fact that university undergraduates are an already privileged group and the groups most in need of teaching to develop lifelong learning skills, because of academic or learning skill deficits and being most affected by technical change, are vocational education students (Cornford & Peak, 1997).

There is also the problem that the combined, overall effects of different policies are not adequately conceptualised. For example, the policy to implement Training Packages, with their essential components of competency standards, assessment, and relationship to the Australian Qualification Framework, appears to relegate both the process of learning and those who provide learning to relatively minor, inessential roles (Cornford and Beven, in press). Thus, while the Training Packages may possibly promote more effective workplace performance through narrow training focus upon specific tasks, the policy with its narrow focus upon product, rather than product and learning process, appears in conflict with current, concerted policy efforts to promote lifelong learning in vocational education and training (Kearns, 1999; Kearns, McDonald, Candy, Knights, & Papadopoulos, 1999) and the development of a training culture (Osmond, 1998; Robinson, 1999).

Further, there appears to be a deliberate policy of the present Coalition federal government of preventing debate over important issues and changes by ensuring that information is not widely disseminated more generally and through the vocational education community in particular (Hawke & Cornford, 1998, pp. 105-7). Continual changing of titles of policy initiatives and of direction characterise much of what has occurred in Australia in vocational education, especially in relation to apprenticeship training which can be argued should be one of the major lynch-pins in the development of a more highly skilled workforce. For example there have been six changes in the nomenclature of apprenticeship training programs over the past decade (Hawke & Cornford, 1998, p. 114). Keeping abreast of changes in nomenclature as well as actual policy details is exceptionally difficult even for those with very real interests in doing so.

Disregard for the Informational Input and the Value of Teachers

Despite the fact that no substantial curriculum innovation has ever succeeded without the input of those directly involved in its implementation (McBeath, 1995), the advice and views of teachers and other vocational education experts have largely been ignored by federal government ministers and agencies under both Labor and Coalition governments. Teachers and vocational educators have consistently been seen as uncooperative or negative about change and have been excluded (Hawke & Cornford, 1998). This applies in terms of the conceptualisation of training reforms under Dawkins (Hawke, 1998), and the major policy

initiatives centred upon competency-based training (Cornford, 1997). This disregard for the views of vocational teachers and specialists in vocational education in the development of policies is symptomatic of a failure to appreciate the importance of quality vocational educators.

Amongst the more worrisome aspects of vocational education policies over the past decade has been the actions taken by the Australian federal government and its agencies like the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) in attempts to open up the Australian training market and to make Departments of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) more responsive to business needs. These things are desirable, however the actions taken may be interpreted as direct attempts to destroy TAFE systems for ideological reasons (Peoples, 1998), since there is evidence that, on occasions where reports painted TAFE in too favourable a light, additional reports were rewritten to correct this impression (see Hawke & Cornford, 1998, p. 121). Ultimately, empirical research was undertaken which revealed that many employers and students looked upon TAFE and its training as effective (ANTA, 1996). Consequently, a conspicuous change occurred in the rhetoric and policies when this was realised. For example, a completely different tone was adopted by Moran (1998), who was one of the chief critics of TAFE while at ANTA, after the research was conducted and published.

Casualisation of the TAFE Teaching Force

From the mid 1980s in Australia, with the advent of economic rationalist policies, there were financial cut-backs and, with the objective of reducing costs, a major casualisation of the TAFE teaching forces occurred (see Robinson, 1998), since full-time teachers incur on-costs and must be paid holiday pay, sick pay and superannuation. The result was the employment of many more part-time and casual teachers who did not have formal teacher training qualifications. Some states, like NSW, did encourage part-time teachers to undertake the National Teaching and Learning Package (NTL) although such training was not compulsory, and the NTL Package only covered elementary aspects of lesson preparation and presentation.

Studies which compare the effectiveness of trained, partly trained or untrained teachers are rare, even in the much better researched areas of primary and secondary education. It is generally assumed logically that increased knowledge, skills and attitudes are gained during teacher education experiences and these must produce some benefits for teacher performance and student learning. Thus it is not too surprising that it has not been possible to locate substantial studies which compare the effectiveness of trained and untrained vocational educators on student learning. Of those which have been located for school education, the studies by Claridge (1990) and McDiamid and Wilson (1991) indicate that teacher education does have substantial benefits for teacher knowledge and skill, and learning outcomes for students. Research into the development of teaching expertise in the school systems further clearly indicates that there are differences in the ability of teachers to promote effective learning with novice teachers often deficient in content knowledge, classroom management skills, understanding of the inter-relationships between bodies of knowledge and teaching procedures, as compared with teachers who have had initial teacher education, experience in teaching and the motivation to develop their teaching skills (Westerman, 1991). Proficiency or expertise in vocational teaching is only likely to develop over considerable periods of time, with this expertise building on substantial initial vocational teacher education qualifications.

The attitude that vocational teaching is easy and that anyone can do it provided that they have subject content knowledge (Robinson, 1998) is erroneous. In vocational education circles it has long been recognised that there is need for teaching skills as well as content

knowledge in order to ensure effective student learning (Rose, 1966, pp.3-4). The current policies of encouraging employment of teachers who have only subject content knowledge is to adopt a position which is remarkably similar to that taken towards vocational education in the nineteenth century when it was often considered that only content knowledge was required (Cornford, 1999b). Only those who are ignorant of the research into teaching effectiveness which has emerged over the past three decades could adopt such a position. In fact, such a position fails to recognise that pedagogical and pedagogical content knowledge, that is understanding of teaching and learning, and knowledge of how to teach specialist content knowledge in order to make it easily understood by learners (Shulman, 1986), are vital components of successful teaching.

In any case, demands made upon vocational educators to ensure increased student learning and skill performance in a wide variety of settings including the workplace as well as classrooms have increased significantly over the past decade (Cullen, 1997; Hawke, Berkley, McDonald & Stowell, 1998; Hawke & Cornford, 1998). These demands, now being made of vocational educators in a knowledge society, necessitate knowledge and skills which could not have been previously acquired via these educators' own, earlier training in their occupational speciality, or even older teacher vocational teacher education qualifications gained only a few years ago since many now-important issues were not then recognised as essential (see below). Furthermore, to simply reproduce existing workplace training cultures will clearly not meet the expectations of increased levels of skilling which are required for Australia to maintain parity in its current relative international ratings (Cullen, 1997). The following section briefly outlines some of the kinds of increased demands which are being made in different settings in vocational education and which involve a multitude of new delivery approaches (Hawke et al., 1998, p. 1).

Future Vocational Educational Objectives

Fostering knowledge and skills pertaining to lifelong learning, superior levels of skill development, and more effective transfer of learning and problem solving are central to the development of a more skilled workforce and attainment of a raft of social and learning objectives (Cornford, 1999b; Cornford & Beven, in press; Stevenson, 1994). Without the development of knowledge and skills in these areas it does not seem possible to achieve the more idealistic concepts of a knowledge society or the learning organisations which are indicated as necessary by forward thinkers in fields like Human Resource Development (Senge, 1990; Drucker, 1994).

Development of lifelong learning skills at both school and post-compulsory levels will be necessary to maintain skill currency and knowledge at both occupational and individual levels given the rapidity of technological, economic and social change (Candy et al., 1994; Cornford, 1999a). However, despite the rhetoric in government reports about the importance of lifelong learning (Cornford & Peak, 1997), there does not appear to be any effective conceptualisation of how specific, effective educational practices will be established to achieve this (see Kearns, 1999; Kearns et al, 1999). The establishment of learning-to-learn skills through explicit teaching of cognitive and metacognitive skills would seem essential to cope with the added volume of information, with this volume and the need for more effective learning only likely to increase (Cornford, 1999b).

However, establishment of effective lifelong learning policies and structures will not be in itself be enough: there are other bodies of knowledge and skills which are necessary to create a more highly skilled and effective Australian workforce. Knowledge of skill learning and the development of expertise research along with more effective teaching strategies to foster skill learning are also required (Stevenson, 1994). So too are knowledge of and teaching skills associated with the transfer of learning. Transfer of learning is an essential

precondition for effective work performance and problem solving in workplaces (Cornford, 1999b) where the nature of knowledge, skill and work has changed to a more cognitive kind involving many more problem situations because of the application of information technologies (Zuboff, 1988; Cornford, 1998).

Comprehensive knowledge by individuals about skill learning and the development of expertise, a greater understanding of complex transfer of learning issues, and the development of lifelong learning skills will only come about through explicit teaching for these, with such teaching knowledge originating largely from quality vocational teacher education (Cornford, 1999b). It is argued that probably one of the most serious problems facing Australia is the failure of policy makers to recognise the increased demands being made upon vocational educators, to conceptualise an effective role for vocational teachers and trainers, and of ways of ensuring that a knowledgeable and highly trained vocational teaching force is established (Cornford & Beven, in press). This is despite the fact that some consultancy reports have convincingly outlined many of the complex skills now required (for example, see Hawke et al., 1998).

Proportions of and Present Formal Qualification Levels of Vocational Educators

Policy changes have meant that the workplace, not just the formal vocational education setting, is now a major site for vocational education and training in Australia (Hawke & Cornford, 1998). Vocational educators are now required in workplace learning and assessment as well as in more formal instruction in schools, TAFE colleges and private training institutions. Statistics which reveal the qualification levels and types of employment of vocational educators and trainers would appear to be highly desirable and a basis for important policy decisions, given the opening of the training market to private training providers. The data for those employed with private training providers are presently unknown and difficult to estimate (Anderson, 1997). Even reliable data on the proportion of TAFE teachers with formal teaching qualifications are unavailable (Cornford, 1999b). In *Statistics 1998 in detail*, published for ANTA, by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research no data on teacher/trainer qualifications are provided (NCVER, 1999a). Most recently, Malley, Hill, Putland, Shah and McKenzie (June, 1999, p. 38) indicated in their draft report for the Office of Training and Further Education in Victoria, *Trends in the TAFE Institute Workforce and Their Implications for the Training and Development of TAFE Staff 1998-2008*, that they were unable to obtain data on teacher qualifications from seven of the eight Victorian institutions in their sample because this was not collected at institute level. The failure to ensure the gathering and public availability of reliable data on formal qualifications and employment suggests an embarrassment upon the part of politicians and bureaucrats as to the low levels of substantial vocational teacher education, or a belief that the data are unimportant.

Previously, employment on a permanent, full-time teaching basis in both NSW and Victoria required formal teaching qualifications. Employment at TAFE in a part-time, casual or sessional capacity does not require possession of formal vocational teacher qualifications. Attempts to establish Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and Quality Endorsed Training Organisations (QETOs) by state and federal governments appear designed to ensure some degree of quality control on training organisations (NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board, 1998; also see below) and thus training qualifications. However, at present the foremost requirement for employment at TAFE is content knowledge and recency of relevant work experience.

Government policies encouraging workplace learning and the entry of private training providers into the market may have resulted in the numbers of teachers and trainers increasing as a relative proportion of the population given that the numbers of those

undertaking vocational programs has increased by sixty five percent from 1989 to 1998 (NCVER, 1999b). However, it appears that many of these teachers/trainers hold no or low level qualifications, which are inadequate in terms of the higher levels of knowledge and skills demanded (Cornford & Beven, in press). Many managers and employers in business and industry have no real interest in training or trainers employed by them gaining formal qualifications (Hawke, 1998). The most optimistic figures indicate that forty one per cent of those workplace supervisors and trainers working in the school-to-work transition area, the most closely monitored area, possessed a Category 1 or 2 Certificate in Workplace Training (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 1997). The Category 2 Certificate, because of recent changes, is now equivalent to a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training (ANTA, 1999). While there could be expected to be a period in which there would be lag in the numbers of highly qualified vocational educators, since policy changes like this involve incremental and developmental processes, the training reform agenda under various titles has been operative for at least a decade.

There is also considerable variability in the quality of the earlier Certificate 1 and 2 in Workplace Training qualifications since there are different training providers and there were not any effective quality control mechanisms instituted by governments to monitor the quality of courses actually provided after registration of the courses (Cornford & Beven, in press). It is also known that in some case these qualifications were gained from two day workshops, a period of time which would be considered by serious vocational educators as inadequate to establish more than basic, 'first-aid' training knowledge and skills (see Cornford, 1999b, pp. 100-101). Concerns about the quality of the Category 1 and 2 Certificate in Workplace Training, along with government attempts to develop a superior training culture, have led to the establishment from October 1998 of the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training as the minimum desired qualification for those involved in workplace training and assessment (ANTA, 1999). But there appear to be problems with effective quality control measures with this also (see below).

It is now appropriate to consider the proportions of permanent, full-time TAFE employees and the qualifications of these employed in the two most populous states, Victoria and NSW. Economic rationalist policies, which are being widely implemented throughout Australia regardless of the political complexion of state and federal governments, have substantially contributed to the employment of part-time, casual or sessional teachers especially in TAFE (Malley et al., 1999; Robinson, 1998). However, there has been a long history of the employment of part-time or casual teachers in TAFE to ensure the continual linking of teaching to present industry needs and processes, and to provide staffing flexibility as enrolments vary according to technological change and employer needs (see below). The most reliable figures are datable to 1992 when it was estimated that there was one full-time vocational teacher to two part-time or casual teachers in TAFE, with these figures varying from state to state (Cornford, 1999b). In NSW in the eighties, under Allan Patterson as Director General of TAFE, an ideal was set at sixty cent permanent TAFE teachers with teacher education qualifications to forty per cent part time and casual, although it is doubtful if this goal was attained. However, over the past decade, there have been very significant changes, especially in relation to increased employment of teaching staff on a part-time or casual basis (Cornford, 1999b, p. 100).

Just what proportions of permanent, part-time staff or sessional staff are now employed cannot be judged since relevant, reliable official data are not available. Even data presented by Malley et al. (1999) in Victoria, the state which appears to have done the most recent comprehensive 'stocktake' on TAFE teachers, make it impossible to gauge the numbers of permanent, contract, and part-time TAFE teachers given their use of the term 'ongoing' to refer to those who may be 'occupying a "permanent" (sic) position or have ongoing contracts' (Malley et al., 1999, p.vi). Furthermore, Malley et al. (1999, p. 39) found that only

three of eight institutes in their sample supplied information on sessional teachers. In effect sessional employees are not considered part-time or casual, but are employed only on a per session basis and at present comprise a sizeable percentage of TAFE teachers employed in Victoria, ranging up to forty percent of teaching staff in at least one TAFE college in that state (Malley et al., 1999, p. 34).

In the absence of current, reliable data on the ratio of sessional, part-time, contract and full-time permanent teachers in TAFE (see above and Cornford, 1999b) it is necessary to rely on informed estimates by knowledgeable vocational education researchers with impeccable professional and research standing within this specialist sector. The alternative is to ignore and not seriously consider vitally important issues for the effective functioning of Australian society because hard data does not exist or has not been publicly released. This does not seem appropriate given that there is certainly wide recognition in informed vocational education circles of the fact that there has been a '*deleterious impact of casualisation on the quality and effectiveness of teaching in TAFE, and VET in general*' (Anderson, 1997, p.151).

The following estimates have been provided by Geof Hawke who is a senior research fellow at the Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training at the University of Technology Sydney, and was responsible as acting director of this centre for obtaining continued ANTA funding as one of only two vocational education research centres in Australia. He has been involved in important, recent consultancy reports commissioned by NCVET and government bodies in Victoria on teacher/trainer education and qualifications (Hawke et al. 1998, *Standards and Qualifications for VET Practitioners*) and the use of research in vocational education decision making (Selby Smith, Hawke, McDonald & Selby Smith, 1998, *The Impact of Research on VET Decision Making*). His estimate is that only ten percent of trained teachers are employed in a permanent, full-time capacity in Victoria. This means that ninety percent of teachers are contract, part-time or sessional in that state. In NSW TAFE, Hawke has estimated that the proportion of permanent, full-time, teacher trained employees is from twenty to thirty percent, indicating that seventy to eighty percent of teachers are casual or part-time (Hawke, personal communication). Statistics obtained, which it has not been possible to corroborate, suggest that there are 5,700 full time teachers and 12,300 casuals or part-timers in NSW TAFE, that is approximately thirty two percent are full-time teachers.

Interviews with Sydney-based NSW TAFE teachers in office administration and metal trades areas by the author have corroborated Hawke's estimates. However, at the Hunter Institute of Technology based in the Newcastle area, forty percent of teachers were equivalent full time staff in 1998 (*Improving Communication*, 1999, p. 2). On account of the strong union base around Newcastle, this may not reflect staffing positions more broadly. The fact that the student satisfaction rating for the Hunter Institute stands at eighty five percent compared with the state average of eighty percent (*Improving Communication*, 1999, p. 2) also suggests that the ratio of full-time teachers may be lower in other areas of the state.

These calculated estimates of proportions of full and casual (or sessional) teacher employment in TAFE by Hawke need to be seen in the context of the organisational changes which have taken place or are currently still taking place. In Victoria nearly all TAFE colleges have been amalgamated into universities after extensive cost saving measures over several years (Anderson, 1997; Robinson, 1998). In NSW, despite increased enrolments in TAFE, '*a total of 630 jobs are to be shed....with at least \$43 million stripped from TAFE's \$923 million budget*' (Editorial, 'Wrong signal to TAFE', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 2/8/99). Furthermore, there is also good reason to believe that many of those permanent, full-time teachers in Victoria and NSW TAFE systems who have formal teaching qualifications are not engaged in face-to-face teaching. They are much more likely to be employed in administrative roles requiring, organisation, staff meetings, student counselling

and advising (Malley et al., 1999), since part-time or sessional employees are paid only for teaching and are either involved in minimal (role-marking) or no administrative responsibilities. How long the TAFE systems in these two most populous states can continue to function even moderately effectively without deleterious effects upon the quality of administration, occupational knowledge and performance is open to question. Malley et al.'s (1999) report contains analyses and a series of recommendations which reflect these serious concerns.

Movements to Requirements for More Substantial Qualifications

Finally there are some indications that the problem of large numbers of vocational teachers lacking formal teaching qualifications is receiving recognition at government level, although the problems of low level or no qualifications in part-time or sessional TAFE teaching and workplace training in industry have been apparent for several years (Anderson, 1997). For example, the May 1999 AVETRA Newsletter, *Research Today*, has indicated that the Office of Training and Further Education, Victoria, has a project underway entitled 'Training the TAFE Sessional Workforce'. Clearly such a research project is unlikely to lead to major changes in policy and practices very quickly, but finally it is at least acknowledgment that the issue is of importance. Perhaps more important are state and federal government efforts to register training organisations and establish new minimal standards for vocational education and workplace trainers. In NSW the Sydney Institute of Technology has announced that it will require part-time teachers to undertake at least a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training course for employment in line with requirements to be registered as a training provider (ANTA, 1998).

The requirement by ANTA for registration of Registered Organisations (RTOs) and Quality Endorsed Training Organisations (QETOs) would seem to be a step in the right direction of trying to ensure quality control and minimal standards in teaching and training (see Hawke & Cornford, 1998). Public TAFE institutions and private sectors trainers will need to be accredited to provide training for officially recognised qualifications and, in turn, will need to ensure that their teachers and trainers possess relevant qualifications. However, the major stumbling block will remain quality control during and after registration. In the past this element has been largely neglected with Certificates 1 and 2 for Workplace Training (Cornford & Beven, in press). Registration requirements for RTO or QETO status focus upon examination of documentation provided by organisations applying, with the chief focus being upon planning for certain eventualities or occurrences, rather than inspection of actual training as is made abundantly clear by the nature of the registration forms (see NSW Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board, 1998). Interviews by inspectors with training staff are a possibility, but there is no provision made for inspection of actual training. Given there is provision for sub-contracting of training provision the potential for loss of quality control is significant.

Establishment of a minimal standard for vocational education and workplace training via the new Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training and Diploma in Training and Assessment Systems Requirements may lead to a diminution of acceptable teaching qualifications in TAFE and private training institutions rather than just the establishment of a minimum qualification for part-time teachers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that some teachers aspiring to full-time permanent positions in TAFE are undertaking a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training since this effectively provides minimal qualifications for workplace assessment with liaison between TAFEs and workplaces becoming more frequent. Prior to this a degree or a post-graduate Diploma in Vocational Education has been the accepted qualification for permanent employment as a teacher in TAFE in NSW for several years.

The adequacy of a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training, or even a Diploma in Training and Assessment Systems, is in grave doubt given the increasing demands required of trainers (Hawke et al., 1998). Many sports coaches, who will be coaching for leisure activities, are required to undertake more substantial courses than do workplace trainers and assessors who will be involved in training affecting individuals' work performance and livelihoods (Cornford & Beven, in press). The requirements for the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training and the Diploma in Training and Assessment Systems are specified by ANTA (1999). These courses have a practical focus and, while they do recognise the importance of the Mayer generic competencies such as problem solving, they do not specify inclusion of material relating to skill learning, the development of expertise, transfer and lifelong learning (see ANTA, 1999). In this they are not alone: many university-based vocational teacher degree or diploma courses lack adequate content in these important areas. However, what older earlier, teacher education courses did provide, despite their current inadequacies, was broad theoretical, conceptual underpinnings leading to greater understanding. These theoretical, conceptual elements are clearly absent from current Certificate and Diploma requirements which are focused upon practical issues (see ANTA, 1999)

The integration of numbers of TAFE colleges into universities in Victoria and the amalgamation of the TAFE Commission with the Department of School Education in NSW have introduced further complications, the ramifications of which are by no means fully apparent at present. Since universities do not require their lecturers to possess formal teaching qualifications, this may mean there is no longer a requirement for the those teaching formerly TAFE level courses in Victoria to obtain teaching qualifications as well. Yet there appears to be a contrary movement in NSW. Despite the amalgamation in NSW, TAFE teachers are being quarantined from teaching in the schooling system. This is somewhat puzzling since one of the evident problems in the NSW secondary school system to date, where a fuller range of vocational subjects have been re-introduced into the curriculum after many years, has been the lack of substantial, relevant, industrial experience of many of the teachers teaching vocational subjects (Cornford, 1998). However, this quarantining, which appears to have a teachers' union-industrial relations basis, may be de facto recognition that part-time TAFE teachers without formal training qualifications have no place in a school system where there are almost universal requirements for some substantial formal qualifications to (at least) diploma level.

Complexity of Some of the Permanent-Casual Employment Issues

The issues surrounding employment of vocational educators in organisations like TAFE involve considerable complexity and centre upon excellence of teaching and maintenance of subject knowledge and skill currency. This latter issue is of great import for vocational education given the rates of technical innovation and change now being experienced and the direct links via business and industry employment to national productivity. There is a long history of casual and part-time employment in TAFE although it has never been possible to determine what is the optimal balance between permanent, full- and part-time staff. Such an employment balance traditionally has served a number of important purposes including ensuring that new knowledge and skills are regularly introduced by part-time and casual teachers who are currently employed in industry and providing some flexibility for administrators when demand for courses weaken.

There is emerging evidence that many vocational educators who are employed, particularly in a permanent, full-time capacity in TAFE, have not maintained technical currency, and that some of them are very much out-of-touch with current industry procedures (Holland & Holland, 1998a). There is reason to believe from Holland and Holland's studies that only a third have maintained technical currency, a third could be brought up to acceptable currency

levels with some reasonable degree of effort, while a third possess seriously obsolete knowledge. Holland and Holland (1998b) concluded in an earlier paper that it may not be desirable for vocational educators to be offered permanent employment on account of the problems in maintaining technical currency for a variety of reasons, both personal and institutional. It is the writer's belief there are distinct advantages in having a relatively high proportion of permanent teachers to create a highly effective vocational education teaching force and that maintaining knowledge currency is a problem which affects all areas of education. Greater attention to inservice education for all teachers in all educational sectors in an era of considerable knowledge change is necessary. For vocational educators in TAFE, the likelihood of greater involvement with workplace supervision in industry potentially will provide more opportunities for maintaining contact with workplaces and current technologies.

The problems of maintaining knowledge and skill currency do not reside just with permanent, full-time TAFE employees. The advantages of such employment of part-time and casual vocational educators in TAFE have been based on the assumption that those who are employed part-time do possess relevant, recent technical knowledge and skills, and that such people are available. However, given the payrates offered by TAFE and most private training providers, the most desirable part-timers often cannot be afforded, especially in computing, information technology and the hospitality industries, and that many who do wish for part-time employment may not possess the knowledge and skill currency desired (Holland, personal communication; Malley et al., 1999).

Maintenance of knowledge and skill currency is likely to remain a major issue in vocational education while ever there is accelerated technical change. Central to this, however, is the fact that many of the policies adopted by TAFE in relation to returns to industry appear to be inadequate, while many of those who do overcome obstacles find that the return to industry cost them money (Holland & Holland, 1998a & b). Further, there is evidence that those who do return with current knowledge and skills are overburdened by the demands made upon them on their return to teaching, especially in terms of being required to develop and teach a range of new subjects. All of these factors indicate a need to seriously reconsider institutional and national policies in order to develop and maintain a more highly qualified vocational education teaching force.

Loss of Vocational Educator Expertise

The lessening of the demand for formal vocational teacher qualifications by employers has had an impact upon university-based vocational teacher educators. Enrolments in vocational teacher education courses in Australia have declined correspondingly with the decline in the numbers of permanently employed numbers of vocational educators in TAFE. For example, at the University of Technology, Sydney in Semester 1, 1999, there were only enough enrolments for the formation of one normal sized, first year class of vocational educators. This contrasts with a period in the mid-eighties when, at one period, when the director General of TAFE Alan Patterson had instigated the requirement of formal teaching qualifications for permanent teachers, twenty two groups were enrolled in first and second years. At the same time the importance of vocational education has been recognised more fully internationally both in terms of lifelong education for life and work, and the need for enhanced productivity and national economic competitiveness. School-to-work transition has also emerged as of great importance (Cornford, 1998). Ironically, while more NSW universities are responding to these international trends and are now offering more vocational education courses than before, these providers are competing for fewer trainee teachers.

In NSW the Institute of Technical and Adult Teacher Education (ITATE) attached to Sydney College of Advanced Education, later transformed into the School of Vocational Education at the University of Technology, Sydney, was the largest vocational teacher education centre in the southern hemisphere in the 1980s. It still offers a vocational teacher education specialisation within a Bachelor of Education in Adult Education degree but operates on a vastly reduced scale. The University of Newcastle briefly offered a vocational teacher education course but because of dissatisfaction with inclusion of TAFE teacher trainees with primary and secondary teacher education this ceased in the early 90s. More recently in the 90s the University of Western Sydney and Charles Sturt University both established vocational teacher education streams. There is currently rumour that the University of New England has also just established a specialist vocational teacher education course, although no formal documents have been sighted. Very recently the University of Western Sydney has announced the closure of its vocational teacher education specialisation along with other teacher education courses for economic reasons (Jacobsen, 1999). In Victoria, Hawthorne CAE operated a large vocational teacher education unit. This was disbanded in cost saving exercises that occurred in Victoria after the demise of the Kirner Labor government and perceived inefficiencies.

It is argued that the production of vocational educators with sound qualifications is dependent upon training and education by vocational teacher educators with substantial expertise in vocational teacher education. Karpin (1995) in his report, *Enterprising Nation*, highlighted the importance of the grouping together of specialists in an area of knowledge and skill and the development of a critical mass. In Karpin's view the development of world-quality management degrees was dependent upon the concentration of excellence and specialist knowledge.

Reduction in the demand for vocational teacher education and economic rationalist policies in most cases appears to be destroying or have destroyed most efforts at the establishment of numbers of specialists in vocational education as critical masses at different specialist centres. At the university of Technology, Sydney, the staff of the School of Vocational Education has been absorbed by more general specialisations and the School no longer exists, although the vocational education specialisation continues within the Bachelor of Education in Adult Education degree. Furthermore, at least ten of the staff who worked mostly or exclusively in vocational education accepted voluntary separation packages in the early 90s. At Hawthorne in Victoria, the disbandment of the specialist vocational education activities saw some of these staff relocated to Melbourne University but the majority were scattered with loss of concentrated expertise. Charles Sturt University would appear to have gone somewhat against this trend, although there are those who feel that distance programs are not appropriate ways of educating vocational educators.

At present the expertise in vocational teacher education would appear to be spread very thinly. When there is finally recognition of the need to educate vocational teachers and trainers with high level qualifications it is doubtful whether, with continuing trends, there will be reasonable numbers of vocational teacher educators who can supply the necessary expertise and experience to compensate for the years of neglect. The wisdom of policy development which does not take these issues into account is questionable.

Conclusion

Cullen (1997) has signalled that the production of more highly qualified vocational practitioners is necessary to maintain international competitiveness but there does not seem to be any evidence of clear conceptualisation at federal government level of the issues that need to be addressed, or the policies formulated, to remedy the deficiencies that he has identified. It is not too alarmist to believe that the current fragmented policies in vocational

education will lead to a critical shortage of both highly qualified workers and TAFE teachers. The report by Malley et al. (1999) for OTFE in Victoria indicates the reality of these concerns.

What also must be addressed is the need to have TAFE and other vocational teachers and trainers prepared to high standards to meet the increased demands of the twenty first century. Fragmented and inconsistent policies are effectively reducing the numbers of centres of specialist vocational expertise and vocational teacher educators. The failure to appreciate the importance of the role of knowledgeable, practically effective and highly qualified vocational educators in training TAFE and other vocational teachers/trainers in order to develop a more skilled workforce has been of reasonably long standing and can be traced to Dawkins' attempts at reform more than a decade ago. It has been the argument in this paper that the concepts of quality vocational educators and quality vocational teacher educators need to again become recognised as important elements in vocational education policy formulation. Failure to do this, and to implement policies which rectify this decade-long neglect, are likely to see Australia slipping even further in terms of international competitiveness in the coming years.

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