

SMI06490

## **Leading the charge in cross-sectoral integration: Vocational teacher education and the embedding of units of competency**

Erica Smith  
Charles Sturt University

In Australia as elsewhere, the national government is keen to improve pathways between vocational education and training (VET) and higher education. The limited availability of such pathways is often attributed to a lack of will on the part of universities. VET teacher-education in Australia has been grappling since 1998 with the challenges imposed by a VET-sector qualification at Certificate IV level that has become, through government regulation, a 'licence to practise' in VET teaching. This paper uses the discussions within the national community of VET teacher-educators and a case study in one university to illustrate the difficulties that exist in laying pathways and guiding students along them. It draws on the debates that have taken place in AVTEC, the Australian VET Teacher Educators' Colloquium, the author's research into assessment issues in embedding the Certificate IV within university courses, and preliminary data from an evaluation of students' reactions to authentic and deep embedding. These data are used to argue that difficulties in cross-sectoral integration are real and are derived from different approaches to pedagogy and evidence requirements, rather than being manufactured by education providers anxious to maintain their boundaries. The VET teacher education community holds unique expertise in this area and therefore the work done in its own courses is of substantial significance.

### **Introduction**

#### *Credit transfer between VET and universities*

Within the higher education sector and the vocational education and training (VET) sector alike there has been increasing appreciation of the issue of articulation between the two sectors. The Australian government's review of higher education in 2002 concluded that there are benefits in encouraging joint VET/higher education programs since they can guarantee articulation and credit transfer, provide opportunities for students to develop a broader range of skills and provide them with a broader range of options as a result of multiple exit points (Nelson, 2002). While the terms 'credit transfer' and 'articulation' are often used interchangeably, there are differences, with articulation being applied to qualifications rather than 'subjects' 'units' or 'modules'. According to the Australian Qualifications Framework Advisory Board ([www.aqf.edu.au](http://www.aqf.edu.au)) 'articulation provides a sequential pathway between qualifications whilst credit transfer provides a means of linking individual components of existing awards.'

In 2005 MCEETYA the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education and Youth Affairs drew up guidelines for principles for credit transfer from VET to higher education ([www.mceetya.edu.au](http://www.mceetya.edu.au)). These guidelines did not acknowledge difficulties, but assumed that credit transfer would be unproblematic and was simply a matter of matching content. The first principle states

The focus of credit transfer and articulation arrangements from VET to Higher Education is to establish the equivalence of learning outcomes, and to assist these equivalence decisions to be reached, **regardless of the similarity or differences of the education processes involved (including processes of delivery, teaching methodology and assessment)** (emphasis added); whether the provider is a Registered Training Organisation or an accredited Higher Education provider; or of entry levels to previous qualifications (for example, eg Diploma from year 12 entry versus Diploma from Cert IV).  
([www.mceetya.edu.au](http://www.mceetya.edu.au))

While the concept of seamless movement between sectors is attractive and opens up the possibility of lifelong learning that is not only smooth but also certificated, a number of difficulties emerge. These relate primarily to the differing conceptions of learning between the two sectors. While VET in Australia today is resolutely vocational and skill-based, university education is generally understood to encompass a much broader field. This is in a sense 'operationalised' by the development of university 'graduate qualities' or 'attributes' which refer explicitly to complex and sophisticated generic attributes (Smith & Bush, 2006). There are challenges posed by suspicion and market rivalries; but these have tended to mask the real difficulties which are associated with different teaching and learning approaches. Such differences are exemplified in assessment which is where differences in student learning are most forcefully in evidence (Dunn, Morgan, O'Reilly & Parry, 2004).

The general response of universities to the problems, which are often only imperfectly understood by Academic Boards, has been to limit credit transfer to students progressing from particular VET institutions, generally TAFE Institutes with which the university has a special relationship. (This is most readily exemplified by the dual-sector universities in Victoria and the Northern Territory). It is hoped that the long-term relationship between the university and the TAFE Institute will guarantee quality of learning and enable problems to be addressed informally. While these partnerships may work in some cases, they nevertheless do not address the issues of differences in learning between the sectors. Moreover they do not acknowledge that since 2000 most VET in Australia has been delivered through Training Packages as a curriculum construct, which means that the training provider is not responsible for the complete development of the curriculum. There are approximately 80 national Training Packages in Australia, which cover most of the non-professional occupations in the workforce. They can be viewed at the National Training Information Service web site ([www.ntis.gov.au](http://www.ntis.gov.au)). Training Packages contain units of competency (devised through consultation with industry and with training providers) gathered together into national qualifications. VET training involves formal assessment of competence, which leads to the award, to successful candidates, of qualifications or Statements of Attainment (the latter certifying competence in one or more units of competency) that are recognised throughout Australia. This system of training has been gradually put in place over the past 20 years through a process often known as the Training Reform Agenda (Smith & Keating 2003).

Training Packages are developed nationally by the ten national Skills Councils, each spanning a number of industry and occupational areas. They contain units of competency, a qualifications framework detailing how the units in the Package are combined to make up various qualifications at different levels in the Australian Qualifications Framework, and assessment guidelines, but do not contain teaching curriculum. Training providers (known in the VET sector as Registered Training Organisations or RTOs) develop their own teaching programs based on the qualifications and units of competency to deliver the training, either in VET providers including TAFE, or in workplaces, although they may choose to utilise nationally-developing learning support materials, which are, however, not necessarily of high quality. Thus TAFE Institutes no longer develop their own 'curriculum'; they build on national Training Packages but cannot deviate from the competencies or from the assessment guidelines, except through approved contextualisation processes (Smith & Keating, 2003). It is doubtful whether most universities are fully aware of this, as they continue to negotiate with individual TAFE institutes rather than with Skills Councils<sup>1</sup> who would be able to provide advice on the content of qualifications as delivered by all training providers. Dual sector universities are the exception in their appreciation of VET curriculum development processes (eg Baxter, 2004).

Perhaps another reason apart from ignorance is involved in universities' continuing to negotiate with individual providers rather than accepting graduates of VET qualifications from any training provider. As part of training reform, many new training providers have been established and there are now over 4000 non-TAFE RTOs, although over 80% of VET is still delivered by TAFE (Smith & Keating, 2003). Many providers have grown up because of the ability to access government funding for the delivery of training in traineeships, although there are some long-established providers particularly in the business and hospitality industries. There have been many documented instances of poor quality in private providers (eg Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business & Education References Committee, 2000), and although the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) was introduced in 2002 with standards for RTOs (ANTA, 2001) and updated in 2005 there are still concerns that private providers generally do not reach the standard of TAFE.

### *Credit transfer, embedding and VET teacher training*

Why is this debate about credit transfer and the quality of VET of particular relevance to teacher-training? The issue here is under what circumstances credit transfer can legitimately be given for a VET qualification into a university qualification, and how this process can be managed. Naturally, VET practitioners themselves are keen to see substantial and clearly explained credit transfer available for their own VET qualification.

The basic qualification for practising in the VET sector has been since 1998 the Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training from the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training. This qualification was enshrined in the AQTF as the requirement for training delivery, with the three assessment units of competency 'plan', 'conduct' and 'review' assessment (out of eight units in the

---

<sup>1</sup> The author's own experience as a member of a Faculty Board, and a university's Academic Programs Committee (which approves all new courses) and Academic Senate, is that there is virtually no understanding of these issues at her own institution outside the vocational education and training academics.

complete Certificate IV) named as the minimum for assessors. In late 2004 a new Training Package in Training and Assessment was endorsed, that includes a larger and much improved Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. While people are allowed to continue to practise with the previous qualification, currently a massive upgrading process is going on across Australia as VET practitioners seek to gain the new qualification. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most of these programs are of poor quality and focus on 'recognition of prior learning' rather than actual learning.

Learners holding the Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training have for many years been seeking credit transfer into university VET teacher-training programs. University VET teacher-training courses have been pioneering in their acceptance of Certificate IV, and also Diploma, qualifications for inward credit (Brennan Kemmis & Smith, 2004). In some cases formal articulation from particular providers' programs into university courses has been negotiated between providers, and in other cases the university program offers standard credit transfer for learners with a Certificate IV from any RTO. However the Certificate IV has been a notoriously poor quality qualification, both 'thin' in itself, and more importantly, often delivered in a minimum amount of time by RTOs (National Assessors and Workplace Trainers, 2001). However although a recent study by Simons, Harris & Smith (2006) has shown that some RTOs have provided good quality courses, with appropriate attention, for example, to learning theory. The problems arising from the poor quality of many of the older Certificate IVs are well-recognised among university teaching staff when considering credit transfer arrangements.

As well as credit transfer arrangements, embedding arrangements are also possible. In such arrangements, students gain the Certificate IV through completion of university subjects. A partnering RTO needs to approve the delivery and assessment arrangements, and awards the VET qualification. The previous Certificate IV was routinely embedded within some universities' teacher training qualifications offered to those wishing to enter the VET sector via the higher education route (Brennan Kemmis & Smith, 2004). Sometimes the qualification was delivered by the university academics, and sometimes partnering RTOs delivered the relevant part of the university award.

In 1999 an organisation called AVTEC was formed, the Australian VET Teacher Educators' Colloquium. This virtual group, of around 100 VET teacher-educators and VET staff development personnel, operates through an electronic forum and members meet about once a year at VET conferences. The main issue around which AVTEC formed was the development of the new Training Package in Training and Assessment (which was five years in the development) and the group gained a place on the national steering committee for the development of the new Training Package. The focus of the group was both on the quality of the new qualification and on the significance of the new qualification for university VET teacher-training courses. In 2004 the group gained funding from the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) for a two-day national workshop to discuss issues of articulation and credit transfer between the new Certificate IV and the universities' VET teacher-training courses. Around 20 universities offer such courses with a total enrolment of over 2000 students. The rationale for the funding of the workshop by ANTA was that it would provide a model for articulation, credit transfer and embedding models between Training Package qualifications and degrees in general and not just for qualifications in the training discipline.

## Data on which this paper is based

This paper draws upon two forms of evidence. The first pool of data consists of the discussions that took place on the AVTEC electronic discussion list between 1999-2004 and at the AVTEC workshop in November 2004. The second pool of data is a case study of one university's treatment of the Certificate IV in its teacher training courses. These data include notes from meetings of academics as they worked through the processes needed to embed the new Certificate IV in the VET teacher-training courses and to attempt to arrange robust articulation pathways. In addition, initial student reaction to the first semester of delivery of the new course is included in the form of analysis of student queries and student evaluations of one of the subjects which embeds units of competency. The author was the co-ordinator of this subject. AVTEC members and students were asked for permission to quote their contributions to the electronic discussion list and forum.

## Findings

### *AVTEC members' views about how to deal with the new Certificate IV*

During the early years of redevelopment of the Training Package in Training and Assessment, most of the email discussions on the AVTEC list related to the need to lift the quality of the Certificate IV so that all VET practitioners would have a better skills and knowledge base. University members of AVTEC argued this simultaneously with their desire for VET teachers to be educated beyond the level required by the ATQF regulation. A typical example of this dual thinking was as follows:

*Ultimately we are witnessing the degradation of the education profession. Although I think it's very important for "trainers" to be recognised and included in that profession, this should be done by recognising the different roles that trainers, teachers and others play. Lumping them all together and saying they can all do their job effectively if they have a Cert IV clearly shows ignorance of the varied roles, levels of responsibility, and contexts in which our work is performed.*

Members raised the issue of articulation early in the discussion, as they considered the effects of the new qualification on their own programs.

*My issue is better articulation between TAFEs and Universities.*

A minor strand of discussion related to whether people were required to upgrade to the new qualification, and whether those with education degrees needed it. In these queries they seemed to be thinking as much about their personal positions as about their own students or the sector as a whole. For example:

*Can you confirm that those with Cert IV AWT don't have to get this new qualification? ... and what would you do in my case with the Cert IV, and a UNE BEd and MEd in Adult Education?*

One member was concerned about university teacher-training courses having to submit themselves to scrutiny if they wanted to embed the new qualification within their degrees. Rather plaintively, the message was

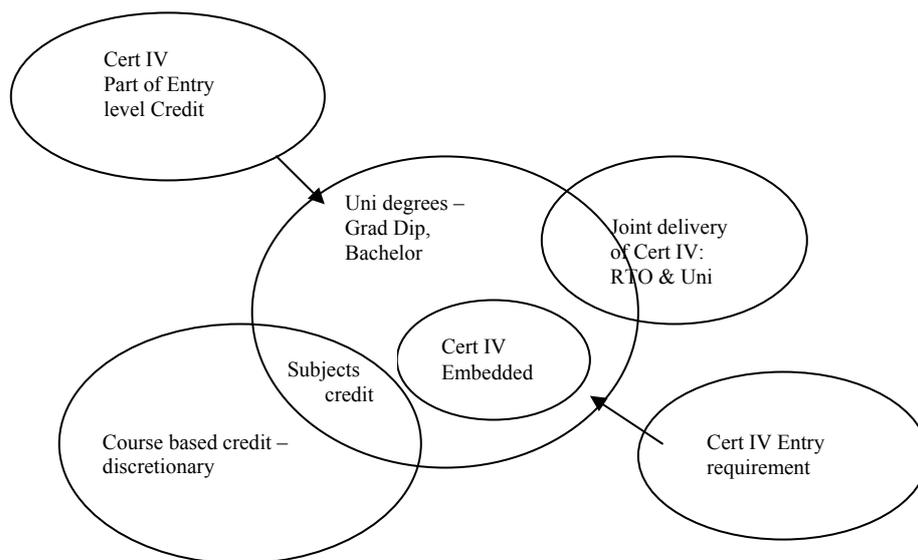
*Why can't they just trust us?*

Such messages were generally dealt with quite sternly by other members. One said

*In the field of football, there are skills, knowledge and techniques which apply to the whole field of football, and the more an individual knows about these, the better player they should be. However if the individual wants to play AFL in particular, they must play the game using the specific and exact rules, policies and procedures of AFL. Refusal to play according to the specific AFL requirements will not be acceptable to the umpire or regulatory authorities, and this precondition is simply a fact of life.*

Most of the discussion fell within these broad themes, although a large strand of discussion consisted simply of comments on the draft units of competency and qualification structures as they were circulated by the steering committee representative. The great interest in the development of the Training Package indicated the awareness among university members of the group about the huge effect that the new Certificate IV would have on their own courses.

The AVTEC workshop in late 2004 was specifically about articulation and embedding, and all universities offering VET teacher-training were invited to attend, together with a representative from the training provider that would be awarding the Certificate IV in the case of embedding. During the two days of the workshop the following model (Figure 1) was developed that showed how embedding and articulation took place with the existing Certificate IV.



**Figure 1: Intersection between previous Certificate IV & University Sector**  
(Brennan Kemmis & Smith, 2004:3)

The numbers of variations in the model showed the ‘make-do’ ways in which universities had coped with the imposition of the new national qualification onto their existing courses. The new Certificate IV qualification gave universities the chance to start with a clean slate, and several universities had delayed scheduled course review processes for this reason. The review of the Training Package had taken years longer than anticipated and hence universities were keen to get moving; however the endorsement of the Package did not occur until November 2004 (appropriately this

event happened while the workshop was taking place) which meant that generally implementation could not occur until 2006.

During the workshop it became apparent that some universities had examined the new Certificate IV and the AQTF compliance requirements and decided that embedding was simply too difficult. They had already determined to offer a certain number of subjects credit into their degrees for the Certificate IV, and expected all students to acquire the new Certificate IV before enrolling. Others were determined to proceed with embedding.

The following questions remained unanswered at the end of the workshop as participants dispersed to consider how to deal with the new Certificate IV in their own institutions.

1. Currently there are very different models in the University sector for crediting (or not) and embedding the Cert IV in University courses. Do we want national consistency about embedding and articulation issues across Australia or do we wish to establish some broader principles for implementation?
2. Since such different methods exist and it is the responsibility of each University to map and then deliver the Certificate IV, how do we resolve the compliance questions about the quality of the processes that result in the production of the “maps”?
3. How do we ensure that the record keeping is accurate and consistent and whose responsibility is this?
4. Can we cluster the units of competency for delivery and assessment?
5. How do we deal with the practicum requirements of the new TAA?
6. What embedding processes are most suitable for our students and our teaching contexts?

(Brennan Kemmis & Smith, 2004: 7)

#### *Case study of Regional University's VET teacher-training program*

Regional University (pseudonym) is the largest provider of VET teacher-training in Australia with about 350 students at any one time studying VET teaching qualifications. Its VET students are all enrolled by distance, in a range of courses from the Associate Degree in VET to the Graduate Diploma of VET. Prior to the introduction of the new Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, the old Certificate IV had been embedded within the degree and Graduate Diploma but as the Certificate IV had been introduced after the university courses, the embedding was done through ‘backward mapping’ across three subjects and was not very satisfactory. Because of this it was impossible to offer proper articulation pathway, and students complained about only receiving one subject’s credit into the courses.

The VET teacher-training staff determined that despite the difficulties explored at the AVTEC workshop they would proceed with the embedding of the Certificate IV as part of the review of the VET courses that was currently taking place. There were several reasons for this which were discussed through a number of staff meetings:

1. Students needed the Certificate IV in order to practise, and if Regional University did not give it to them they would most likely get the qualification from a poor quality RTO.

2. The material covered in the Certificate IV ranged across a lot of the content that was covered in the courses, and if students entered with the certificate IV it would involve a large amount of re-visiting ground they had already learned (albeit at a superficial level)
3. The consultations for the Training Package review were extremely wide-ranging and it was reasonable to conclude that the Certificate IV was therefore a good reflection of current and anticipated VET practice
4. Embedding the Certificate IV meant that staff needed to become very familiar with the qualification, which (a) was necessary to be abreast of current practice and (b) meant that articulation pathways for those who did enter with the new Certificate IV would be based on a deep understanding of what those students would know.
5. Staff were reluctant to offer credit for university subjects for the Certificate IV in a simple credit transfer arrangement, because Certificate IV is not at the same level as university subjects.

In order to understand the new qualification as well as possible, staff undertook the following professional development activities:

- Attendance at the AVTEC workshop: in fact two of the staff were the organisers of that workshop.
- Attendance at a local State Training Authority workshop on implementing the new qualification.
- Involvement in ongoing discussions on the AVTEC discussion list.
- Undertaking the new Certificate IV as learners through an external provider rather than the RTO with which Regional University was partnered.

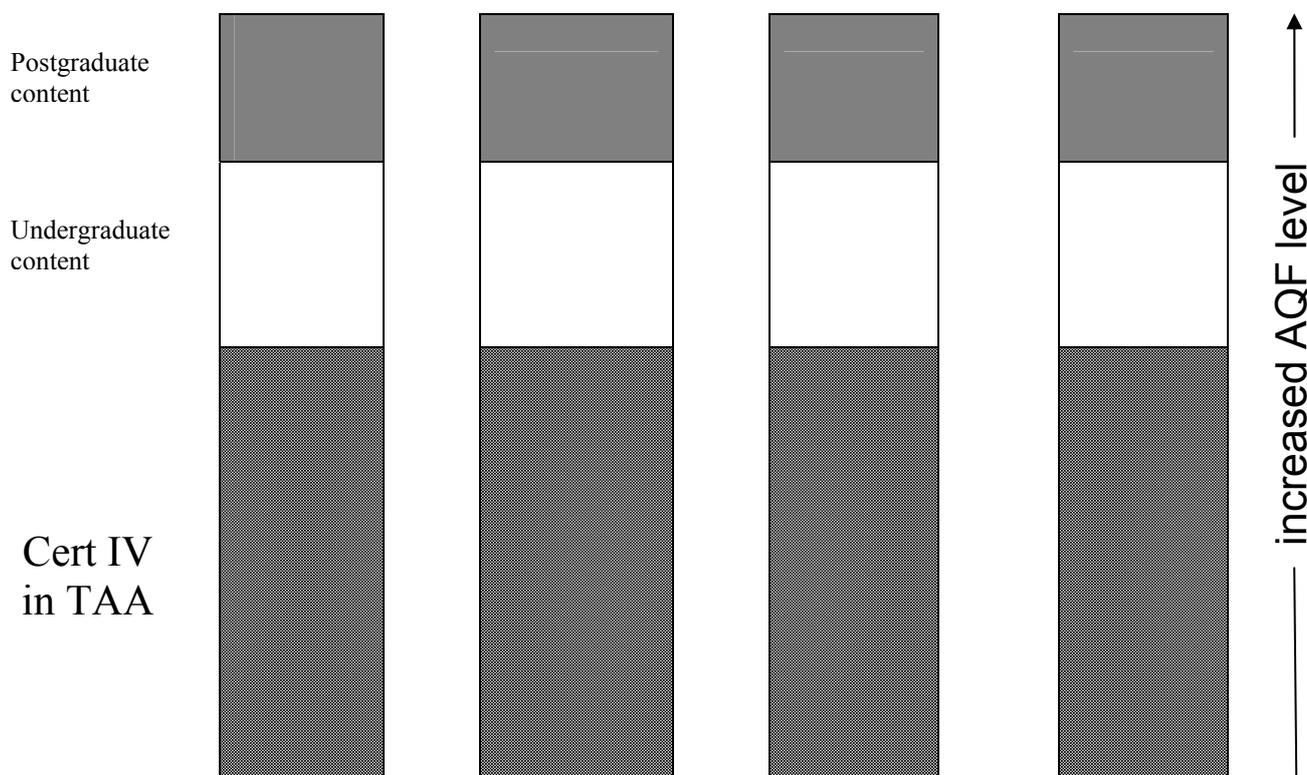
A research study involving several universities had previously shown that assessment was the issue which was of most concern when embedding the previous Certificate in VET teacher-training programs (Smith & Bush, 2006). The three major models relating to assessment that were described in that study were as follows:

1. The partnering RTO taught and assessed the units and the university did not have any part in writing the assessment tasks;
2. The university assessed the unit as discrete 'blocks'; within subject(s); and
3. The university embedded the assessment of the units within broader assessment tasks, typically asking students to explain why they did something or to reflect on the process of doing it.

(Smith & Bush, 2006)

It was eventually decided at Regional University that the second model would be adopted, to maximise student understanding of the level at which they were to be assessed, and also to enable the learning and assessment materials to be adapted for other purposes to deliver the Certificate IV through the partnering RTO.

The units of competency of the Certificate IV were distributed across four university subjects as seen in Figure 2:



**Figure 2: Embedding of the Certificate IV in Training & Assessment in four university subjects at Regional University**

This diagram shows that there are units of competency in all four subjects, with 12 units being delivered in total. There are then ‘university extension sections’ in each subject, which are smaller for the undergraduate subjects and larger (and more difficult) for the Graduate Diploma subjects. When writing the subjects, therefore, the academic staff needed to set some assessment tasks at Certificate IV level and some at either undergraduate or postgraduate level.

The model adopted at Regional University was intended to make articulation from the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment relatively easy to arrange. As the ‘university extension’ parts of each subject were clearly identifiable, it was possible to offer students entering with the new Certificate IV a clear pathway. These students gain exemption from the four subjects in the diagram, but are required to complete a subject tailored for people seeking articulation, which comprises the ‘university extension’ part of each of the four subjects. This subject therefore gives them the university-level underpinning knowledge and critical approach to the material, which is not delivered as part of a standard certificate IV. As an added precaution against poor-quality Certificate IVs, students are required to provide evidence of having completed a certain amount of supervised VET teaching as part of one of the assessment tasks.

An added difficulty with embedding the Certificate IV is that Training Packages almost always require at least some of the assessment to be undertaken in the workplace. The Training and Assessment Training Package is no different. Several of

the units require workplace assessment and some allow assessment in a simulated workplace. Three of the four subjects were therefore designed to include a practicum component. Two subjects require a practicum in a training provider, and one in an enterprise that is not a training provider. The latter requirement is because three of the units of competency are about delivery of training in workplaces rather than in educational institutions. While the concept of a practicum is not new to Regional University's VET teacher-training courses, the requirements of the new Certificate IV and of the strengthened AQTF necessitated additional requirements particularly with relation to the role of the workplace supervisor (who are called 'preceptors') in the supervision and assessment of the university student. A completely new practicum system therefore needed to be set up, including the preparation of a training module for preceptors who did not themselves have a Certificate IV qualification.

### Difficulties reported by students

The difficulties faced by students with the embedding of the Certificate IV are now discussed, using feedback from students enrolled in Autumn 2006 in the undergraduate and postgraduate versions of the subject that involves a workplace practicum, and embeds three units of competency. The subject is called 'Training in workplaces' (or 'Effective training in workplaces for the postgraduates) and includes a 70-hour practicum in a non-education workplace. The students are expected to organise their own practicum, although assistance is given. Messages posted on the electronic forum and telephone enquiries were analysed to examine the areas of the subject that posed the greatest challenge.

Most of the queries on the electronic forum related to the suitability of the prac workplace.

For example, three postings were as follows:

*I have had very little success to date with organising a prac site and I am finding it very stressful. Time is ticking away ... it is proving very difficult to locate a site willing to let me in on their business and training issues.*

*I chose to do a prac in a field I have worked in and currently teach, which is child protection... I am currently waiting for the numerous criminal records to be completed so I can commence! Such (are) the joys of a prac within the Dept of XXXX.*

*My only problem at the moment is that my preceptor hasn't sent his form in, even though I keep bugging him.*

The relevance of the practicum issue is that the units of competency included in this university subject are required by the Training Package to be assessed in the workplace. Thus students needed to find a workplace in which to practice and be assessed. The 'preceptor' is the person required to gather part of the evidence for the final assessment decision about competency to be made by the Regional University assessor (ie the lecturer).

One student found the whole thing just too much, and decided to study his Certificate IV somewhere else and enter the degree via the articulation route:

*I and probably everyone else in the (subject) is probably considering dropping out pre-HECS date and completing the TAA Cert IV in a much easier and cheaper way.*

One even decided to withdraw from the whole course:

*I am withdrawing from the course as I have been unable to convince a suitable enterprise (XXXX industry) to take me on to train their staff... As it would appear on the recruitment websites that Cert IV is the only requirement for employment as a workplace trainer, I am therefore going to put my efforts into finding a job and studying later! (Presumably this student already held the previous Certificate IV.)*

Some comments related to the content of the Certificate IV part of the assignments. Each of the two Certificate IV assignments involved a practical task which the workplace preceptor was partially involved in assessing, and a written task that tested underpinning knowledge in the units of competency. The queries relating to the assignments could be divided into those who sought guidance on the practical tasks (the majority) and those who sought guidance on the task that assessed underpinning knowledge (the minority).

Telephone enquiries relating to the prac were recorded. 36 queries were recorded, from 30 students enrolled in the two subjects. The queries were similar to those on the forum except that two students rang to say their employers, TAFE colleges, thought there might be a conflict of interest if they carried out training for local employers. Another rang several times to discuss difficulties with her preceptor, but eventually rang to say that she had been offered a job at her prac site, to her great astonishment. The formal university subject evaluations were quite polarised among students, with some reporting very good experiences in the subject but two students expressing strong dissatisfaction. Interestingly, the question on which there was most agreement among students was that the workload was too great for a subject at the level (half of them thought this was the case). This finding accords with an instance reported in the study by Smith & Bush (2006) where a subject co-ordinator at another university said,

*A very vocal minority objected to the assessment of the subject because it was the only authentic assessment in the course. They couldn't take any short-cuts in this one. People actually had to be failed and had to be reassessed. This was something the university wasn't used to either. It was a huge amount of work for me.*

(Smith & Bush, 2006)

The majority of students also confirmed in their formal evaluations the difficulties they had been having accessing suitable prac sites. However only 6 of the 30 students completed evaluations, making the use of these data problematic.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

This paper has traced the journey of the community of VET teacher-educators in Australia in their decision making about how to treat the industry qualification in their field of practice. The journey has involved long and complicated involvement with the development of the industry qualification, to try and ensure that the qualification was of high quality, and simultaneously to consider how the university sector should respond to the qualification. The difficulties which have been encountered in that journey include the differences between treatment of content at Certificate IV and university levels, differences in assessment methods, the requirements of the VET sector for authentic delivery and assessment, and the regulatory requirements of the

VET sector. It is not surprising that many universities have adopted a ‘hands off’ approach to the qualification, with students expected to gain it before entering their courses, and the university course reduced by an appropriate number of subjects. The case study at Regional University tells the further story belonging to those who decided to take the path leading to embedding. The latter illustrates not only the challenges that academics needed to overcome when designing the embedding and articulation arrangements, but also the difficulties encountered by students when faced with academics determined to teach and assess in a way that was faithful both to the Training Package and to the university’s expectations. While the difficulties with practicum are not unusual in VET teacher-training courses (Ellicott, 2006) (and indeed among any university courses), the need for the practicum to take a particular form to conform with the Training Package requirements and for workplace preceptors to accord with AQTF requirements added an extra dimension to the challenges.

The experiences of VET teacher-training courses point to the difficulties that would be faced by all discipline areas when attempting to accommodate related VET-sector qualifications in an appropriate and robust way. The story outlined in this paper exposes the poverty of the MCCETYA guidelines which, it will be remembered, say that equivalence should be established ‘regardless of the similarity or differences of the education processes involved (including processes of delivery, teaching methodology and assessment)’. It is precisely those differences of delivery and assessment that constitute the differences between the VET and higher education sectors.

The journey of VET teacher-trainers along this path was perhaps unique, because they are experts in VET. They felt every bump in the road because of the awareness of about VET sector practices, and thus their awareness of the possibilities available for articulation and embedding (Bush & Smith, 2004). They also knew that their students would be alive to the possibilities because their students are generally already practising in the VET sector. Thus in a sense VET teacher-trainers have thoroughly ‘road tested’ the model of embedding and robust articulation, and need to be able to communicate their lessons to other disciplines in universities. It is unfortunate in this regard that in mid-2005 ANTA was closed down and its responsibilities transferred to the federal Department of Education, Science and Training (DEST). The demise of ANTA in mid-2005 meant that the corporate knowledge about the work by AVTEC, as well as a great deal of other corporate knowledge, was lost to the VET sector. Although a copy of the AVTEC workshop report was requested by DEST, the re-arrangement of DEST personnel consequent on the absorption of ANTA’s activities have meant that the results of this particular activity are unlikely to find their way to influencing policy at this level. AVTEC members working in universities report informally that they are increasingly involved in university committees dealing with articulation issues and it is likely that there will be slow diffusion through the university sector by this means, rather than any immediate increase in national awareness of the issues.

## References

- Australian National Training Authority (ANTA). (2001). *Standards for registered training organisations*. Melbourne: ANTA.
- Baxter, G. (2004). Articulation and recognition: One dual-sector institution’s approach. Address to AVTEC workshop, Melbourne, 22-23 November.

- Brennan Kemmis, R. and Smith, E. (2004). Report of workshop: Implementing the Training and Assessment Training Package across the sectors. AVTEC. Melbourne, 22-23 November, 2004.
- Bush, A. & Smith, E. (2004). Articulation and embedding: Using the Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training to explore the relationship between the higher education and VET sectors. *12th Annual International Conference on Post Compulsory Education and Training*, Griffith University Centre for Learning Research, Surfers Paradise, December 6-9.
- Dunn, L., Morgan, C., O'Reilly, M. & Parry, S. (2004). *The student assessment handbook*. London: Routledge & Falmer.
- Ellicott, P. J. (2006). Negotiating a VET teacher education practicum in rural and isolated areas. *Global VET: Challenges at the global, national and local levels*, 9<sup>th</sup> Annual AVETRA Conference, University of Wollongong, April 19-21.
- National Assessors and Workplace Trainers (NAWT) (2001) *Review of the Training Package for Assessment and Workplace Training, Final Report Stage 1*. Melbourne: ANTA.
- Nelson, B. (2002). *Varieties of learning: the interface between Higher Education and Vocational Education & Training*. Canberra: Department of Education, Science & Training.
- Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education References Committee. (2000). *Aspiring to excellence: report into the quality of VET in Australia*. Canberra: Senate Printing Unit.
- Simons, M., Harris, R. & Smith, E. (2006). *Understandings of learners and learning embodied in the Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).
- Smith, E. & Bush, A. (2006). The delicate dance: The assessment implications of awarding students vocational qualifications within university degrees. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 25:4, pp 387-402.
- Smith, E. & Keating, J. (2003). *From training reform to Training Packages*. Tuggerah Lakes, NSW: Social Science Press.