



TAFE Directors Australia 2016 Conference Laneway Discussions – What kind of TAFE Workforce will be needed to produce graduates with skills needed for jobs of the 21st century?

Professionalising VET Professionals

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“At the front line of excellence in the teaching and learning outcomes is a professional and well supported VET workforce” – (Skills Australia: 2012, p.91)

Identifying Future Skill Demands

Equipping the TAFE workforce to deliver the skills of tomorrow is a complex task and involves a number of considerations. The starting point for building this workforce must be the identification of the types of skills that will be in demand and how the market will want to consume these skills. Once these questions have been answered the workforce can be equipped to ensure it can deliver.

To support this, TAFE Queensland recently undertook a joint research project with the CSIRO titled *‘The VET Era: Equipping Australia’s Workforce for the future digital economy’*, which is available at tafeqld.edu.au/reportsandsubmissions. The objective of the report was to identify the key skill sets that are in increasing demand in the labour market and the way in which technological advancement and disruption is changing how these skills are being delivered and consumed by the market. Some of the key findings from this report, that are highly relevant to this discussion included:

- VET sector output and labour market demand have strong alignment.
- The demand for upskilling is most critical during times of disruption e.g. occupational change increased during the Global Financial Crisis – disruption is expected to increase in the future.
- Lifelong learning and the need for more modular qualifications will require workers to build a portfolio of skills and therefore these skills will be consumed in a different manner and delivered in different methods throughout the course of an individual’s career.
- Communication and STEM skill clusters are experiencing the highest level of growth, with technical skills seeing more moderate growth. Importantly there is a long term trend toward higher level skills, particularly at the Degree/Diploma level.
- Educators will need to respond to digital disruption on two fronts:
 - The need to incorporate digital literacy across qualifications to support changes in the workplace; and
 - Embracing digital technology to enhance the delivery of education and training.

What is clear from this research is the way in which skills are delivered and consumed will continue to change. It is expected that this change will gather pace as disruption plays a more prominent role

in the shaping of the labour market and the skills that are required. The sector must change and evolve to meet these challenges.

How is TAFE Queensland Equipping its Workforce?

TAFE Queensland is working to ensure its workforce is ready to deal with these changes, which are already upon us and some of the following initiatives identify the work we are doing.

- **Digital Learning Futures 2020 Strategy:** This is the key document to provide the path to a digital learning future. The strategy includes 39 initiatives to position TAFE Queensland as the premier provider of future focussed, job ready, digitally enabled graduates.
- **Educator Capability Framework:** The framework is an acknowledgement and action plan to deliver our educators with the breadth of skills to deliver the skills of the future. The framework includes the ongoing development of our educators, including a focus on future skill areas such as applied research and enquiry, technology for learning, facilitation of learning and innovative products and practices.
- **Professional Learning Program:** This program is delivering skills and capabilities to grow our portfolio of technology-enhanced learning options. The program aims to transform pedagogy and practice through targeted professional development aligned to the Educator Capability Framework.
- **Digital Pedagogy Capability Program:** This program focusses on implementing digital pedagogy through the use of specific technologies to enable the development of models for delivery. This program includes a Digital Literacy Program for Educators, which aims to lift the level of digital literacy and raise awareness around digital pedagogies.
- **Applied Research initiatives: RedSpace** (TAFE Queensland's applied research unit) coordinate applied research that is undertaken by educators and learners working with local employers. This approach supports the development of enterprise skills within TAFE Queensland's workforce.

The above illustrates the systematic and multi-faceted approach that TAFE Queensland is taking to prepare its workforce for future educational delivery. At the core of this is the principle that, not unlike the market we are servicing, our educators will be lifelong learners who will continue to grow their skills and be enabled to be flexible to respond to emerging demand.

National VET Association

Nationally we need to mobilise and build momentum for a national VET professional association. This is not a new concept and so far it has been considered through the Australian Government's 'Quality of Assessment in VET – Discussion Paper' and previously through a national working group, which culminated in a proposal being presented to the Australian Government.

This proposal identified the key contributions that an association could make to the sector, across four key areas. These included:

- **Professionalism:** researching (e.g. international scanning); defining and promoting the skills, attitudes and knowledge needed by its members (professionalism); the development of principles and categories of membership; professional capability standards and code of practice; establishment of a voluntary register of members; professional development and research networks to leverage VET expertise and enable a connected workforce.

- **Workforce Development:** providing and linking members to continuing education opportunities; addressing training gaps; ongoing workforce relevance and currency; fellowships and awards; and continuing professional development.
- **Advocacy:** promoting the profession; advising government on policy settings and enabling members to influence and have a voice in policy decisions affecting the future of the profession.
- **Accreditation:** supporting existing quality mechanisms and / or recognising and accrediting education programs.

This concept has the support of a number of key stakeholders in the sector, including TAFE Directors Australia, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training and the Australian Skills Quality Authority. Despite this, we are still without a single body that represents the VET workforce. This absence is made ever starker at a time when the reputation of the sector has been diminished by a small number of providers and the focussing of public discourse on these issues.

Our workforce are our greatest asset and it is their diversity and richness of skills that will drive the sector into the next era of education and training. The continued development of the workforce to enable responsiveness and malleability to meet what will be a number of future challenges will be absolutely critical to ensuring the sector remains relevant and continues to deliver the skills that drive the Australian economy forward.