

Inquiry into the delivery of vocational education and training in regional, rural, and remote Queensland

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Vocational education in schools

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Some of the information is taken from various sources which I have not cited but align with my believe, thoughts, experience and opinions.

Background

VET is accessed extensively in high schools as it offers vocational learning for students but also due to the Queensland Certificate of Education agenda, it provides schools with a way to 'boost' QCE points and recover students who are 'not on track'.

VET courses are also beneficial in providing students opportunities to learn in ways that do not require attendance 5 days per week at school i.e. they attend TAFE or other RTOs on a regular basis. However accessing VET courses through other RTOs is usually done through the use of VETiS funding which allows students access to one course while at school. This then puts pressure on the school to find ways to offer more VET courses (to cater for the QCE agenda) which means schools become RTOs under the QCAA banner. This creates more challenges for schools as maintaining the RTO status and having properly qualified trainers is under-resourced and difficult to risk manage.

Accessing VET for students in regional areas is made more difficult due to the lack of available RTOs and therefore the lack of course vacancies and diversity of courses. Travel by students under the age of 18 is expensive as it often requires accompaniment of a parent/carer in addition to other transport and accommodation costs.

Principle

The provision of vocational education and training (VET) in schools (including school-based apprenticeships/traineeships), I believe is supported by stakeholders. All forms of knowledge should be valued, including those that have specific and significant vocational dimensions.

School education needs to be comprehensive in nature and not narrowly or exclusively focused on academic pathways but embrace vocational education. Schooling should facilitate young people's transition to a broad range of post-school options and pathways, and people should be able to re-enter the education system to enhance their quality of life as part of a fundamental commitment to lifelong learning.

Entry-level vocational education is a general social good which should be provided in public schools and TAFE institutes. All students should have equity of access to properly trained and accredited public providers and facilities, taking into account social and economic circumstances, gender, location, ethnicity, and disability.

Strategies to allow students to equitably access multiple VET courses need to be developed in response to challenges many students face in attaining the Queensland Certificate of Education. The VETiS funding model subsidises students for one VET qualification. Students wanting to undertake additional qualifications need to pay full-fees which is a challenge for students with socio-economic challenges.

The delivery of VET needs to be by properly qualified and credentialed trainers. The Queensland College of Teachers does not require teachers to hold the required VET qualifications be as teachers are trained to teach, assess and report on the Australian Curriculum in Prep-Year 10 and the senior subjects Applied and General subjects.

Industry should make a worthwhile contribution to the implementation of VET in schools, as industry is a major beneficiary of these programs. Such contributions may be material, in cash or in kind through the provision of opportunities for students to learn in the workplace, or a combination of all of these. Schools are encouraged to form productive

equitable partnerships with local industry for the benefit of their students. Commercial or sponsorship arrangements which are designed:

- as advertising
- to allow businesses to shift their specific training needs to schools
- to exploit students by disguising work in unpaid roles as training opportunities.
- to include teachers in the development and design (as well as the delivery) of VET, should not occur.

Support for schools

Schools require substantial additional public funding to enable delivery and maintenance of accredited VET courses and RTO status. This includes support for:

- plant and equipment, including consumables
- professional development
- curriculum development and implementation
- industry release for teachers
- the contracting out of services (where necessary)
- organisational and supervisory changes in schools
- the meeting of legislative requirements (e.g. workplace health and safety).

Any school that is a RTO under the delegation of the QCAA should have additional resource allocation, separate to the regular school budget, in recognition of costs associated with maintaining RTO status.

Delivery of VET by school

The capacity of schools to deliver particular VET programs should be carefully considered. The maintenance of RTO status in schools is an increasingly significant bureaucratic process that is resourced from the general school budget. Given the human resourcing cost of meeting industry currency, I believe that Queensland state schools should partner with TAFE Queensland, rather than become a RTO under the delegation of QCAA. Any school that is a RTO under the delegation of the QCAA should have additional resource allocation, separate to the regular school budget, in recognition of costs associated with maintaining RTO status.

I believe TAFE are the best suited to the delivery of VET qualifications in school, therefore the following should be considered in order of preference with the school's preferred model being approved the school and the LCC:

- i) All VET courses in secondary schools should be delivered by TAFE using TAFE trainers.
- ii) Any partnerships for delivery using school staff should be with TAFE as the first option.
- iii) Any partnerships for delivery with a non-TAFE RTO should not include school staff unless they are fully resourced (funded) by the RTO
- iv) Any partnerships for delivery with a non-TAFE RTO that uses school staff that are not fully funded by the RTO should have approval from the Regional Director"

VETiS funding for certificate qualifications identified on the Priority Skills List should only be paid to Queensland TAFE. This does not include VETiS funding associated with school-based traineeships and apprenticeships (SATs).

Working conditions

Working conditions for VETiS teachers need to be addressed as a matter of urgency. Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) compliance requirements and industry expectations require support that addresses the following matters at least:

- administrative support
- class sizes
- access to quality professional development and release to industry
- hours of work and spread of hours
- length of time teaching/year
- non-contact time
- credit for non-traditional delivery, including workplace assessment, flexible delivery
- travel commitments
- EEO principles and programs
- recognition and allowance for the time expended by teachers in audits, internal reviews and validation by industry.

There are many managerial and legal issues arising from the integration of VET into schools which need to be addressed. These include, for example, issues relating to the supervision of students across various sites, behaviour management and workplace health and safety. Guidelines and training need to be developed in relation to these matters.

I believe that a review of networks supporting VETIS should occur. Such a review should:

- investigate the current inequitable allocation of services and funding through state and federal initiatives
- identify the VETIS services that would be most efficiently delivered through network arrangements
- ensure that future developments are equitably resourced
- propose the establishment of a senior position with the Department of Education to coordinate VETIS activities.

Qualifications and training of VET teachers

I believe that teachers should have the option to not deliver VET qualifications because attaining and maintaining such qualifications is not a requirement for employment with Education Queensland. Any teacher agreeing to teach VET should be allocated additional non-contact time for management of RTO requirements plus TOIL in recognition of any qualification currency activities they must complete.

Teachers of vocational education and training in schools must be registered teachers with appropriate qualifications and experience. Existing teacher qualifications should be recognised as sufficient to deliver VET in schools.

The Department of Education has a responsibility to help teachers keep their industry experience up to date. Practising teachers of vocational education subjects should be able to complete industry experience requirements during work time. An ongoing program of teacher industry release should be a priority and targeted funding should be set aside for this purpose.

Where a non-registered resource person is used to assist in the delivery of vocational education in a school, a registered teacher must be responsible for the curriculum program, and must supervise the non-registered resource person in the classroom.

VET students

Schools should offer a Cert. IV or above only in special circumstances and only with the expectation that the qualification will be completed after graduation. The Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority created General and Applied syllabi that have just been implemented for year 11 and year 12 students.