

INQUIRY INTO VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Questions on notice

Newcastle Hearing – Friday 18 September 2015

Dr John Kaye to ask Ms Terri Quinlan Part-time Casual IT Teacher and TVET Coordinator, TAFE NSW Hunter Institute

1. Please explain the concept of 'education' in contrast to 'training' and indicate
 - a. Why is it, in your experience, important for the student and for society?
 - b. Does Smart and Skilled for a particular qualification provide funding for education that is not directly necessary to achieve training outcomes?
 - i. If not, please explain what the implications are for
 1. TAFE, and
 2. private for-profit providers

Training involves the learning of a skill whereas educating involves not only learning the practical skill but the theoretical knowledge behind it.

There is a huge difference between 'educating' students and 'training' students.

When you 'train' someone, you are showing them how to gain or master a specific skill or skill set. The learning is often done by rote where you show the student how to do something and get them to repeat and practice it until they are capable of doing it on their own when asked. However they may have no deep understanding of, or knowledge about, what it is they are actually doing, the concepts or processes behind it, why they are doing it, different ways of doing it, how to transfer the skill elsewhere and so on. Independent thinking is not often involved in training and if it is, it is often on a micro level.

When you 'educate' someone you not only train them to do something but you also equip them with the underpinning skills and knowledge associated with the skill you have trained them in, furthering the student's individual knowledge and developing their intellect. The student is encouraged to think and write about what they learn. Education instills a deeper knowledge of the subject over a longer period of time. Education assists a student to become a critical thinker and problem solver in the area in which they are being trained. By having a deeper understanding and knowledge of the skill the student learns to extend what they have learned, work independently and transfer their skills to other areas.

When we educate a student at TAFE we not only train them in the skills they need but we also teach them the underpinning skills and knowledge they require and we incorporate the delivery and assessment of Employability skills. These skills include communication, teamwork, problem-solving, initiative and enterprise, planning and organising, self-management, learning and technology. These skills apply across a variety of jobs and life contexts. Employability Skills are the skills that employers are actively seeking when considering job applicants. These skills are necessary not only to gain employment, but also to contribute effectively to the workforce and progress within an enterprise so as to achieve one's potential and contribute successfully to enterprise strategic directions.

As stated in my original submission to the Inquiry the OECD in its 2013/01 (January) "Education indicators in focus" paper said the following –

"Education brings wide-ranging benefits to the society.....In the past few decades, research has supported this conventional wisdom, revealing that education not only enables individuals to perform better in the labour market, but also helps to improve their overall health, promote active citizenship and contain violence.....Education has the potential to bring significant benefits to individuals and society, which go well beyond its contribution to individuals' employability or income. Skills are important channels through which the power of education is manifested in a variety of social settings. Policy makers should take into account the wider social benefits of education when allocating resources across public policies".

This is why what we do is called "vocational **education AND training**". Training may look attractive in the short term because it is a cheaper and quicker option to equip people with just the skills needed for a specific job or a narrow skill set. **Educating** people is much better in the long term for both the individual, the employer and society.

To suggest that somehow Smart and Skilled provides funding for education that is **not** directly necessary to achieve training outcomes is ludicrous. It is my opinion and my experience (as well as the opinion and experience of colleagues) Smart and Skilled does **not** provide **enough** funding in **any** qualification to provide the education needed necessary to achieve **quality** training outcomes.

When market reform for vocational education and training was introduced and Smart and Skilled was announced, even before it was rolled out, TAFE NSW started planning for the anticipated significant drop in funding that would come with it based on the experiences of the other states.

In order to operate in the new Smart and Skilled world we were told TAFE had to become more 'flexible', 'agile', 'responsive' and 'competitive' when in fact TAFE was already these things. What management and the government really meant was that TAFE had to cut its costs, become 'leaner' and 'meaner' and become '**cheaper**'.

So TAFE embarked on the change management path. Faculties, sections and campuses were restructured leading to significant job losses across NSW. By shedding permanent staff TAFE could then employ casual staff as needed with lower rates of pay and fewer conditions.

In a bid to become more competitive, courses and course delivery were 'streamlined' – course lengths cut, delivery hours reduced and units minimised without any regard to student expectations or outcomes. It was, and is, all about the dollar. TAFE, of course, still expects staff to maintain the quality service and delivery that TAFE has long been known and well regarded for, which puts additional pressure on teachers and adds to their work load and stress levels.

No doubt, TAFE management and the Government will see these changes as TAFE being forced to become more 'efficient'. But this is simply not the case. These cuts to staffing and reduced face-to-face teaching hours rob students of any meaningful chance of really learning and absorbing the key knowledge and skills. Teachers are forced to drop important learning activities and class material from their lesson plan as they concentrate on ensuring students can simply respond to the specific assessment task questions rather than having a more extensive and broad knowledge of the subject material. Students have less time to collaborate and practice their skills under the guiding hand of their teacher and as a consequence, students are more likely to fail or not finish the course due to the perceived lack of support. Subsequently many TAFE teachers put in additional unpaid hours trying to support their students through the course. With payments tied to course completions there is more pressure on teachers to just "tick and flick" to ensure students course complete and their Institutes get paid. All this in order for TAFE to be able to 'compete' with private for-profit providers.

Of course the implication for private for-profit providers is that in order to maximise profit they too must cut costs. They can do this in a number of ways. By operating out of cheap rented rooms and not having any expensive infrastructure to maintain they can reduce operating costs. By hiring less qualified trainers with little or no industry experience they can pay cheaper rates – and by making them casuals they are not up for the on costs such as long service leave, sick leave and holiday pay and they need only engage and pay them for limited periods of time. Finally these providers can maximise their return by reducing course length and delivery hours and by 'coaching' students through their assessment tasks. Students can successfully course complete with little or limited effort (and will have no incentive to report unscrupulous activity) and the for-profit providers can pocket government money.

Worse still, in an effort to become even more 'agile', 'flexible' and 'competitive' TAFE is now trying to introduce new categories of employees in the latest Enterprise Agreement for teaching staff. These new employees (trainers, assessors and educational support officers) will carry out tasks that are traditionally carried out by teachers but will be paid less, work longer hours and receive less entitlements. TAFE has essentially taken the work that a teacher does and split it into the different skills and tasks (teaching, training, supporting students, assessing, and administration). TAFE is trying to create new and different roles to carry out these tasks with varying rates of pay and conditions – all of which are lower than the current teacher pay and conditions.

What an insult to the dedicated and qualified people who teach at TAFE. I know of no other job that has been treated like this. We do not split a nurse's job into the different nursing tasks and then apply different pay rates and conditions to each task. We do not pay politicians one rate for parliamentary sitting days and then give them differing (and lower) rates of pay and conditions for the other activities they carry out in the course of their work e.g. meeting with constituents, attending meetings, media releases, opening ceremonies, commemoration ceremonies, local publicity jaunts, visiting schools and hospitals etc.

We are being told we are too expensive, that we earn more money than other TAFE teachers in the country yet we live in the most expensive state in Australia. TAFE teachers must have industry qualifications at a minimum level of a Degree, Diploma or Trade Qualification plus a minimum number of years of relevant industry experience. TAFE teachers leave their industry to teach in TAFE and must gain additional teaching and/or training qualifications in order to teach so they become doubly qualified and then they must maintain their industry and vocational teaching currency throughout their career. Very few vocations or professions require this. State MPs are paid more than TAFE teachers yet they are not required to have specific industry

qualifications or minimum levels of industry experience in any particular industry in order to become a politician. Once elected they are not required to study for and gain any additional qualifications.

So why are TAFE teachers being singled out? Because the Government wants to save money and not fund TAFE appropriately.

2. Please explain the work of a TVET coordinator and the significance of that work to school students, to schools and to TAFE and the community.

TVET stands for TAFE-delivered Vocational Education and Training, and allows a school student to attend a TAFE course as part of their HSC. TAFE delivered HSC VET Courses (TVET) are courses, developed or endorsed by the Board of Studies, which senior secondary school students may study at a TAFE NSW institute while completing their HSC at school.

TVET courses are taught by TAFE teachers usually at a TAFE NSW college/campus. As these students are enrolled in TAFE NSW they are subject to student rights, obligations and policies and also receive TAFE NSW credentials on successful completion of their studies. In some cases, courses are delivered by TAFE NSW teachers using school or other facilities. Students can also undertake HSC VET courses through a shared school/TAFE delivery arrangement.

These courses contribute to the student's HSC and in some cases also to their ATAR. They have been endorsed by the Board of Studies Teaching & Educational Standards HSC courses. Most of these are based on National Training Package qualifications.

TVET students are concurrently enrolled in both school and TAFE NSW and must therefore meet the requirements of both learning institutions. In many TVET courses there is a mandatory work placement component. TAFE NSW has the responsibility of overseeing the work placement and informing the BOSTES of the completion of student work placement hours and the HSC examination estimated marks.

A TVET Coordinator is responsible for the coordination of a TVET class or classes for specific discipline areas at a campus or campuses. Most TVET Coordinators also teach on their TVET course. More often than not, they are part time casual teachers like myself. This is because the workload involved with coordinating a TVET class is significant and permanent teachers are often too time poor to take on the task. Coordinators must ensure that not only all TAFE requirements are met but that BOSTES requirements are adhered to. They work in conjunction with Work Placement Service Providers to prepare students for work placement and organise, supervise and report on placements. They have a duty of care to ensure placements are appropriate and conducting assessment as appropriate. In the event that placements cannot be found for students TVET Coordinators are required to run simulated work places for these students.

In addition to overseeing the delivery and assessment of a TAFE qualification TVET Coordinators need to ensure their students are prepared for the HSC exam and conduct and mark the Trial exam at their TAFE campus. They are required to report course results and any issues regarding satisfactory course completion to both home school and student and issue N warning letters and N determinations where appropriate.

Having responsibility for both TAFE and BOSTES requirements is a significant workload for TVET Coordinators, and while they are paid some coordination hours for this job if they are casual, the paid hours usually fall far short of the hours required to do this job. However the benefits to students, schools and the community are significant. Students have the opportunity to attain both the HSC and a TAFE qualification while still at school. Students and schools benefit from the TVET courses being taught by industry qualified and experienced TAFE teachers. In many cases, particularly in regional areas, school and TAFE campuses are located very near each other providing exposure to further education options to the schools and their students. TVET courses also provide pathways into further study at TAFE NSW.

Another advantage of TVET courses at TAFE is that it gives students an opportunity study subjects that are not offered at school due to lack of students numbers and it allows schools to offer a wider choice of subjects to students. In addition students have the opportunity to 'taste' a vocation via the TVET process and therefore make a more informed choice for post school study.

3. How many TVET coordinators have lost their positions as a result of restructuring or other changes since 2011?
 - a. How many were before the restructuring began?
 - b. Please explain the impacts on students and TAFE of this change.

Unfortunately I do not have this information. As mentioned earlier many TVET Coordinators are part time casual teachers. I have been teaching on TVET courses for many years and have been coordinating and teaching on the Information Technology TVET course at two campuses for the last three years.

I know that under Smart and Skilled, TAFE NSW has announced to schools there would be a new pricing model

for TVET in 2016 and there were concerns that this “capped budget model” would limit student access to TVET courses. As a TVET coordinator and teacher I have not been privy to management discussions on the new funding model. I have heard rumours that TAFE cannot afford to run many of the TVET courses previously run as the funding provided is not sufficient.

I believe that we will no longer be running Information Technology TVET courses in the Hunter next year and will only be honouring our contract for the current Year 11 students who will be studying Year 12 next year. This will be a great loss to both the schools and students as this reduces their choices of subjects for the HSC, prevents students from gaining a dual qualification while still at school and limits the exposure of students and schools to post school vocational education and training. This will also be a significant loss of work for me as a part time casual.

I can tell you that in my faculty, Business and Creative Industries, we have faced two restructures in preparation for Smart and Skilled. In the initial restructure the Information Technology section at Newcastle was closed and up to 7 permanent staff were made redundant. In our second restructure last year 30 permanent positions were deleted and 22 teachers were made redundant (some positions were vacant and waiting to be filled). This reduced our teaching staff in the faculty from 79.75 positions down to 49.75 positions, a reduction of 37.5%.