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THE EVER CHANGING WORLD OF TAFE NSW

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About the Author

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Kevin Heys is a graduate of the University of Sydney and Sydney CAE which is now part of the University of Technology, Sydney. He has a background of 25 years experience of work in education, first as a teacher in high schools, then in the field of technical education.

The following is his introduction to the topic of "The Ever Changing World of TAFE, NSW".

The knowledge and insights that I bring to the topic come from my work in TAFE over twenty two years. Initially as a teacher of Economics and Humanities based subjects and more recently as someone who is more broadly involved with management and educational leadership at college and regional level. My work has a strong emphasis on the people side of things interpreting policy and developing procedures for practical implementation purposes. This means that I have a substantial role with supervision, recommendation, and approval of various activities. It also involves communication, negotiation and networking with colleagues and other educational providers and trying to keep myself reasonably up to date with educational developments.

I have decided to approach 'the changing world of TAFE NSW' by looking at some of the historic, contemporary, national and futuristic perspectives and sharing some of the practical perspectives of how these developments apply and relate to TAFE NSW.

THE EVER CHANGING WORLD OF TAFE NSW

An education update for the Australian College of Education North and South Harbour Regional Groups. Presented at the Australian Catholic University – Strathfield Campus on October 30, 1997.

History

There is a publication called 'Spanners, Easels and Microchips' which recalls the history of TAFE NSW 1883-1983. Prior to 1883 skilled workers were largely trained on the job and in private institutes. The first technical education in Australia belongs to Governor King who in 1800 established female orphan schools to teach the various arts of domestic economy. Governor Macquarie in 1819 had orphan boys taught trades. There was some public support dating back to the 1830's when Governor Bourke fostered the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts which provided a form of adult education in the beau arts philosophy, science and technical education. This school helped to provide skilled workers for the economic and industrial growth periods of the 1850s and 1880s. In the 1870s there was a concerted effort by major industrial employers and trade unions to establish a system of technical and further education.

By the 1880s there was some concern that the British Empire was falling behind America and Europe in industrial efficiency and there was also concern for democratic ideas and the moral quality of the community.

In 1883 George Reid – the Minister of Public Instruction, wrote a cabinet minute 'to set up a state system of technical education and that parliament would cheerfully appropriate sums of public money in aid of technical instruction when ever asked to do so.' The Sydney School of Arts was taken over by the Board of Technical Education and it became the nucleus for the state system of technical and further education. The expectation was to educate citizens not merely to earn their livings but to be fitted for the weighty responsibility of citizenship. This was a period of very significant social and technological change in Australia.

In 1887 a Working Men's College was esta-

blished to address the educational disadvantage experienced by artisan and labourers. It provided courses in English Grammar, Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, Bookkeeping, Elocution, German, Mathematics, Applied Mathematics and Steam Engines, Latin, Greek, French, Italian, Mechanical Drawing, Freehand Drawing, Drawing, Experimental Physics, Architecture, Building Construction, Phonography, Practical Geometry and Perspective, Geodesy and Surveying, Navigation, Practical Chemistry, Chemistry, Telegraphy, Natural Philosophy, Materia Medica and Planning Theoretical Mechanics, Modelling, Wood Carving, Political Economy, Physiology, Anatomy, Simple Surgery, Photography and Field Naturalist Club. As you will understand there were subsequent struggles during the 1890s to retain government funding and attempts were made to dismantle the technical education system in favour of primary and university systems.

During the 1900s Technical Education in NSW has moved with the changing times. It established an articulated pattern for course recognition – this provided a sequence of primary, junior technical and trade certificate on to diploma and university degree courses. It established a correspondence school in 1910 to meet demographic and distance requirements. In WWI it established training for ground and air forces with engineering and support services. In WWII it played a key role in training mechanics, builders, fitters, cooks and electricians. Colleges in many cases operated for 20 hours a day on rotating shifts.

During the 1950s it lost most of its diploma courses to the University of NSW and began to concentrate more on the certificate and advanced certificate courses which were focused on the trade, general education and technician courses. A second shift occurred in the 1970s with the move of further higher level new diploma

courses to the NSW Institute of Technology. Still the growth in Technical Education continued as technician course enrolments expanded from around 14,000 to 60,000 between 1960 and 1982. The strong growth was in the area of special education where enrolments grew from around 25,000 to 195,000 between 1949 and 1982. These courses were generally part time and designed to meet special vocational and general educational needs. They were also part of the general change reflected by the Kangan report in 1974 which saw the extension of Technical to include Further Education (TAFE). The Kangan report reaffirmed the need for access to a liberal and technical education for all citizens to enable individuals to understand and to cope with change.

By 1983 TAFE NSW had grown to an organisation with 90 colleges to be the largest and most diverse sector of post secondary education in Australia. Its role was to provide education and training to meet the needs of a skilled work force in NSW. It provided hundreds of vocational and prevocational courses geared to meet the needs of individuals, community, industry, and government.

Contemporary Times

The 1980s was a period of expansion and consolidation for TAFE as it set about major and minor course development on five year cycles complemented by short courses in response to local community, industry demand and government policy. It was a period of expansion and consolidation especially for developing courses in response to anti-discrimination legislation, equal opportunity policy, unemployment, emerging environmental and occupational health and safety requirements, business and electronic needs. Strong emphasis was given to social equity concerns for women, multicultural needs, disabilities, aborigines and the unemployed along with community, technological change and industry needs in an emerging global context.

The period was characterised by giving emphasis to administrative and departmental requirements with a strong commitment to a whole state wide provision. A group of 24 teaching schools managed the system of course provision supported centrally by curriculum and assessment units. The schools consisted of Applied Electricity, Applied Science, Art and Design, Automotive and Aircraft Engineering

trades, Biological Sciences, Building, Business and Administrative Services, Civil Engineering, Electrical Engineering, Engineering Trades, Fashion, Food, Footwear, General Studies, Graphic Arts, Hairdressing, Home Science, Mechanical Engineering, Navigation, Plumbing and Sheet Metal, Rural Studies, Secretarial Studies, Textiles, and Vehicle Trades. The schools now have some historical significance and they were also responsible for full time teachers' selection and placements in TAFE.

The local provision was managed by a college system (100 colleges in 1985) that was overseen and financed on a state wide basis in response to local needs. TAFE colleges were seen as having a very important technical and educational role as part of the public service for the local community and industry. They were also seen increasingly as a part of the economic reform agenda of the Federal Government, as part of the labour market policy, award restructuring and industry policy. Course development became increasingly influenced by national curriculum registration and industry policy requirements.

Dr. Allan Pattison (Director-General of TAFE NSW) reported in 1987 that his corporate plans in the 1980s focused on: meeting the economic needs of the State, addressing inequality, meeting community needs, consultation and participation, accountability for the efficient and effective use of public resources and improving the quality of TAFE's educational provision. The 1980s saw a period of relative growth, stability and incremental change for TAFE as it proceeded along a pathway to meet economic and social goals.

In 1988 Dr Terry Metherell commissioned the Scott report to review the structure and administrative relationships of TAFE with relevant Departments such as Education and Industrial Relations. A number of consultants' reports reviewed personnel practices, planning, information systems and administration, finance and budgeting, internal communication, property management, college organisation and network groupings and technology impacts on education.

TAFE was considered to be at the cross-roads. This led to the TAFE Commission act of 1990 which restructured TAFE colleges into a regional system of 24 Networks and the 24

Schools into a group of 13 Training Divisions (Arts and Media, Building and Construction, Business Services, Engineering Services, Information Technology, Manufacturing, Personal and Community Services, Rural and Mining, Tourism and Hospitality, Transport, Basic Work Skills, Foundation Studies and Pre-vocational Programs). The training divisions had the responsibility for specific industry liaison, and course development. Michael Brinsden was the Managing Director at Central Square during these few turbulent years. TAFE was being positioned to become a more devolved, competitive, enterprise connected and market oriented organisation.

In 1992 just after Dr Gregor Ramsey took up the position of Managing Director there was a further restructuring of the 24 Networks into 12 Institutes of TAFE NSW. This consisted of 6 rural, 5 metropolitan and 1 open training and education network (OTEN). This structure was considered to be a semi-devolved structure with a good deal of policy, planning, corporate services and support being provided centrally from St Leonards whilst the regional Institutes had the devolved responsibility for local community and industry service, marketing, delivery, staffing and management arrangements within the context of the state system.

Educationally the 13 Training Divisions were becoming established with their industry specialists, curriculum managers and quality assurance personnel developing working relationships with approximate 20 relevant state industry training advisory boards (ITABs) and another layer of national ITABs. The training division staff were building bridges between government policy, community and industry needs with curriculum and course support provision for teaching staff and students' learning requirements. The period of the 1990s has been greatly influenced by award restructuring, competency based training, national curriculum modules, key competencies, computerisation, assessment realignments, accreditation, articulation, recognition, quality assurance and customer service orientation.

National impacts

Higher Education was restructured by John Dawkins in the late 1980s and early 1990s when he combined the Colleges of Advanced Education with the Universities. These changes opened up

the opportunities for TAFE. Some TAFE Institutes became known as Institutes of Technology thus providing greater scope for them to expand diploma courses in many technical areas to increase their appeal to overseas students.

The Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEET) established the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) around 1990. The objectives of the national system were to implement a national framework for the recognition and development of vocational skills; competency standards within the Australian Standards Framework; to implement a competency based vocational education and training (VET) system; accessible entry level training; national curriculum materials; and to have an efficient, effective and integrated training market.

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) was established in 1992 to oversee and to implement the above objectives. Other objectives for VET included quality as measured by outcomes; increased participation, opportunities and outcomes for individuals; greater response to industry needs; access and equity provision and for training to be seen as an investment. ANTA spawned state organisations such as the Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET) and the NSW Vocational Education and Training Agency (NSW VETA) to coordinate the National Training program. It seems as though this was a sign of times to come with the formation of the Department of Training and Education Coordination (DTEC) which emerged in 1995.

The development of the National Framework for the Recognition of Training (NFROT) as agreed to by the relevant State and Federal Ministers in 1992 provided a comprehensive framework to enable wide recognition and delivery of vocational credentials. The system was built on competency based training and enabled the recognition of qualifications from a wide variety of providers (TAFE, private colleges, group training companies, skill centres, commercial and community colleges, enterprises, licencing authorities, schools, professional associations and industry) and for the prior learning of individuals to be counted as part of the vocational training system.

Industry was expected to play a major role in developing competencies and the recognition

process to meet industry labour requirements. The framework would provide the foundation and structure for the Vocational Education and Training market. It was seen as a way of opening up registration to a wider range of providers. Such providers require registration, appropriate staff, a safe environment, responsible and ethical relationships, financial safeguards and quality control.

The current collection of State Industry Training Advisory Boards (ITABs) is designed to provide the voice for industry training requirements in terms of competencies. This collection of 23 ITABs includes provision for Arts; Automotive; Communications; Construction; Finance, Insurance and Business; Manufacturing Engineering; Community Services and Health; Food; Forest; Light Manufacturing – Furnishings; Light Manufacturing – Textiles, Clothing and Footwear; Mining; Primary; Process Manufacturing; Public Sector; Retail and Wholesale; Tourism; Transport and Distribution; Utilities and Electro Technology; Property Services; and Sport and Recreation. The State ITABs are generally linked to a similar network of National ITABs and relate to national competency standards.

The NFROT system was seen as providing a stronger link between public and private sector providers. Accreditation required providers to have relevant content and standards, appropriate delivery methods, and assessment based on national competency standards. The principles underlying recognised courses included identified training needs based on standards expected in employment, course standards relevant to the credential, competency based training, multiple entry and exit points, flexible learning, articulation, customisation, access and participation, appropriate assessment and on going monitoring and evaluation. Credit transfers could be accessed through recognised training programs based on competencies, reduced time and repetition, documentation and related to specific courses.

The Australian Vocational Certificate Training System (AVCTS) Report was released in 1992. This comprehensive report by Laurie Carmichael sought to widen the range of training providing a variety of entry paths which included general, vocational and work experience and entry into the labour market. The system was designed to provide flexible

delivery, pathways, competency based training, on and off the job training, recognition of prior learning, qualifications, equity, TAFE and industry participation and professional development. The system was based on the Australian Standards Framework which ranked skills over eight levels from entry, operator, trades, technical, para professional through to professional levels. It was designed to widen the skill formation framework to include non traditional vocational and equity concerns and to improve the level of skill formation and Australia's international competitiveness.

The Key Competencies Program (KCP) for Work was established in the early 1990s. This followed on from the Finn Report of 1991 on 'Young People's Participation in Post Compulsory Education and Training' and also from the Mayer Report in 1992 which considered *Putting General Education to Work*. The Key Competency Report established a set of generic competencies considered essential for emerging patterns of work and work organisation. The eight competencies included: collecting, analysing and organising information; communicating ideas and information; planning and organising activities; working with others and in teams; using mathematical ideas and techniques; solving problems; using technology and cultural understanding. The competencies were designed to enhance educational outcomes by promoting skill development, economic competitiveness and to support the convergence of general and vocational education.

Towards a Skilled Australia was published by ANTA in 1995 to publicise its national strategy for vocational education and training. The objective of the national focus was to provide an educated, skilled and flexible work force to enable Australian industry to be competitive in domestic and international markets, and to improve the knowledge, skills and quality of life for Australians, having regard to the particular needs of disadvantaged groups. The mission is for these goals to be fulfilled in cooperation with other education sectors, industry and those seeking vocational education and training. The approach is to build a client focused culture, creating life long learning opportunities, to have a national system and to reward innovation and best practice.

The Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) was established in 1996 in order to help clarify and simplify TAFE, NFROT and University awards. The guidelines specify characteristics of learning outcomes as well as explaining the responsibilities for assessment, issuance and certification. This structure clarifies the TAFE offer with its system of certificate courses levels 1 to 4 then to diploma, advanced diploma and graduate certificate courses in some highly technical areas of skill development. The University's courses would provide some overlap with diploma and advanced diploma, degree, graduate certificate, graduate diploma, masters degrees and through to the doctorate level qualification.

Current and Future Directions

Major recent impacts on TAFE NSW occurred in 1995 and 1996 with the changes of State and Federal governments. The NSW government set about a major restructuring for TAFE by standing down Dr. Gregor Ramsey as the Director-General. It placed TAFE under the newly constructed organisation of the Department of Training and Education Coordination (DTEC) with Jane Diplock as the Director-General and the Managing Director of TAFE NSW.

The major restructuring of the old Department of Education and the Department of Industrial Relations, Employment, Training and Further Education (DIRETFE) brought TAFE and several state adult education and training organisations under the one umbrella of DTEC. An extensive round of reference, consultation groups and negotiations evolved over the latter part of 1995 and into 1996 to set up the new structures and personnel arrangements. DTEC answered to Minister Aquilina and had units for policy and executive services; planning, resource, research and industry liaison; education and training services (recognition, program management, adult community colleges, adult migrant education services, and DTEC centres); corporate services; TAFE NSW coordination (Executive services and Institutes).

The TAFE teachers' association raised concern about the impact of the restructuring on downsizing TAFE, transferring substantial parts of its planning and administrative capacity, compromising its independence and direct access to the Minister, undermining its

curriculum development capacity, setting up a divisive competitive structure based on national competition policy and down grading teachers' support and working conditions. The impacts of the changes were described as creating greater uncertainty, casualisation, reduced career prospects, increased emphasis on funds, competition between Institutes, reduced course offerings, pressure on flexibility and course development and a wider range of duties for teachers.

The thirteen TAFE Training Divisions were reduced to seven Education Service Consortia (ESC) in 1996. This change has destabilised their morale and working arrangements related to the responsibilities of design, development and maintenance of over 1000 courses. The seven ESCs are Assessment; Business and Public Administration; Community Services, Health, Tourism and Hospitality; Construction and Transport, Information Technology, Arts and Media; Manufacturing and Engineering; Primary Industry and Natural Resources. Details of the courses can be found in the TAFE Handbook. The broad course curriculum documents are now considered as open state property which is available for use by all approved training providers. The funding of this curriculum development is on a tender basis and managed by the Vocational Education and Training Accreditation Board (VETAB).

At the national level ANTA and Minister Kemp have been extending the deregulation of the VET market. Significant shifts have occurred with national curriculum being reduced to Training Packages – which give emphasis to competency standards, assessment guidelines and qualifications. This approach to curriculum is designed to increase ITAB involvement and to give greater emphasis to flexible training and delivery. Some national support structures such as the national staff development committee have been disbanded. A further development is in the area of funding with a decrease in growth funds, pressure to increase productivity, and to increase competition with the introduction of user choice funding arrangements for 1998.

The ideological shift in TAFE between the 1970s and the 1990s was well noted by Damon Anderson from Monash University. He commented that the change was as shown in the diagram overleaf.

1970s to 1990s

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - principles of free public access - social equity - democratic participation - cooperation and the public interest - social justice - contribution to citizenship - people as participants - teachers as professionals | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - user pays - economic efficiency - corporate managerialism - competition & private interest - economic growth - commodification of education - people as consumers for financial returns - teachers as shop keepers or training technicians with curriculum packages |
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The forces of change are a particular western phenomenon which is impacting on TAFE. Some commentators ascribe it to group thinking coming from the Organisation of Economics and Development (OECD). Some of the elements have to do with philosophical, social ideas along with practical forces of technology, information technology and financial instruments. TAFE is very central in the post modernist and X generation age. It is taking up a variety of reconstructionist elements with a fundamental approach based on competency based education and training, key competencies skills for work, college and work place delivery, improved assessment and evaluation instruments, evolving organisational change, collaborative arrangements, corporate and international focus, quality improvement measures, access and equity commitments and flexible learning provision in an attempt to link together individual, community and industry needs for the twenty first century.

TAFE NSW's current vision statement is to be recognised nationally and internationally as a best practice provider of vocational education and training. Its mission is to maintain and enhance its competitive edge in developing and delivering programs, products and services which facilitate work related learning. Its organisational values include – responsiveness and flexibility to meet customer needs; to enhance community service, access and equity while balancing demands for competitiveness; to ensure that staff and customers are treated with respect; to recognise unique staff skills and contributions; to foster team work, innovation and creativity; to promote accountability and efficiency; and to promote partnerships with the community, students and industry.

TAFE NSW's current objectives are listed

under six headings which relate to the vision, mission and value positions of the organisation. Its objectives are: to deliver quality, responsive and competitive vocational education and training programs, products and services that meet customer needs; to enhance participation

and outcomes for members of equity target groups across the range of courses and award levels; to provide quality, flexible curriculum, appropriate technologies and services to continually improve the learning environment; to develop and maintain an innovative learning organisation in which individual and team contributions are valued and maximised; to provide leadership, quality management and accountability to improve strategic planning and systems, programs and services; to position and market TAFE NSW as the leading provider of vocational education and training within Australia and internationally.

Summary

In summary, TAFE NSW is positioning itself with its corporate plans for a corporate age. It has moved more towards a federation of Institutes. Its charter may still be described as a working persons institute which is consistent with its foundation principles. The organisation does now have a very established provision of access, foundation and technical education and training. It is undergoing the stress and strain of modern times with several rounds of restructuring and financial pressures as it copes with changes in government policy, organisation, technological and social change. It does have a tremendous sense of purpose, strength and innovative capacity which is born out of its very experienced and committed staff and the ongoing diverse needs and interaction with students, communities and industries.

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