THE UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME
A U S T R A L I A

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION
FOR

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND
VOCATIONAL TRAINING

SUBMISSION BY

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1.   Introduction

One of the most significant developments in Australian senior secondary education over the last few years has been the dramatic increase in the number of students involved in VET in Schools programs (National Report on Schooling in Australia: 2002). In 1999, WA post-compulsory students participated in one million hours of VET, and in 2000, nearly 1.6 million hours (Curriculum Council, 2001), between 1997 and 2002 Independent schools experienced a significant growth (211%) in the number of schools involved in VET programs (NCISA Submission in the Inquiry into Vocational Education in Schools,2002).

Studies undertaken by NCVER (2004) have shown clear links between school vocational programs and successful school leaver entrance into a variety of industries. In addition, VET in schools programs can be seen to assist in providing the following outcomes:

> ➤ Youth employment and training retention
> ➤ Links between industry-specific VET in schools programs and employment opportunities
> ➤ Easier student transitions from school to employment
> ➤ Transferable generic skills
> ➤ Increased student confidence in employability
> ➤ Alternative higher education pathways
> ➤ Increased student post-school aspirations
>   (Koczberskil & Taylor, 1999:iii)

2.   Structure of Submission

This submission addresses the preparedness of university graduates to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australian schools, specifically teaching in the area of vocational education and training. Partnerships between schools and Registered Training Organisations are briefly covered to ensure a holistic review. Demonstration of achievement in this area is provided by short examples of the University of Notre Dame Australia's (UNDA) vocational education programs.

3.   Background: UNDA and Vocational Education and Training

In 2003, The University of Notre Dame developed three vocational education programs as a result of industry consultation which identified a growing need for teachers of vocational education subjects in both the schools and higher education sectors. These programs are as follows:

> ➤ Bachelor of Vocational education
> ➤ Graduate Certificate in Vocational Education
> ➤ Graduate Diploma in Vocational education

The Bachelor of Vocational Education is unique in that it allows graduates employment opportunities in both the secondary school systems and the public and/or private Registered Training Organisations (RTO).

4.   Entrance Selection Criteria

It would appear that many professionals working within the VET area, either school or RTO based, have very limited knowledge of the system they work within. Very few university participants have demonstrated any real depth of understanding within the system despite the fact that most have worked in a VET related discipline for years.

It should be noted that whilst many higher education lecturers (eg. within the TAFE environment) have industry qualifications, this does not automatically facilitate the delivery of information using sound pedagogical methods. Without question, whilst Australia is in the grips of an industry skills shortage, the need for fully competent trainers who are specialists not only in their background trade area, but also in the area of information delivery and system regulations, is vital.

Focus on the United Kingdom as a comparable model highlights secondary schools streamlining students to be either straight "A-level" focused or VET "A-level" focused. The English system has provided for students of either vocational or tertiary abilities to apply for higher education entrance. As such an increasing demand for qualified teachers who are also proficient in the area of VET is occurring. I would argue that a similar trend is taking place in Australia. The current lack of school teachers holding an industry based qualification who can deliver VET-in-schools can only further exacerbate the industry skills shortage.

Broad industry demand has prompted the University of Notre Dame to deliver qualifications to overcome such teacher skills shortage. UNDA's Bachelor of Vocational Education is a unique degree program that provides a teaching qualification to people who have an accredited trade qualification and industry experience. The degree recognises both the training completed at a Registered Training Organisation and related work experience by providing one year of advanced standing in what is normally a four-year degree.

Students wishing to gain entrance in to the **undergraduate course** at UNDA are required to meet the following criteria:
> A trade or industry-specific qualification plus recent Registered Training Organisation teaching experience
> A trade or industry-specific qualification at least equal to a Certificate IV level
> An industry specific Diploma or Advanced Diploma qualification
> A recognised trade/industry specific apprenticeship plus a certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training
> A Diploma of Training and Assessment
> An Advanced Diploma in Training and Vocational Education

Students wishing to gain entrance in to the *post-graduate courses* are required to meet the following criteria:

> ➢ a three-year undergraduate degree coupled with a one year Graduate Diploma in Education

> ➢ a four-year teaching degree

The Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma programs enable four-year trained teachers to add to their knowledge and skills in the area of vocational education and training (VET).

5.   Calibre of Students Selected

Whilst the UNDA programs are still in their infancy (commencement February 2004) with a small student cohort, it would appear that they are attracting diverse backgrounds and experiences. As a result of the University valuing industry experience, students from "non-traditional" university entrance backgrounds are applying for the courses. The undergraduate program comprises students with the following backgrounds:

- Electrician with TAFE teaching experience
- Florist with TAFE teaching experience
- Childcare workers with TAFE teaching experience
- Marine Engineers
- Hospitality workers
- Carpenters

These students come to the University with unique background experiences and qualifications which will be invaluable within the school system. Schools will soon be able to employ teachers who not only hold a recognised teaching qualification but also meet all Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) requirements for the delivery of VET programs. Industry skills and qualifications that previously have not been catered for in schools due to lack of qualified staff, will be available within school curriculum. New opportunities will surface for schools as a direct result of the diverse vocational abilities of graduate vocational teachers'.

Post-graduate students all hold a current secondary Australian teaching qualification.

It is interesting to note that the gender balance of students enrolled in the program is 50% male and 50 % female.

6.   Attrition Rates

Provision must be made within the Government School and TAFE system to allow teachers/lecturers time off for important professional development. It would appear that so far this has extended only to professional development offered in-house. Many

lecturers see the need to further develop their teaching abilities and receive recognition for their efforts; it would be in the best interest of the Government to allow them to do so.

Recent TAFEWA developments with regard to the Lecturers Qualification Framework have identified the growing need for pedagogically sound delivery practices. Given that formal qualifications within the TAFE system are now linked to promotional and salary scales, it is vital that staff are given the opportunity to receive formal qualifications at institutes of their choice. Formal policies must be addressed to ensure staff are allocated reasonable time for professional development activities.

(UNDA specific information)
The attrition rate for UNDA's vocational courses has been relatively low, with those students who have withdrawn doing so prior to commencement of first semester. Follow-up with these students has shown work commitments to be the main mitigating factor for withdrawal. Fear of not achieving at an acceptable level due to work related time restrictions has prompted the decision. Of those students who have withdrawn, all have expressed a desire to re-apply at earliest convenience.

7. Educational Philosophy

Students enrolled in the UNDA Bachelor of Vocational Education complete three years of a four year teaching degree. First year is given as advanced standing due to previous industry qualifications. The degree qualifies students to teach in secondary schools in Australia in the VET area or in the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector. Students also qualify to teach up to year 10 in secondary schools in a general curriculum area studied during the course.

Adult learning principles are applied throughout the vocational education curriculum. Lecturers take on the role of facilitator and manager of student learning, as opposed to the 'traditional' lecturing role. Classes are set up in such a way that students apply the learning to their own situation. Many students are currently working within the TAFE or schools sectors and use the classes as an opportunity to apply their newly acquired knowledge to their industry specific Training Packages.

The undergraduate program provides for a mix of teaching pedagogy, VET specific units, teaching experience and education theory. Return-to-industry, school and RTO placements are also a requirement of the course. The combination of professional education studies and teaching experience, coupled with current industry practice, provides the basis for competent and confident practice in the VET area.

Assessment and evaluation occurs as a combination of formal assignments and exams, as well as informal in-class activities. Students are expected to actively participate in research within their particular area, with assessments being heavily based on researched information. Within the area of vocational education, over the three year course, students are expected to research and complete a review of a current and innovative VET practice occurring in either a school or RTO.

8. Interaction between University Faculty Disciplines

Undergraduate students are expected to complete a general curriculum area of study taken from the eight learning areas covered in schools. To do so, students will need to study subjects housed within other colleges within the University. As such learners are exposed to a variety of teaching methods, faculty staff, fellow students, global issues and learning theories.

9. Graduand Preparation

Literacy and Numeracy

More needs to be done by schools and the TAFE sector to promote the delivery of literacy and numeracy skills within every class, as opposed to subject specific classes. This may be of particular concern within the VET environments, where many trades-based RTO lecturers have not completed higher education qualifications and could possibly present with their own literacy/numeracy problems. Standards need to be implemented to ensure that all lecturers, either school or RTO based, have the ability to provide literacy and numeracy student support, regardless of their delivery area. Formal research carried out in this area would help address this issue.

(UNDA specific information)
All students upon entry to the degree program are required to sit a literacy and numeracy test. Failure to achieve a 70% pass or above results in the enrolment of additional classes within these areas. Vocational Education students are assessed not only on their course content work but also their literacy and numeracy abilities throughout the duration of the course. Students are expected to demonstrate a high level of ability in this area. Those experiencing difficulty will be required to participate in classes specifically geared toward students needing extra support. All classes are assessable, with participants unable to further progress within their chosen degree until demonstration of stipulated outcomes.

The teaching of literacy and numeracy is also covered within the context of the vocational education arena via the requirements of Training Packages. Students are made fully aware of their obligations to ensure that learners are provided with support in this area.

Students qualifying as secondary teachers who do not undertake English or Mathematics as a minor, will understand the importance of providing adequate support in literacy /numeracy as a cross-curricular link. Students become very proficient in their ability to integrate literacy and numeracy within all school delivery areas.

Vocational Education Courses

As VET programs have been increasingly introduced into the school curriculum, the demand for experienced teachers to undertake further studies within the VET arena has been highlighted. Release time provided by schools for such professional development needs to be further explored to ensure that an equitable arrangement is made to encourage such development.

Currently, schools ability to deliver programs in new and emerging industries is limited by availability of qualified staff (and resources). Strong links between schools and RTO's need to be encouraged to ensure that school students are exposed to emerging industry trends. Such partnerships further highlight the need for availability of programs that allow for experienced industry-qualified people to train as teachers. VET practitioners should be made capable of moving between schools and RTO's with a full understanding of both.

(UNDA specific information)
The courses as stated in this paper are focused on the vocational education arena with students becoming proficient in all AQTF and industry requirements. Graduands will leave the University with a sound understanding of how to embed VET into general curriculum courses of study or deliver as stand alone subjects. In addition, students will have current industry experience and hold a Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training and a secondary teaching qualification. Students will be well placed to move between schools and RTO's with confidence.

Classroom Management / Special Needs

During the course UNDA students are provided with units specifically targeted at classroom management. An expected practicum outcome is the successful management of students in class. In addition, successful completion of subjects targeted at catering for differences and the psychology of education are an enrolment requirement.

The model of a seamless transition for teachers between the TAFE and school environments gives rise to the belief that all teachers/lecturers need to be well skilled in the area of effective classroom management.

Information Technology

Governments and education systems around the world recognise the need for students to be skilled, creative and confident users of a wide range of information and communication technologies (Brush et al, 2001; Charalambus & Karagiorgi,2002).

Even though a wide cross-section of society today has accepted Information and Communications Technology (ICT) as an entrenched characteristic of its culture, education has been slow to adopt it as an integral tool within the classroom (Cuban, 2001; Elliott, 2004).

The current approach adopted by the College of Education at UNDA... is that students are required to complete two compulsory ICT units within their first two years; one skill-related, the other emphasising the integration of ICT in the curriculum. This approach is useful to the extent that the skills unit enhances ICT literacy skills and the pedagogy units allows students to further develop and maintain these skills in the context of designing classroom based resources (Steketee,2005).

Steketee, in a study of integrating ICT as a teaching and learning tool, goes on to argue that by modelling effective implementation skills in the context of genuine subject areas at university, lecturers are not only exposing students to new and innovative ways of learning, but are providing them with a practical understanding of what learning and teaching with ICT looks and feels like. In this way, ICT is not an 'add-on' but an integral tool that is accessed by teachers and students across a wide range of curricula (2005:4).

UNDA vocational education students are provided with a plethora of opportunities to familiarise themselves with information technology. Not only are students required to complete two compulsory ICT units, they are frequently exposed to E-learning VET specific toolboxes with the expectation of classroom implementation where practicable. Resource Generators are also demonstrated with a practical classroom application.

Achieve Accreditation

All vocational programs are recognised by the Department of Education and Training and are therefore eligible for registration to the Western Australian College of Teaching. Students are also given the opportunity to complete "Accreditation to Teach in Catholic Schools", thereby further broadening their employment prospects.

10. Ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce

With the Government's policy objectives of increasing retention rates to year 12 , VET–in-schools programs are becoming a major tool in the achievement of this outcome; as such an increasing number of teachers are becoming aware of the importance of VET. More school support needs to be provided to those teachers seeking an understanding of VET delivery requirements. Of even greater importance is the need for schools to recognise the added time burden for those teachers delivering VET-in-schools, and ensure that equitable time allocation is given for such involvement.

Given the requirement for on-site visitation of students, organisation of work placements, additional content delivery to ensure coverage of VET outcomes and AQTF paperwork requirements, teachers of VET are increasingly become disinclined to participate in the system. It would appear that little, if any, additional time allocation is provided to teachers to enable them to carry out their VET related duties.

Out-of-hours workloads are becoming the norm for these teachers. It is evident that an excessively complicated bureaucratic process is in place for both the delivery and auditing of VET-in-Schools. This is arguably seen as a disincentive for those teachers either considering moving into or staying in, the VET system. Teachers would be far more gainfully employed by either the removal of some of the existing constraints or allocation of time and resources to enable successful completion of duties.

Unlike general curriculum, the VET system with its constant review of Training Packages requires continual professional development by its practitioners to ensure an awareness of emerging trends. Such on-going reviews add yet another pressure to those teachers delivering VET. Again, equitable time allocation needs to be provided to ensure such continual professional development can take place.

(UNDA specific information)
The UNDA Graduate Certificate and Graduate Diploma in Vocational Education programs specifically allow for teachers currently working within the school setting to expand their career opportunities in to the VET environment.

A number of students currently enrolled in the vocational courses have expressed concern that the more educated they become in the VET area, the greater the expectation their employer (usually schools) places on them with regard to their VET workload. All students have stated that no additional hours or resources are allocated for completion of added duties and see this expectation as a career burden rather than progression.

11. Conclusion

Given the Australian Governments push for skilling Australia by implementing new directions for vocational education and training, we must ensure a viable training system that can further the country's economic growth. If we are to forge ahead with such policy direction, adequate numbers of qualified teachers capable of delivery of such an outcome must be available. It is pointless to address the need and develop a vision if we are incapable as a nation of providing the staff and delivery.

12. Recommendations

➢ Further HECs places need to be made available in undergraduate vocational degree programs around Australia.

➢ DEST policies need to be considered in order to promote the up-skilling of current school teachers to ensure the long-term viability of VET-in-Schools.

➢ Additional funding made available to ensure the training of adequate numbers of teachers to meet the VET-in-Schools demand.

➢ Additional funding and time allocation made available to assist with the professional development and workload of current VET teachers.

➢ Funding made available to train teachers and RTO staff to ensure vocational practitioners can make a seamless transition between the two sectors.

➢ Standards implemented to ensure that all vocational trainers (schools-based or RTO) have the ability to support the literacy and numeracy development of their students.

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