

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES – STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND TRAINING

CONSTRUCTION TRAINING QUEENSLAND

In my opening remarks I refer you to our original submission signed by the CTQ General Manager, Mr Greg Shannon in which he raised several issues some of which I would like to expand so as to add further depth to the comment.

As stated in our submission, CTQ is an Industry Training Advisory Body (ITAB). We are recognised in Queensland as a valued and trusted voice of leadership in workforce and skills development for our industry. Our membership consists of all key industry associations and unions and the Department of Employment and Training with whom we particularly have an abiding respect for getting the job done.

Mr Shannon's submission commented on several key aspects which I would like to flesh out for you in the VET in schools context.

1. Applying theory and translating it to contextual workplace settings

Often we experience young people coming into the industry usually with sound theoretical understanding but lacking the ability to contextualise or translate their learning from education into workplace situations.

An example of this is was when the following question was asked of a VET in schools group (some 14 students):

“How many cubic metres of concrete do you need to fill a hole; one metre square by one metre deep?”

Eighty-five percent of answers were incorrect and ranged from not enough to fill the hole to concrete trucks lined up nose to tail from Brisbane to Newcastle and everything in between.

Interestingly enough we were informed by the teacher that we asked the wrong question. We should have simply asked: “What is the volume of the hole?”

There is the related problem of knowing whether the answer is close, right or wrong and this relates to spatial translation in understanding the size of a one cubic metre hole in comparison to the relative size of say the mixer barrel on

the back of the concrete truck (which by the way holds 6 cubic metres of concrete).

A further example of the problem in translation can be traced back to a root cause in teaching mathematics wherein teachers of mathematics predominantly use centimetre units when the building and construction industry uses millimetre units and young people in the main and for whatever reasons do not translate measurement to real life situations effectively.

A typical example is when asking a student to measure and cut a piece of material to 300mm (that might be say 500mm in length) and then getting a response from the student that the material is way to short because they're thinking 300cm.

Group Training Companies invariably have had to resort to aptitude testing as a way of determining a young person's ability to cope with the theoretical training and translating that understanding to the building and construction workplace which is quickly moving to high technology building systems and processes.

2. Mayer Key Competencies

We have long held the view that if the Mayer Key Competencies (MKC) were more effectively understood, utilised and measured for outcome that many of problems faced by young people entering our workplaces would disappear.

It is critical in the opinion of most of our employer groups that if every school graduate had up to Level 2 Mayer Key Competencies under their belt that most if not all of the problems faced by employers of young people's inability to translate what they've learnt to real life situations would all but disappear overnight.

3. High Expectations of Qld Government White Paper Reforms

Industry generally is very supportive of this initiative under the 'earn or learn plan' toward the Senior Certificate although it is a measured social pressure to keep young people in school.

You can wrap it any way you like but at the end of the day unless that young person enters the workforce with recognisable and useful skills they are still perceived to be uselessly unemployable.

There is an added and very real issue for our industry that is often not the case for others in that we do not have static workplaces.

4. School based Apprenticeships and Work Placement

Contractors move regularly between jobs and it is probably in the residential sector of the building community that most if not all of school based apprenticeships and VET in schools programs will by necessity seek

placements. Large construction sites have not traditionally embraced this perhaps because of the industrial complications it brings about under enterprise bargained agreements (EBA).

5. Marketing the industry as a Career of First Choice

There remains a vexed issue and need to market the industry as a Career of First Choice at the school level.

Societal pressures on young people promulgate softer options and creature comforts rather than sun, dirt, dust and mud which are the oft-portrayed model of working in the building and construction and allied industries.

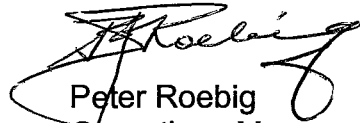
Many in the industry would disagree with this perception particularly those who have made successful livings from their trade and they number in the many thousands.

There is also the perception that Industrial Technology and Design (the old Manual Arts curriculum area) is for the 'Johnny drop kicks' which couldn't be further from the truth but many teachers will tell you they invariably seem to either attract that style of young person or used by their schools to cater to client usually in the lower scholastic groupings.

6. Teacher Graduate Programs

Added to this perception is the 'teacher education model' itself wherein teaching graduates go from high school, enter university, obtain a degree and then go back to school as a teacher in vocational education training with no real affinity with the workplace with the result that young school students are not infused or enthused with the industry persona but rather acquire what I would call the "teacher's comfort zone" knowledge base of an industry which is not always a true reflection because it is not influenced by real experiences.

End of Comment:



Peter Roebig
Operations Manager
Construction Training Queensland
PO Box 3294 South Brisbane Qld 4101
Ph: 07 3846 8700
Fax: 07 3846 5067
Email peterr@ctq.com.au