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TAFE, Life Long Learning and Globalisation

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Abstract: Vocational Education and Training with particular reference to the TAFE system in Australia is a large and complex issue add to this how it relates to Life Long Learning with an aging population and Globalisation in the Information Age and we have a topic that warrants further investigation.

The purpose of this essay is to firstly clarify the above mentioned dynamics currently influencing Vocational Education and Training within TAFE NSW, then illustrate how they relate to each other, investigate different theories and concepts then finally justify my conclusion that TAFE NSW is aware and a willing participant within the current trends of Life Long Learning, Globalisation and the Information Age.

In the preceding statement, Ján Figel '(2005), European Commissioner in charge of Education and Training claims that *'Learning does not stop when you finish school or university. We live in a rapidly changing world in the Information Age, and our workforce must make sure it has the general skills required by our demanding globalised environment. Also, as our society ages, it is more important than ever before that adults continue to learn new skills or refresh old knowledge throughout their lives.'*

Though his claim may well have merit, what we are trying to do is apply it to TAFE NSW as Australia moves into a global market and the need for a skilled and knowledge based workforce becomes a key issue, how the Vocational Education sector responds to this global movement. .

There are four key terms and or concepts that warrant further explanation if we are to truly investigate the issue. Information Age, Globalisation, Lifelong Learning and Aging Workforce are the major keystones of this argument.

The Information Age is what has been labelled to the concluding years of the twentieth century and the beginning of the twenty-first century (David S. Alberts and Daniel S. Papp,1997). The main catalyst for this age has been the invention of the microprocessor in the 1970s so that computers became accessible to the public. In the 1990s, the Internet migrated from universities and research institutions to corporate headquarters and homes. *The key characteristic of computer technology that sets it apart from earlier analog technologies is that it is digital, these are systems of discontinuous data or events, that create a "universal model" to represent information* (Covell A, 2000). The benefits of this are, information;

availability, Integration, Interaction, Transactions, Tailoring and Editing. In other words, information is now easy to reproduce, be multi-media, communicated via unicast/multicast/broadcast, automated, adjustable and easy to modify.

Australia has always been an early adopter of technology especially when it comes communications, mainly due to the vastness of this continent and the sparseness and spread of the relatively small population there has always been the need to educate the population, transceiving analog information from the old radio schools over three quarters of a century ago to using digital highways via satellites and other broadband technologies now.

The Information Age has been major contributor to the great phenomenon of change in the 21st century which is globalisation. And, as identified by Baylis and Smith (1997), the term describes the process of increasing interconnected between societies to an extent that events in one part of the world influences peoples and societies in other countries. *A globalised world is one in which social, political, economic, educational and cultural events become more and more interconnected and a dominant characteristic of the world's political, cultural, economic and natural environments (Khan, 2003).*

For a clearer definition, Nobel Laureate Joseph Stiglitz (2002) correlates this with his definition of globalization as...*the closer integration of the countries and peoples of the world which has been brought about by the enormous reduction of costs of transportation and communication, and the breaking down of artificial barriers to the flows of goods, services, capital, knowledge, and (to a lesser extent) people across borders.*

The impact this has on Vocational Education within TAFE NSW is two-fold;

Globalisation in regard to Content and in regards to delivery. When looking at content of Vocational Education and Training (Globalisation/internationalisation of Online Content and Teaching, according to the Australian Flexible Learning Quick Guide Series) this could be taken to mean; the inclusion of world/global views and practice in both general and specific ways within content and teaching design, exploring and adapting content and courses for appropriateness in a global context of a changing world, putting greater emphasis on transferable and required skills to equip students for work in modern day industry and enterprises, exploring opportunities for partnerships and collaborative development to extend market opportunities internationally, Identifying the critical success factors, barriers, and issues associated with globalisation/internationalisation of training and the implications for VET providers.

Globalisation of Vocational Education and Training in regards to delivery can be seen as a cross border exchange of education services.

The report "APEC and international education" (Prepared for the Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations by the Centre for International Economics (CIE)) states that Cross border exchange between economies can take place in a number of ways. The World Trade Organisation: General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) has summarised them as one of four different modes of exchange.

Mode 1: Cross border supply: The Open Training and Education Network (OTEN) is a business unit of TAFE NSW - Western Sydney Institute. OTEN offers nationally accredited qualifications via Online/Distance Education to people living overseas.

<http://www.oten.edu.au/oten/core/showpage.htm'?pg=siinternational>

Also apart from delivering the material to international markets directly, TAFE NSW also makes their material and methods available to overseas institutes; this is often experienced with international Vocational Educator coming to TAFE NSW for insight into Delivery and Management of Training Packages. I personally was involved in delivering a two day workshop to a group of 18 Professors, Lecturers, Engineers and Technical Assistants from the Changzhou College of Information Technology in China on how to pull apart Training Packages, create a learning pathway, create a learning program and deliver holistically (see Appendix 1.0).

Mode 2: Consumption abroad: TAFE NSW is a substantial provider of Vocational education for international students. When investigating its policies and publications we get great insight to their planning, such as; Globalisation requires an engagement that promotes a notion of global citizenship. TAFE has a range of international programs and there are more than 21,000 international onshore students in TAFE courses. These students provide scope for TAFE to expand globally but this is hindered by restrictions on visas and many students transferring to universities. The international model of engagement for TAFE is a market relationship. This also needs to shift to a partnership model with other international public sector organisations with a similar purpose to TAFE. (TAFE going global)

However, TAFE must be vigilant and not allow its International Student programs to be associated with the more cynical view, well described by (Peter Kell, 1997) as

internationalisation of education is seen in its narrowest sense as merely the recruitment of overseas students to do courses in Australia. In blunt terms this translates to "bums" on seats and dollars through the cash registers for the providers.

Mode 3: Commercial presence: A successful example within TAFE NSW is Adveti - Abu Dhabi Vocational Education and Training Institute ADVETI — Abu Dhabi was formed in 2007 as a partnership between Abu Dhabi Education Council (ADEC) and the largest Australian government vocational education provider — the Technical and Further Education Commission of New South Wales (known as TAFE NSW). (Abu Dhabi Vocational Education and Training Institute ADVETI, About Us Webpage) http://www.veti.ac.ae/ad/index.htm?option=com_content&view=article&id=56&Itemid=82&lang=en

Mode 4: Presence of a natural person: Teacher Exchange programs are an excellent means of knowledge transfer. Teachers from other Countries and Culture can benefit from experience of the exposure to Australian VET Market and co-workers can also get fresh insight from having someone around that has a different point of view. Obviously this is also applicable for Australian VET Educators working Overseas.

Literature accessed during this research indicates that a good deal of organisational learning takes place through sharing. It has the capacity to build the expertise of individuals and teams and can ensure knowledge continuity. (B Clayton & T Fisher, AVETRA 2005 conference) Research that has identified a culture of knowledge sharing networks of teaching staff in Australian VET providers, fostered by national funding through Reframing the Future and Australian Flexible Learning Framework initiatives which encourage collaboration (Symons 2001; Mitchell & Young 2003).

Benefits to VET Educators can extend to; enhancing their job opportunities and professional networks, giving them an edge over their Australian peers, developing interpersonal skills by living and studying in another culture, experiencing different teaching styles and ways of learning, gaining an international perspective on their studies and professional knowledge, learning to be more independent, experiencing life overseas.

http://www.sit.nsw.edu.au/international/?Media_Index_ID=1940

NSW Exchange Programs for Educators by the Strategic Initiatives Directorate is an excellent example of NSW Department of Education (including TAFE) offering such opportunities for this mode of Cross-Border Educational exchange.

[https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/detresources/Exchange Exchange programs terms and conditions CBAfdLRdHx.pdf](https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/detresources/Exchange%20Exchange%20programs%20terms%20and%20conditions/CBAfdLRdHx.pdf)

Australia's educational framework is very open and there are no limitation in age or delivery of qualifications such as full time and part time. TAFE NSW and their whole approach encourage lifelong learning.

According to NCVET 2003, Statistics and Courses, the VET sector has proportionally a large section, over 60% over 25yo and 25% over 40yo. Tom Kariel (2004) interpreted the result as *what is notable about these distributions is the number of older persons that participate, particularly in the VET sector. In the university sector around 40 per cent of students are over the age of 25, while in the VET sector the proportion is over 60 per cent. Moreover, the numbers of students over the age of 40 are by no means trivial- over 15 per cent for university and 25 per cent for VET. It seems apparent that lifelong learning (or at least up to 60 years) is alive and well in Australia,* However, no matter how stark the previous

results are it is not until we look at the proportion of the population participating by age according to NCVET 2003, Statistics and Courses do we really see the impact of Life Long Learning as people keep learning, training and retraining. At age 25 to 29 participation is 20% of the total population and even at 40 to 49 there is still around 12% of the population in education. Australia is well above international average when it comes to Life Long Learning, 30 to 40 year olds is around three times the OECD average and notably over three times for the 40 and over group.

This in conjunction with Australia Aging Workforce in which the average age of the full-time workforce has been increasing faster than the general population and highlights the fact that whereas full-time workers were on average younger than the general population before 1991, the situation has since reversed and in recent years the gap in ages has widened (Parliament of Australia Department of Parliamentary Services RESEARCH NOTE 7 March 2005, no. 35, 2004-05, ISSN 1449-8456) means that the demand on VET Education in TAFE NSW can only increase since Lifelong Learning is mainly vocationally driven and the average age of workers has grown and will continue to do so.

In the July 2007, OECD Policy Brief "Lifelong Learning and Human Capital" stated in their summaries. The ageing of populations in most developed countries is putting pressure on people to retire later. As a result, there is a growing need for them to go on updating their skills and education to cope with the fast pace of change in the workplace. Yet, this is not something that only affects those nearing the end of their career. People of all ages in the workforce need to continue raising their skill levels, which, in turn, can improve their earnings prospects and make it easier for them to find new work in the event of job loss.

In conclusion, TAFE is aware and an active participant in all aspects of this topic, TAFE NSW has always looked at innovative ways of increasing productivity, efficiency and delivery.

There are definite limitations to how well and quickly it participates in change.

The size of TAFE, in such a large organisation change and adaptation will always takes longer and the bureaucracy of being a government owned institute, including red tape and political motivations.

The aging of the Teaching staff TAFE institutes, *already with a teaching workforce older than the Australian workforce overall* (B Clayton & T Fisher, 2005) runs the risk of having less access proportionally, to younger, more Tech-savvy and less conservative teachers willing to take on changes required.

Declining funding over the past decade as clearly pointed out in TAFE Futures (2006) *Diminished resourcing and the squeeze on budgets were universally recognised as major impediments to TAFE performing its role and mission* (TAFE Futures, An inquiry into the future of technical and further education in Australia, 2006)

I also agree with the recommendations of TAFE Futures Report, especially that TAFE should have a central Australian agency for negotiating and managing international projects and international student matters. TAFE institutes should be encouraged to develop memorandums of understanding with international public VET providers. Agreements with international providers should be used as a way of promoting exchanges of staff as a well as students' participation in courses and exchanges.

Globalisation by itself is a huge change on the current 'Vocational Educational Landscape all around the world, add to this an Aging Population actively involved in Lifelong Learning all through their lives not just their Teens and early Twenties and you begin to see the importance and responsibility that TAFE has currently and more importantly it will have in the future as these trends mature.

Appendix

Subject	Chinese Delegation
From	Worthington, Colin
To	Tsingos, Eric
Cc	Lorenzini, Antonina
Sent	Monday, 4 August 2008 3:41 PM

Hi Eric

Thanks for delivering a presentation to the Chinese delegation that is visiting the Institute.

I would like to confirm the details:

Location: Liverpool College — ETC Theatrette

Date: Friday 15 August 2008

Time: 9.00 - 10.30

Topic: Hardware/Op Systems

Location: Liverpool College — ETC M31/32

Date: Friday 22 August 2008

Time: 9.00 - 10.30 and 11.00 - 12.30

Topic: Networking

About them.

They are a group of 18 Professors, Lecturers, Engineers and Technical Assistants from the Changzhou College of Information Technology in China. I understand that they don't speak English very well and will be accompanied by interpreters. They are here to see how we deliver our courses.

Can you please discuss and demonstrate:

- How you used the unit guide to determine what you would deliver to a class and how you would assess the class.
- How you would deliver the lesson. (Theory, questioning, exercise, quiz, demonstration, practical exercise etc)
- An example 18 week (or whatever) outline.
- Examples of the content.
- Examples of the practical exercises and tasks (as detailed as possible) for a class.
- The assessments you would use and how they relate back to the Unit Guide.
- Any industry input or industry links to the course.
- Embedded industry certification

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- If possible, can you able to discuss and demonstrate how you would deliver two or more units holistically.
 - Project work if appropriate. (Why — how — benefits to the students)
- Expect a short question and answer session at the end of your presentation,

Also, because of the language issue and the use of interpreter, a normal session will take at least twice as long with this group.

Katharine Ross or Belinda Cheng from TIEC will meet you at the ETC just prior to the session and will introduce you to the group.

The group would like a copy of any lesson notes, presentations, sample assessments or resources that you are using. So can you please email soft copies of any documents to Katharine Ross or Belinda Cheng in the Liverpool International the day before your presentation and they print them for you.

If you have to carry resources etc, you may be able to book into the ETC car park by contacting security on 9827 8484 rather than parking in the main College car park.

You will receive payment for the delivery plus approx half the hours again for preparation.

Thanks again

Regards

Colin Worthington

R/Assistant Faculty Director
ICT & Design Faculty
Macquarie Fields College
Ph: 9829 0393

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Ján Figel' (2005) European Commissioner for Education, Training, Culture and Multilingualism

Andy Covell, Digital Convergence: How the Merging of Computers, Communications, and Multimedia is Transforming Our Lives (Rhode Island: Aegis, 2000) p 58

Worthington, Colin. <mailto:Colin.Worthington@det.nsw.edu.au>. Chinese Delegation. Monday, 4 August 2008 .

The Information Age: An Anthology on Its Impact and Consequences Edited by David S. Alberts and Daniel S. Papp(CCRP Publication Series, 1997)

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Globalisation/Internationalisation of Online Content and Teaching Australian Flexible
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Quick Guide Series <http://pre2005.flexiblelearning.net.au/guides/international.pdf>

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[http://aei.gov.au/AEI/PublicationsAndResearch/Publications/APEC and International
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