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IMPLEMENTING TRAINING PACKAGES
IN A TAFE INSTITUTE:
PERCEPTIONS AND CONCERNS OF STAFF
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Abstract
The role of the vocational education and training (VET) professional has changed over
the past ten years in response to a number of changes to the VET sector. The advent of
training packages is a further change to the sector and is currently being implemented,
in the most part, by teaching professionals. Teachers are required to have more diverse
skills and knowledge than ever before to meet the needs of an increasingly competitive
marketplace. This paper outlines the findings of a project involving teachers in a
technical and further education (TAFE) institution as they began the process of
implementing the cross-industry Laboratory Operations Training Package into their
teaching centre. The impetus for the research was the recognition that the change
brought about by the new initiative would present a challenge for the teachers and a
further change to their role in VET. The research was qualitative in the form of a case
study. Findings demonstrated that the implementation required a significant change in
the philosophy of educational practice within the centre, and that the implementation
process was causing the teachers anxiety and confusion.

Introduction
Teachers’ professional practice in the Australian vocational education
and training (VET) sector has changed and will continue to change as
the training reform agenda evolves (Smith & Keating 1997; Lundberg
1996). Over the past several years, technical and further education
(TAFE) teachers have had to engage with new practices resulting from
initiatives in competency-based training (CBT), flexible delivery,
recognition of prior learning, workplace assessment, and the
development of a competitive training market; as well as structural
changes that have occurred within TAFE institutes and within the VET
system more broadly. Although the need to engage with these changes
has been relentless, there has been little research designed to observe
change processes as they occur among TAFE teachers within institutes. Individual teachers cope with change differently, with some welcoming it and responding in meaningful ways. However, this is not the case for all teachers and there is often reluctance and resistance, most particularly if the change is seen to be irrelevant, unnecessary or unsuitable. Whatever their response to change, teachers will pass through levels of uncertainty (Schon 1971). In the case of training packages, this uncertainty was very clearly shown in a study by Smith and Keating (1997). In their study, 10 per cent of respondent teachers did not know if a training package had been developed for their area of teaching, and a further 30 per cent had no idea when they might implement a training package. There was also confusion over the use of national modules within training packages.

The study reported here was designed to investigate the perceptions and concerns of staff in a TAFE institute as they worked to develop an implementation plan for the introduction of the Laboratory Operations Training Package. The study was conducted during 1999. In the first half of that year the participants in this study had been advised that the training package was to be implemented to the institute in February 2000. Accordingly, staff had a period of around eight months to plan and effect the implementation. The observations in this present investigation were made concurrently with the implementation planning, with the research being conducted in the second half of 1999.

The concerns and responses of teachers working with competency-based training have been researched and expressed in a number of publications examining practice in the Australian VET sector. Robinson (1995) looked at the experiences of a small group of qualified teachers, implementing the CBT system over a range of disciplines at the Canberra Institute of Technology. Mulcahy (1996) observed classes in two Melbourne metropolitan TAFE institutions, and interviewed students, teachers and curriculum co-ordinators, identifying teacher concerns regarding CBT. Chappell (1998) argued that asking teachers to ‘do things differently’ in their day-to-day practice experience impacts on how they conceptualise themselves as professional educators:
... current educational policies of government can be seen as not only changing the institutional practices of TAFE but are also constructing a new identity for teachers working in the institution.

(Chappell 1998, p.19)

These studies acknowledge that educational policy changes are an issue for teachers and that teachers working with CBT often express a lack of confidence in their ability to interpret the policy expectations into day-to-day instructional practice. Additionally, Stevenson (1993) observed that competency-based training initiatives in government policy conceptualised education and knowledge as important only for economic productivity, regarding as unproblematic broader questions of purpose of vocational education, content input and relationships between individual, industrial and social goals. That narrow conceptualisation is at odds with teachers' views of their professionalism (Grundy 1992; Gore, Bond & Steven 2000).

Lowrie and Smith (1999) conclude from the results of a survey they conducted that while most training providers have been informing their teachers about training packages, there is a clear lack of awareness on the detail of components, intentions and role. Results indicated that educational issues are of concern to TAFE teachers and, further to this, TAFE teachers seem suspicious of innovations that seem to be 'inconsistent with sound educational practice' (Lowrie & Smith 1999, p.10).

This concern about educational issues is most likely at least partially related to some reluctance on the part of teachers to re-conceptualise themselves as professionals who have less of a role in educational practices (Chappell 1998) such as curriculum preparation, and the development of learning outcomes. What may not be adequately understood is that training packages provide for an amount of professional education judgment and decision-making. In the absence of detailed curriculum, and with greater access to and expectations of flexible delivery methods, considerable educational expertise is required. Additionally, the perceived marginalisation of teachers in the evolution of training policy (Ryan 1999) and the process of conceptualising the training packages are likely to result in considerable challenge on educational grounds.
A study by Smith and Nagle (1995) identified that teachers were confused both over CBT teaching methods and over what should be the content of a module of learning. Such confusion can often be lessened by making teachers and trainers more aware of competency standards underpinning curriculum documents (Smith & Keating 1997). Nationally endorsed training packages are replacing State accredited curriculum as a means of officially recognising and specifying requirements for formal training. According to Smith et al. (1997), one goal of training packages is to provide materials relevant to particular industries. They conclude that training packages might have the following beneficial outcomes for VET:

- There will be less confusion amongst teachers and trainers between competency standards and module learning outcomes.
- Teachers and trainers will become more familiar with competency standards.
- Assessment requirements may become more clearly defined

(Smith et al. 1997, p.99)

It is clear that the ways in which CBT and training reform will affect teachers’ capacity to perform depend upon their perception and experience of CBT and its application. Smith et al. (1997) argue that ‘the “what” of learning still has its place, but the “how” and “why” need to be given equal prominence’ (p.93).

The model of curriculum change suggested by McBeath (1997) provides a framework for developing the ‘how’ and the ‘why’, and has formed a useful framework for the present study. McBeath (1997) has commented that, while VET instructors often readily accept curriculum change derived from external influences and directives, the ‘current management-driven curriculum reform model is stressful, disruptive and inefficient’ (p.37). As McBeath comments, that approach values only the innovative idea, not the process of implementation. Dissemination of curriculum change is seen in that management context as the marketing of change, with a focus on the tactics and strategies required to effect the change. McBeath (1997) has argued that dissemination of curriculum change necessitates the interaction between planners and implementers, and should encompass five stages of curriculum change. The middle three stages identified below are
those that McBeath (1997, p.42) suggests as being the commonly observed 'three broad stages'. The first stage she has added is derived from the work of Marsh (1993); while the last stage was identified originally by Fullan and Steigelberger (1991). The resultant five stages of change as described by McBeath are:

- an **orientation and needs stage**, which requires that there is a familiarisation by stakeholders with what the broad changes are expected to be, and what the drivers are for change
- an **initiation, mobilisation or adoption stage**, that identifies the decisions and activities which need to occur prior to the change being put into practice
- an **implementation stage**, which involves putting the change into actual practice
- an **incorporation stage**, which includes identification of the processes and practices required to position the change into the routine of the training environment
- an **outcomes stage** (Fullan & Steigelberger 1991), which focusses on longer term issues such as student learning, teacher change etc.

The uncertainty of teachers about the efficiency and the implementation of training packages can be at least partially attributed to their lack of involvement in the stages of the model put forward by McBeath. In the implementation of training packages in the institutional context of the current research, teachers were placed in the position of engaging with the middle three of McBeath's five stages of curriculum change and dissemination. Teachers were not, however, part of the first stage. The outcomes stage was seen as problematic, possibly due to lack of involvement at the first stage. Teachers were charged with the responsibility for initiation, implementation, and incorporation without any strong engagement or understanding of the orientation and needs stage. The notion of dissemination had been invoked in its 'management-driven change' sense, rather than in its sense of interaction between planners and implementers.

It was this uncertainty about the efficiency, need, and implementation of training packages that prompted the research reported in the present paper. This research was designed to examine the process of change or
transition, which occurred at a large Melbourne TAFE institution as
teaching and support staff dealt with the changes brought about by the
implementation of the Laboratory Operations Training Package into
their program. Specifically, the purpose of the project was to collect and
interpret data on the effects and implications of the change to teachers’
work and the issues relating to the introduction of training packages
into a TAFE teaching centre. The study aimed to explore and document
how a group of TAFE teachers dealt with the changes to their role as a
consequence of implementation of training packages, and focussed
most particularly on:

- preparedness of the staff to accept the changes
- the shift towards a new assessment model
- the effect of policy changes to the context of teachers’ work and
  identity
- the provision of research data which may assist in the identification
  of effective implementation strategies for both educators and
  management

McBeath’s (1997) framework is a useful lens through which to examine
the experience of teachers readying themselves for the implementation
of a training package. The present investigation, which observed the
processes of change as they occurred, focussed most particularly on the
actual experiences of participants as they engaged with the orientation
and initiation stages of the McBeath model; and as they anticipated
engagement with the implementation, incorporation and outcomes
stages.

Method

Qualitative data were collected through five focus groups, each
comprising the same ten participants; followed by semi-structured
interviews conducted individually with the focus group participants.

The focus groups were conducted at the participants’ teaching centre,
with an emphasis on reflective collaboration. All participants were
volunteers, consisting of teaching and technical staff. The focus groups
engaged in informal discussions, allowing participants to volunteer issues and concerns associated with the implementation by February 2000 of the Laboratory Operations Training Package.

Semi-structured interviews were used to obtain primary data from individual participants in the focus groups. The research was designed to facilitate participants in the expression of their own opinions, in their own words, on issues relevant to their own personal perspective, experience and situations. Individual impressions of the implementation process and the concept of a training package were essential to obtain data on attitudes and perceptions regarding the change being implemented at the centre. Care was taken to avoid influencing the views of interviewees by using open-ended questions, and allowing respondents time to consider their answers and respond unhindered. Four open-ended questions were used, each intended as a guide to initiate a response regarding selected aspects of the implementation.

The four questions used with the focus groups were:

- What is your impression of the use of training packages generally in the vocational educational training sector?
- What is your impression of the implementation of the cross-industry Laboratory Operations Training Package at the Centre of Animal and Biological Sciences at our institute?
- Do you see any issues relating to the implementation? If so what do you see as strategies to overcome these issues?
- Do you see the change from curriculum-based delivery to the use of training packages as a positive or negative initiative and why?

These questions were developed to investigate teacher attitudes towards the training package initiative and their expectations for implementation. The questions were focussed particularly on the first two stages of McBeath's model as part of teacher experience, and to identify their expectations for the final three stages of the model. It needs to be recalled here that these teachers had not yet experienced those final three stages, so the research was not able to draw on lived experience for these last stages of the model.
Results

Focus group session 1

The participant profile consisted of two management staff, seven teacher/trainers and one technical staff representative. The participants involved in the case study were aged between 33 years and 55 years and consisted of equal numbers of males and females.

The first focus group involved identifying and discussing issues. Major issues identified from the focus group were that participants expressed feelings of anger and suspicion with regard to the concept of training packages and the proposed commencement by 2000. In addition, there was a widely expressed sentiment that they felt ill-informed regarding training packages in general. All participants agreed to read the endorsed components of the package and consider its implications for delivery in the centre prior to the next focus group session. It was also agreed that participants would list any questions and concerns regarding the package and have the institute management address each issue at the next focus meeting scheduled for five weeks later. It was agreed that more information from institute management was essential to help clarify expectations and reduce uncertainty with regard to the proposed implementation.

Focus group session 2

The centre manager was invited to address the group using a list of questions generated as a consequence of focus group session 1. These questions were:

❖ How does an industry focus on assessment relate to TAFE?
❖ How does the institute perceive the centre simulating a workplace for the assessment focus and what provision is there for new resources to accommodate that?
❖ Is there provision to maintain the integrity of the complete accredited course?

The institute manager responded to these questions by delivering an overview of the proposed initiative.
Emerging from the second focus group session were the following issues:

- The implementation of the Laboratory Operations Training Package will change the content and the delivery methods of instruction provided at TAFE institutes.
- The extent to which that happens will depend largely upon the influence of State training authorities, in terms of their expectations of TAFE institutes within performance agreements, and the will or vision of staff and management within individual provider organisations.
- Many providers will decide to use conventional curriculum to deliver underpinning knowledge, since there was not a view that training packages are adequately supported by useable curriculum and learning resources.

**Focus group session 3**

Participants felt that the best way to tackle the process of implementation was to identify the industry area that best represented the biological 'flavour' that the centre wanted to focus on. Further to that, participants wanted to commence the potentially arduous process of matching units and elements of competence with learning outcomes taken from the existing curriculum. To achieve this, the participants took responsibility for a subject area they were familiar with or had taught in the past and matched the old with the new. They identified along the way any unnecessary or extraneous curriculum material that had been identified as non-essential or no longer required. At the same time, the participants took care to keep any course material that was felt to be essential knowledge within the proposed new course. The process of matching competencies was not part of the focus group itself; however, the group meeting was used as a sounding board for any issues or queries regarding course content.

The main theme throughout the meeting was related to participants feeling overwhelmed by the process, and a continued emphasis of suspicion and anger towards the initiative and the work resulting from it. There were, however, some participants who felt the package could
potentially improve the course if it was implemented to include underpinning knowledge that firmly grounded the assessment.

Focus group session 4

The fourth focus group met in early August 1999 and the agenda for the meeting was to continue with the implementation theme of the previous meeting. Participants expressed the need to meet with the Industry Advisory Committee, to have industry input into the process. The program manager compiled a draft partial implementation plan, outlining a proposal to work toward the philosophy of the training package, and focussing on the shift to more flexible and industry-based assessment. There was unanimous agreement to continuing to teach from existing modules for the initial transition period.

Focus group session 5

This group was held in October 1999 and was the final focus group meeting. The agenda for this meeting was to finalise the preparation for a partial implementation of the Laboratory Operations Training Package in February 2000. Discussions focussed around the possibility of using the training package to the advantage of the centre. The majority of participants (70%) still expressed suspicion and cynicism at having to change and implement a system that they felt was no better than the existing one. They also felt very strongly that as practitioners and educators, they had not been consulted regarding the content of the training package. For that reason it was perceived as lacking in educational merit.

Interview findings

The semi-structured interviews conducted with individual teachers and technical staff were conducted during mid-1999. The outcomes of the interviews are summarised below, organised by question.

Question 1:
What is your impression of the use of training packages generally in the vocational educational training sector?
In response to question 1, four of the ten participants described the concept of a training package as being good. The reasons cited for this response were:

- The training package focusses on vocational outcomes.
- There was an industry focus.
- It was perceived to be what industry wanted.
- The initiative seemed to have some benefits for educators in terms of its flexibility.
- The initiative seemed to be a good idea in terms of the trade areas.

There was a strong theme throughout the responses relating to the participants' belief that the focus on industry and vocational assessment was more relevant to the traditional trade areas and less to the area of biological sciences. Further to this theme was the notion that vocational education professionals had been sidelined in the development of training packages. Therefore, it was perceived, all vocational courses had been conceptualised under the one 'trade-oriented' framework.

Three of the ten participants were reserved about the initiative and felt that they were unable to perceive it as being good or bad until it had commenced in 2000.

Question 2:
What is your impression of the implementation process for the cross-industry Laboratory Operations Training Package at the Centre of Animal and Biological Sciences at our institute?

Eight of the participants felt some form of suspicion or cynicism about the initiative because of past experiences with government initiatives and, further to that, three participants expressed feelings of confusion.

Three of the participants felt that the implementation of the cross-industry Laboratory Operations Training Package into the centre was a significant change in the philosophy of educational practice. That change alone, in their view, was causing anxiety for staff. In addition, some teachers felt that a lack of recent industry knowledge across the teaching staff made the implementation more challenging and, in some cases, confronting because of the industry-focussed assessment.
Question 3:

Do you see any issues relating to the implementation? If so what do you see as strategies to overcome these issues?

All participants identified issues related to the initiative and its implementation within the centre. Recurring concerns throughout the responses were as follows.

- The participants cited change management as being a major issue. Feelings of confusion mixed with anger about further change in an educational system that had been already over-burdened with change was clearly of concern to the participants. Further, lack of time was cited by all participants as being a major hurdle associated with the implementation process. There was a view that teachers were already overloaded with teaching. It was felt by all participants that without an appropriate amount of time to implement the package the outcome could potentially be sub-standard or threaten the integrity of the standing of the current course.

- There was a clear theme throughout the interviews that participants felt the Laboratory Operations Training Package was not clearly understood and consequently was perceived by participants in different ways. It was felt that without a clear and common vision, the implementation process would be impeded.

- Those without a recent industry background expressed feelings of frustration, stress and inadequacy.

- Participants generally felt resentful of an initiative from which they felt side-lined when it was being written. This feeling was expressed through comments relating to the package having little educational merit and a lack of focus on essential underpinning knowledge. Further to this, participants cited that there was a focus on training rather than education and its subsequent ‘reductionist’ focus was being expressed in the lack of pathways to higher education.

- There was an identifiable pattern in the interview responses relating to the inconsistency of training packages generally. This inconsistency was cited in the form of the varied degrees of input and quality attending the implementation process understood to be in place in other institutions and with other packages. A perception that some training packages were ‘shoddy’ was further reinforced by
a belief among interviewees that some States had refused to implement the training package and were rewriting it into a separate curriculum.

Question 4:
Do you see the change from curriculum-based delivery to the use of training packages as a positive or negative initiative and why?

All participants felt unable to answer the question without reservation, since they saw both positive and negative aspects in the Laboratory Operations Training Package. The general theme was that participants felt the industry focus and industry assessment in principle was positive. However, the participants felt that there were some negative aspects of the training package concept, as summarised below.

- In cases where students enrolled in the course directly from the Victorian Certificate of Education, the package did not address their lack of industry knowledge.
- Lack of VET teacher input into the Laboratory Operations Training Package was seen as negative in terms of its educational content.
- There was a perceived lack of a common vision as to what constitutes a training package.
- There was a perceived focus away from underpinning knowledge in the curriculum toward technical competence only.

Discussion

Over the four years preceding this study, teachers who participated had seen many changes in the context of their workplace. These changes included structural changes to the VET system and to their own institution, and changes to senior management personnel. Along with these domestic changes, the participants in the study had also been involved with the implementation of the National Curriculum for Science Teachers (SCHITECH). This curriculum was competency based and had specified learning outcomes and qualifications from certificate III to the level of diploma. Clearly when the proposal to implement a training package into the centre was imminent, teachers and support staff were apprehensive and anxious about further
changes. Participants in this study were experiencing considerable pressure and anxiety relating to these proposed changes. Six main themes were identified as being major areas of concern.

Concerns about time limitations

All participants in the study felt that the expectation to implement the Laboratory Operations Training Package into the centre within eight months was unrealistic, given that the participants had full teaching and/or co-ordination roles to carry out. Further, the study indicated that a substantial proportion of participants felt overwhelmed and resentful by what was perceived as a lack of time allowance in their teaching loads to match the time and effort required to implement the package.

In the past TAFE teachers had a professional position that was concentrated in the classroom. Prior to changes in the market orientation of VET, teachers did not have to face larger issues outside their own teaching context. This is no longer true, with current competition faced now from within TAFE and from other providers. The TAFE sector is having to renegotiate employment terms and conditions to be more flexible (Smith & Keating 1997). Part of this flexibility is in teachers’ capacity to participate in changes to curriculum, and to write and implement curriculum. There was a clear indication that the added responsibility on top of an already full workload was, in some participants’ minds, too much to ask.

Lack of a clear understanding of a training package

Similar to earlier findings by Smith and Keating (1997), there was a theme throughout the data collected and through observations that there was a lack of participant understanding of training packages. All participants in the present study initially had little real knowledge of training packages and felt frustrated and anxious because of this lack of knowledge. In addition, there were feelings of suspicion and cynicism among participants at once again having to implement a new curriculum.
The extent to which the change and perceived lack of consultation had impacted on the morale of staff

A strongly articulated issue that continued to be brought into discussions was the anger and cynicism that participants felt regarding being 'sidelined' during the writing of the Laboratory Operations Training Package. Further to this issue was the perception that government and some industry representatives did not consider the educational content of the package but rather concentrated on practical assessment only. The perception from many participants was that an industry focus was a positive initiative for vocational education but provision for the inclusion of essential underpinning knowledge had been left out. Participants felt that the concept of training packages seemed to be reductionist. This resonates with Stevenson's (1993) observations that government policy in VET would appear to take the view that learning only prepares for economically productive activity, rather than providing a broader and non-utilitarian concept of education and knowledge.

Numerous discussions in the groups concentrated around the focus on industry-related assessment. A clear theme throughout the study was that all participants felt that the key to maintaining the integrity of what they taught was to continue to teach subject areas that they classified as being essential underpinning knowledge.

Industry knowledge

Participants in the study who had come into the TAFE system from secondary school teaching felt that the new industry focus on assessment was difficult for them to address as they could not draw from their own industrial experience when assessing students. The need to visit industry, speak to industry advisors, and spend block periods back in industry was discussed as a way of overcoming the problem. Teachers need to know what new technologies and processes are emerging and translate that knowledge into the classroom context, and match it with competencies during assessments. Smith and Keating (1997) had made a similar argument when they suggested the need for VET teachers to remain abreast of industry trends.
Assessment

The issue of assessment was the most noted theme within the case study. Participants expressed concern regarding the notion of a simulated work environment and a method to best address the issue of assessment of students within that environment. There was an emphasis toward retaining current assessment models for assessing the underpinning knowledge modules. Participants spent a lot of time matching SCHITECH modules with training packages and the elements of competence outlined in the package. Assessment has been identified as a major concern to TAFE teachers since the inception of competency-based training. Smith et al. (1995) found that assessment issues were the most difficult to accommodate in a general definition of CBT as there were widely differing views on such features as grading assessment and workplace assessment.

Feeling under-valued

In addition, feelings of being under-valued and having to spend too much time on assessment were of major concern to participants. A study conducted by Smith & Nagle (1995), with findings similarly identified by Robinson (1993), suggested that teachers are confused over competency-based training, teaching methods and assessment. This would tend to validate the concerns expressed by the teachers throughout the implementation.

The focus group sessions yielded some useful results that will be discussed in following paragraphs. Most particularly, the stages of McBeath’s (1997) model for curriculum change can be detected as occurring as the focus groups progressed. The orientation and initiation stages are clearly identifiable as lived experience within the focus groups, while the last three stages (implementation, incorporation and outcomes) can be identified as anticipated future processes as the training packages were to be implemented in the following year.

Focus group 1

Observations from this focus group indicate that, confirmatory of the Lowrie and Smith (1999) observation that teachers are uncertain about
the nature of training packages, the challenges of actual implementation also contribute substantially to feelings of uncertainty and anxiety. The views expressed during this first focus group session provide a clear indication that the lack of involvement by teachers in Marsh's (1993) and McBeath's (1997) first stage of curriculum change (orientation and needs) had a major part to play in a lack of participant understanding of the concept of training packages, and the reason (or need) for their adoption. Additionally, the session identified the need for dissemination to move from a management-driven approach to one of interaction between the planners and those charged with the implementation. It is likely that at least some of the hostility expressed by participants in this focus group would have been lessened had there been a perception of greater inclusion in the dissemination process, and more attention paid to the orientation and establishment of need stage.

Focus group 2

It can be argued that the questions generated for the institute manager not only indicated uncertainty over implementation but also, as Chappell (1998) suggests, concern for what it means to be a teacher in a training package context. The issues identified showed a progression from those of focus group 1, which yielded issues of personal uncertainty, anger, and frustration with change. Further to that, feelings of being marginalised were expressed. Focus group 2 outcomes were clearly associated with more professional issues of implementation, teaching and management strategy, and concern for development of required competencies and conceptual understanding.

The orientation stage and the dissemination process developed through the involvement of the institute manager occurred at the same time as focus group participants were grappling with implementation. However, this focus group showed some of the benefits of that process. During the focus group session there was clear evidence that the second stage of McBeath's model, that of initiation or mobilisation, was beginning to be engaged by participants. There was a commencement of the identification of the decisions and activities that need to precede the change.
Focus group 3

A clear outcome of focus group 3 was the emerging of a willingness to engage meaningfully with the change, and to commence detailed planning to achieve it. It is important to note that the group's anger had shifted from being the result of uncertainty to being focussed on the work that was to be done, but which was nevertheless deemed unnecessary.

In terms of the McBeath (1997) five-stage model, it is apparent here that there was a continuing engagement with the issues of initiation, and the anticipation of implementation considerations. Participants who were beginning to discuss ways in which the package could improve the course were moving towards a state of readiness for the incorporation phase and even the outcomes phase. Also still clear, however, was evidence of the continued dysfunctions that were the result of a dissemination process that was not seen as interactive or inclusive.

Focus group 4

In this focus group the details of anticipated implementation were being engaged in a systematic way, with some planning and reflection being undertaken between meetings. Clearly, participants by this time had moved much more definitely towards planning implementation, and the flow chart initiative of one of the participants indicated a move towards incorporation, or routinisation. The decision to teach initially from existing modules, while partly an implementation decision, is also indicative of an anticipated routinisation process that was becoming comfortable to participants, probably because it could be related to a known routine already established. This adaptation from the known to the new formed an important part of the implementation stage being engaged by the participants in the focus group.

The expression of a need to meet with the relevant Industry Advisory Committee of the institute also indicated recognition that dissemination requires interaction. Interestingly, in this case, it was the implementers rather than the planners who saw this need for interactivity to be part of dissemination. Also noteworthy was the relative absence of the
earlier hostility that had occurred as the process had become clearer to the implementers, confidence about the issues to be addressed had grown, and a consultative process identified.

Focus group 5

Here there was an acceptance of the need for implementation, and a desire to have a workable implementation plan. The anticipated implementation plan also embraces the need for incorporation into practice, and routinisation, indicating that participants were beginning to engage with the fourth stage of the McBeath (1997) model. The views expressed in that fifth focus group session also included some reflection on the outcomes stage, most particularly whether or not the change, once implemented, would result in improvements of student experience. It also appears implicit in the comments made during that focus group session that participants were engaging in some reflection on whether or not at least some outcomes of the changes might ultimately have any benefits for them as teachers.

However, the feelings of marginalisation in the process were still there. This once again provided a clear indication that the orientation and establishment of the needs stage of the McBeath model were absent in the original management-initiated process, and that the dissemination process was non-inclusive of the personnel charged with implementation responsibility.

Conclusion

The current investigation has provided some test for the five-stage curriculum change model proposed by McBeath (1997). Throughout the study, teachers were engaging with curriculum change through a process that was interpretable through McBeath’s model. Teachers moved through the mobilisation to an anticipation and planning for implementation and routinisation stages in a way that was identifiable as the focus group sessions proceeded. Also evident was some engagement with the outcomes stage of the model. The study also provided some evidence that the orientation and needs establishment
first stage of the model is important in the early development of effective engagement with curriculum change. An absence of that stage from the experience of teachers in the curriculum change researched here appears to have resulted in some dysfunctions. At the same time, the research here has not been able to establish positively that inclusion of that first stage would have resulted in different processes or outcomes. Nor has the study been able to provide information on what precisely an effective orientation stage may have encompassed.

Additionally, there was considerable evidence that, as McBeath (1997) observes, a dissemination process that is management driven and non-inclusive of the implementers results in substantial stress, disruption and inefficiencies. Participants in the current research made it quite clear that they felt marginalised and disenfranchised from a dissemination process not characterised by interaction between themselves and the planners of curriculum change. That lack of interaction and inclusion was manifest in the hostility and suspicion that persisted throughout the focus group sessions. Again, the current study is not able to provide evidence that an interactive dissemination process would necessarily have yielded different participant responses, although there was evidence that as interaction proceeded there was some attenuation of those feelings.

There is also evidence that the implementation of training packages across VET is causing some teachers anxiety, and that this is at least partially related to a changing perception of their own roles as teachers, and the value placed on their professionalism by other stakeholders in VET. The emphasis from government on work-based learning and industry-relevant training will continue to shift teachers’ day-to-day work practices and the ways in which training is being delivered across TAFE. In a recent paper Hawke (2000, p.14) examines the changing nature of vocational education and training and acknowledges that there are challenges to be faced by teachers. One of these challenges is to acknowledge the importance of improving VET awareness of ‘workplace realities among teachers’. As indicated by some of the responses from teachers in this paper, industry expertise is seen as validating teachers’ positions as vocational educators. Further to this, teachers in this study felt that a perceived lack of recent industry
experience was of major concern to them. Chappell (2000, p.5) suggests that 'the TAFE teacher's credibility as "industry expert" is always open to question and complicated by rapid changes to work that currently characterises post-industrial workplaces'.

Teachers in TAFE have been experiencing changes to their work practices since the introduction of competency-based training. The implementation of CBT, flexible delivery, recognition of prior learning and workplace assessment has served to change the working experiences of TAFE teachers. Although the current study has shown the importance of issues of implementation, according to Chappell (2000), this may be shifting. There is evidence in the current study that the myriad of changes that are occurring in VET impact on teachers' understanding of their educational practice and, most particularly, on their identity as professionals.

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