Today I intend speaking to you about one Institute’s approach to improving its teachers’ pedagogy (Teaching and Learning practices).

BRIT proposes to develop and implement a staff professional development program to support VET teaching and learning excellence based on the concepts of collegiality and collaboration.

The rationale behind this project is based on the following three assumptions.

1. Teaching and learning is often characterised by relative isolation of teacher from teacher.

2. A growing percentage of VET teachers come directly from industry with a Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training and as their only teaching qualification (high vocational competence, low teaching and learning competence).

3. With an aging teacher workforce there is the need to support practice-based renewal of teaching practice with a particular focus on the development of excellence in VET teaching and learning strategies.

Overview of BRIT
BRIT services a residential population of approximately 200,000 people. This population is spread across 25,000 square kilometres. While the population is geographically spread, it is not geographically isolated being only 140kms from Melbourne and the metropolitan TAFES, and only a few kilometres from a number of surrounding regional TAFES. It is therefore in a very different market position compared with eg. the East Gippsland TAFE, which is very isolated by comparison.
BRIT is a multi-campus TAFE having 11,000 students accessing 12 campuses scattered throughout the Region i.e. a Melbourne City campus at Essendon, 3 correctional facilities (Tarrengower, Bendigo, & Loddon), and a Juvenile Detention Centre (Malmsbury); 5 Regional Campuses (Echuca, Kerang, Maryborough, Kyneton and Castlemaine) and 2 Bendigo City Campuses – (McCrae Street and Charleston Road). Indeed, BRIT is unique among TAFES in the number of campuses it has for its overall size of operations. At BRIT our courses are grouped under faculties or what we call Teaching Centres, each with their own Teaching Centre Manager. BRIT has 6 Teaching Centres whose courses are clustered into Secotrs. Each Sector has a Sector Co Ordinator.

1st Assumption - Teacher Isolation  Teaching and learning is often characterised by relative isolation of teacher from teacher.

Studies of effective professional-development programs find the use of such terms as: collaboration, cooperation, partnership, mutual adaptation or accomplishment, collegiality and interactive development. These images tend to create a vision of professional work and professional relations at once intellectually stimulating, educationally rigorous, and professionally rewarding. On closer examination, however, conditions that are powerful enough to introduce new ideas and practices in classrooms and to sustain "collegial" relations among teachers require a degree of organisation, energy, skill and endurance often underestimated in summary reports.

Judith Little, a well known researcher into teacher professional development in the 1980’s and 90’s found that teachers have few opportunities to watch each other at work, and tend to form impressions of each other’s competence from students’ comments and from casual glances through classroom doorways. The criterion for “good teaching” is often no more than the sense that things are “going well” in the classroom. If trying a new approach requires a disruption in established routines, if it will thereby create the appearance of floundering and place teachers at risk of being judged negatively by colleagues, teachers may be less likely to make the attempt. The more complex and unfamiliar a practice, and the greater a departure it requires from past practice, the more likely it is that teachers will indeed struggle with it.

If the experiences from Little’s studies serve as evidence, practices that have resulted in greater student achievement and classroom order have required extensive thought and preparation; these teachers trace their most impressive accomplishments to more complex undertakings that stretched the limits of their knowledge and experience. Collective participation on some scale (even four members of a single department or two-person course level teams) eased the burden. Teachers describe group discussions of ideas, shared work in preparing written materials and designing lessons, and collaborative review of progress as less threatening.

Research of Beattie (1995) and supported by Langdon (1998) found that the building of collaborative relationships between teachers is important in contributing to a teacher’s learning and development.

Teachers’ favourable and unfavourable judgments about staff development revolve precisely around the issue of teachers’ rights to propose or share in such analyses and around their obligation to accept the analyses (and advice) of others.

The point here is whether the interaction called “staff development” is conducted in ways that are properly reciprocal, calling for shared items and collaborative effort among fellow professionals.
In programmes that required collaborative participation, teachers and staff developers alike found their views mutually valued, sought, credited and tested. The issue for teachers and for programs of staff development is how such reciprocity was established as the basis for shared work, and was confirmed in the course of routine interaction.

To be successful, collaborative arrangements must offer the opportunity to demonstrate reciprocity among fellow professionals, to develop clearly known and shared aims, and to establish trust by building a history of predictable performance.

Learning to teach can be analogous to learning to play a new sport. It takes time to learn the basic skills, grasping the essential rudiments of the game, much practice, tolerance for mistakes and a way of marking progress along the way.

Research tells us, that at first teachers may feel threatened or wary of collaboration, particularly when it involves visiting each others classrooms. We must be sure to respect an individual teacher’s professionalism and encourage them to approach this form of staff development with the idea that they were participants in building a learning community where all were involved, rather than that they were remediating some failure on their or another’s part. This subtle yet important distinction makes the difference between professional development programs or activities that enhance teachers’ sense of professionalism and mandates that make assumptions that negate teacher’s past experience and knowledge. Where the ideas come from is not nearly as important as how staff development is organised, how people are supported, and how teachers’ sense of efficacy can be enhanced.

As Little’s research (1982, 1984) shows, discussion of new teaching and learning strategies or new texts must be mated with discussions of how best to engage teachers in dialogue about their own teaching, how to find ways for teachers to have a greater sense of their own professionalism, their own sense of excitement as teachers. Teachers need opportunities to come together as colleagues, where they can be involved in the plans, and where their concerns can be made primary.

But collegiality does not just happen. We must all learn how to work in a way that nourishes people and helps them grow rather than exhort people to make changes without the necessary conditions to make this happen. But how can this come about? Perhaps the single most important learning has been that there are a variety of ways to work with people – no single mode works for everybody.

Because most teachers have learned to teach by doing it, much of their repertoire is home grown, experiential, and idiosyncratic. Attempts to make changes in style and substance must involve teachers in doing things that help expand their repertoire. There are many ways for this happen. However, the most important, and as research shows, most effective way is for teachers to feel a sense of colleagueship with each other; by collaborating to do something rather than making do on their own in isolation.

Lieberman and Miller (1984) found that in schools where new norms of collegiality and experimentation were practiced, four patterns were observed:

*Teachers talk about practice.* Teachers begin to build a shared language about what they are doing. The focus is off students and on to the substance, the process, the interaction, and the materials they are creating. The focus is on *practice*, not *teachers*; or as Little (1982:331) says ‘teachers engage in frequent, continuous and increasingly concrete and precise talk about teaching practices’.

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Teachers and administrators plans, design, research, evaluate, and prepare materials together. It is in the interaction of ideas and plans and in execution of these plans that people become committed.

Teachers observe each other working. Colleagueship in a collective struggle to learn is more apt to build commitment and involvement and control and evaluation. Little (1982:331) describes this as ‘teachers frequently being observed, and provided with useful (if potentially frightening) critiques of their teaching’.

Teachers teach each other the practice of teaching. The resources of the Institute are recognised. People see each other as colleagues. People share resources with each other. Past and current learnings are discussed.

Little (1984) draws attention to the subtleties of “relevant interaction” as opposed to “demanding” interaction. The day-to-day descriptions of what people do when they develop new practices describes both the content and the processes that go on in school-improvement efforts that really make a difference. Teachers design and prepare materials, review and discuss plans, persuade others to try things out, credit new ideas, invite others to observe, observe other teachers, teach each other formally and informally, talk publicly and about what is being learned, evaluate both their own and the other’s performance. This is what building high expectations is all about. Collegiality is modelled not by talking about it, but by doing it. Staff development becomes a process for the teacher.

Some educational institutions are characterised by relative isolation from teacher to teacher while others are places where teachers consistently interact around professional issues. As Rosenholtz (1989) points out, “Norms of collaboration don’t simply just happen. They do not spring spontaneously out of teachers’ mutual respect and concern for each other.” Fullan (1992:11) argues “staff development will never have its intended impact as long as it is grafted onto an organisation in the form of discrete, unconnected projects”. Clearly a change in practice requires organisational structure for implementation.

This then begs the question: ‘How then do we, organise a TAFE institute in order to gain a norm of collaboration/collegiality?’

If we look at the research findings from the past two decades about staff development there is not really much new under the sun. Rather, what you will discover are some tried and true notions that have become enriched and expanded over time.

These include:

- Providing team teaching opportunities which create the need to plan and carry out instructions with colleagues.
- Working with people rather than working on people.
- Recognising the complexity and craft nature of the teacher’s work.
- Providing time to learn.
- Building collaboration and cooperation, involving the provisions for teachers to do things together, talking together, sharing concerns.
- Starting where people are, not where you are.
- Making private knowledge public, by being sensitive to the effects of teacher isolation and the power of trial and error.
- Resisting simplistic solutions to complex problems; getting comfortable with reworking issues and finding enhanced understanding and enlightenment.
- Appreciating that there are many variations of development efforts; there is no one best way.
- Using knowledge as a way of helping people grow rather than pointing out their deficits.
- Supporting development efforts by protecting ideas, announcing expectations, making provisions for necessary resources.
- Organising development efforts around a particular focus.
- Understanding the content and process are both essential, that you cannot have one without the other.

Of course the list is not all-inclusive. Our knowledge about staff development and school improvement is still incomplete.

Joint work was seen by Little (1990) as having the greatest potential because it involved shared responsibility for the work of teaching.

This highlights a change of perceptions about teaching from the perception of teaching as a routine job conducted with craft-like knowledge, in isolation from other adults in a hierarchical status structure, to a new perception in contrast which views teaching as a non-routine activity drawing on a reliable body of technical knowledge and conducted in collaboration with other professional colleagues (Leithwood et al, 1994:126).

Clearly, the work environment needs to have appropriate organisation structures that acknowledge teachers as competent adult professionals, that provide an environment supportive of risk taking, and that enables staff members to work and learn collegially. These support structures include observation of peers, feedback from peers, consultation and reflection with peers, planning and evaluation together are all required. (Smyth 1991, Fullan 1992, Ridden 1996). More recently this is confirmed by the 2004 ANTA “Final Report: Working and Learning in Vocational Education and Training in the Knowledge Era, Professional Development for the Future Project” (Feb. 2004). This report emphasises “building professional development into the iterative nature of knowledge work; and that there is a need to …‘embed a new style of professional development within VET”’. (Henry, 2004).

2nd Assumption - VET Teacher Training A growing percentage of VET teachers come directly from industry with a Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training and as their only teaching qualification (high vocational competence, low teaching and learning competence).

As BRIT continues to focus on Vocational Education and Training there is a strong emphasis on having vocationally competent teachers. As a result, BRIT, along with other TAFE Institutes, source the majority of new teachers directly from industry. These teachers generally begin with a Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training as their only teaching qualification.

The following grid shows a sample of delivery time for Cert IV in AWPT as it stands in 2004 across various TAFE Institutes:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Delivery of Certificate IV in Assessment &amp; Workplace Training</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th># Sessions</th>
<th>Times</th>
<th>Delivery Hrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>As at 19th April 2005</td>
<td>Metro TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>11 sessions</td>
<td>9am-5pm</td>
<td>77 Hrs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Hrs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Metro TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>Eve</td>
<td>17 weeks</td>
<td>6pm-9m</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sat</td>
<td>8 weeks</td>
<td>9am-4:30pm</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metro TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>Wed Day</td>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>9am-4:30pm</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAFE QLD</td>
<td>Thu</td>
<td>13 weeks</td>
<td>6pm-9pm</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>Off Campus Only</td>
<td>$1,100</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>Days</td>
<td>10 days</td>
<td>9am-4pm</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>Days</td>
<td>17 session</td>
<td>9am-4pm</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>Days</td>
<td>8 sessions</td>
<td>9am-5pm</td>
<td>56</td>
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<tr>
<td>Country TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>Flexible Only</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country TAFE - Vic</td>
<td>Days</td>
<td>24 sessions</td>
<td>6pm-9pm</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BRIT</td>
<td>Day/Eve</td>
<td>50 sessions</td>
<td>3 hours</td>
<td>150</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The NOM HRS for AWPT is 210 hrs
The NOM HRS for new TAA is 355 hrs

This basic teaching qualification has very little if any practical teaching component. Therefore many new teachers (as described by Leithwood et al, 1994:116) have partially developed classroom management skills; knowledge about, but limited skills in the use of several teaching models; no conscious reflection on choice of model; rely on using limited techniques in response to external demands (eg reporting to employers) and there is generally a poor link between the focus of assessment and instructional goal (including limited use of holistic assessment). This is backed up by the findings of recent NCVER research (Dickie et al 2004), which found that the TAFE sector across Australia is making increasing use of part time and non permanent staff, most of whom do not have formal qualifications in education and training. The study found that these people now make up a majority of professionals employed in the sector.

**Vocational Competence**

![Vocational Competence Diagram]

**Teaching Competence**

![Teaching Competence Diagram]
Due to the nature of a teacher’s work, the number of part time and sessional teachers and the small number of teachers in each area of study there is little opportunity within BRIT for teachers to have sustained interpersonal adult contact necessary for professional growth. This is illustrated by the fact that as at December 2004 BRIT had over 350 courses on its Scope of Registration and 267 teachers (of whom only 56 % were ongoing permanent staff members):

103 Ongoing full-time teachers
47 Ongoing part-time teachers
18 Fixed term full-time teachers
17 Fixed term part-time teachers
82 sessional teachers

The notion of teachers working in isolation or in ‘loosely ~ coupled’ organisations also impacts on the level and style of supervision. ‘Loosely ~ coupled’ organisations (Fullan, 1982) refer to units, processes, actions and individuals that are typically connected loosely rather than tightly in an organisation. Examples of loose coupling abound in organisations who function with little or no supervision, independence rather than interdependence among departments, actions isolated from consequences and process that seem disconnected rather than linked.

This therefore, has implications for the role of Teaching Centre Manager and Sector Co-ordinators, as supervisors in relation to the Institute as an organisation. I outlined the role of each at the start of this paper. In order to be able to base VET teaching and learning on the concepts of collegiality and collaboration the concept of collegiality will need to be developed as a modus operandi for the organisation.

The need for the “enablers of professional organisation’s fundamental identity; connect others; and establish work structures which develop” (Henry 2004:3). Workforce have maximum effect only if they are work is organised in TAFE” (Kosky 2002:8).

The pattern of leadership required by the supervisor/leader in this process calls for practices which most Teaching Centre Managers/Sector Co-ordinators are not prepared. For this to be successful, they will need to participate in training sessions that will assist them to develop appropriate leadership practices and support structures within the organisation.

3rd Assumption - Life Long Learning With an aging teacher workforce there is the need to support practice – based renewal of teaching practice with a particular focus on the development of excellence in VET teaching and learning strategies.

Professional development has been redefined by Fullan (1992) as a life-long process of learning, not an isolated event, but rather a continuous and career-long process.

Unruh & Turner (1985) present a theoretical model to provide a basis for planning professional programs:
They argue that a properly developed professional development program should provide for a continuous growth of teachers from early years through the period of the maturing teacher. The beginner needs assistance in getting underway. The teacher achieving security needs aid of a different type and much more freedom. Maturing teachers (15+ years experience) need additional challenges to keep up their interest and support to retain their enthusiasm.

The purpose of staff professional development should always be to enable staff members to work together and to grow professionally in areas of common concern. Inservice programs should be based on staff experience and training. The prime goal is to promote the continuous growth of teachers, including the elimination of deficiencies.

The first dimension of the proposed model is concerned with professional growth. In each of four periods from preservice to professional maturity the teacher is learning certain competences and achieving certain goals. Unruh & Turner (1985) arbitrarily divide the professional life of a teacher into four periods, of indefinite length; some persons have been known to remain in the initial teaching period for many years while others have progressed rapidly toward the maturing period. The second dimension, areas of knowledge (the content of the program), involves five major fields of study which have been selected because they contribute much to the understanding of the process of education, the college as a social institution, and the process of learning. Unless a program has something from each field to stimulate the intellectually powers of teachers, it is not likely to be a balanced program. The third dimension is motivation. Teachers must constantly keep themselves informed of new knowledge, the modification of methods, and new insights produced by research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Periods of Professional Growth</th>
<th>Preservice</th>
<th>Initial Teaching Period</th>
<th>Building Security</th>
<th>The Maturing Teacher</th>
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<td>Culture</td>
<td>1* (a)</td>
<td>6* (a)</td>
<td>11* (a)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(continuing general education)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Specialization Professional advancement</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>(b)</td>
<td>(b)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sociology</td>
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DIMENSION TWO
Areas of Knowledge
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DIMENSION THREE
Aspirations
Incentives
Motivation
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<th>Motivation</th>
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Research undertaken in Victoria (Langdon, 1998) confirmed that the younger a teacher the less comfortable they are about having someone else in their classroom supporting them. One of the major findings of the research, into the concept of collegiality, was that relatively few people who obtain skills in new approaches to teaching will make that way of working part of their regular practice until a ‘coaching’ or ‘collegial support’ component is added to the components in the initial activities. In relation to the concept of life long learning, it has been argued that collegiality is part of the extended professionalism of the teacher (Langdon, 1998:224).

It is difficult to contribute to teacher development in the absence of a clear image of what such development looks like (Leithwood et al 1994:113). To be effective, professional development programs must take into account both a teachers professional expertise development and as I said earlier, their career – cycle development.

Impacting on this is the fact that “modern production methods, new technologies and job redesign are changing the skills that existing workers require”. As Minister Kosky stated in her Ministerial Statement, “Reskilling for existing workers is of growing importance” (Kosky, 2003). For this to occur life long learning will need to become the norm.

**BRIT Model:**

BRIT’s VET Teaching and Learning Excellence Professional Development program will have both formal and informal aspects:

As per the centre circle, the initial target group for this program will be new teachers to BRIT. As this program is expanded the cohort of teachers in the centre circle would change however, support structures would remain just as valid.
Formal Aspects:

- **On-the-job supervision**
  This is related to performance management developing annual workplan, setting Key Performance Indicators, providing feedback (summative and formative) and appraisal. The key result is the growth and development of teachers. The goal is to help them succeed. The main tool BRIT uses here is the teacher’s workplan on-line.

- **Vocational Competence**
  BRIT is placing emphasis on the vocational competence of all teachers. Vocational competence can be gained in a number of ways. Specifically BRIT expects all full time staff members to undertake Industry Release of a minimum of five (consecutive) working days every two years, in the field they are teaching in. Part time staff members satisfy this if they are currently working part time in the industry relevant to the Training Package they are teaching at BRIT.

- **Certificate IV/Diploma Training and Assessment / VET**
  The aim is to assist the teacher to upgrade their teaching qualifications to an AQF Level 5. This will assist in both their theoretical underpinning knowledge as well as assist them to advance through the salary subdivisions as per the new MECA.

Another BRIT project currently underway is the *Blended Delivery Model for implementation of the new Certificate IV course in Training and Assessment (TAA)*
This Project is working with industry to provide relevant and tailored training options for VET teachers.

To drive this project we have sourced a project manager from the industry sector and as well have included industry representatives on the external reference group and working party.

**Four key client groups are being targeted:**
1. Secondary Teachers who wish to teach VETis;
2. Inexperienced Teachers from both TAFE and VETis who have industry knowledge and experience but are new to teaching;
3. Experienced Teachers from both TAFE and VETis who need gap training to bring them up to the new qualification requirements; and
4. Workbased trainers training in different industries and contexts.

The Blended Delivery Model Project will provide flexible and tailored delivery of teacher training and assessment rather than a ‘one size fits all’ product as has largely been developed in the past.

Informal Aspects

- **Mentor**
  Each new teacher will be assigned a mentor. The aim of this is to contribute to skills development in mentors as well as contributing to the growth of those participating as mentees. Although mentoring appears as an Informal Aspect there will be training provided to mentors as well as formal support material. The mentor does not necessarily come from the same department as the mentee.
• **Co-worker Buddy**
  Each new teacher will be assigned a buddy. The co-worker buddy will be someone working in the same discipline as their buddy. The emphasis here is an active communication promoting interaction, discussion, critique, support and feedback. This project aims to incorporate the concept of team teaching as an induction strategy to assist new teachers in their development of professional expertise.

• **Self Directed Learning**
  Self directed learning via project work will involve teachers using the action research model. The project topics may be selected by the Teaching Centre Manager and/or the teacher. The aim is to both improve teacher’s skills, knowledge, understandings or performance in VET pedagogy and to foster a collaborative culture (eg. Team development of a flexible delivery tool).

**Project Outcomes**

- Close links forged with TAFE Development Centre.
- Staff Development Project Officer appointed to drive the development and implementation of this program.
- Staff Professional Development program details supporting VET pedagogy excellence further developed.
- Staff Professional Development program implemented as part of teacher induction.
- Supervisor training identified and implemented for Centre Managers and Sector Co-ordinators.
- Industry Release program developed for all BRIT teachers and industry partners identified.
- Teachers supported to undertake further teacher training study (Dip TAA or the course which fulfils the MECA requirements).
- Action Research projects, aimed at improving teacher VET pedagogy and fostering a collaborative culture, identified.
- Support materials/kit developed to assist ‘co-worker buddy’ program.
- Mentor program identified and adapted for use at BRIT.
- Mentors identified and training undertaken.
Bibliography


Dickie et. al. (2004) “Enhancing the Capability of the VET Professional” Australian National Training Authority Project


Strategies to achieve VET Teaching & Learning Excellence

Abstract

This paper addresses BRIT’s workforce development plan which proposes to support VET teaching and learning excellence based on the concepts of collegiality and collaboration. The rationale behind this project is based on three assumptions. Firstly that Teaching and Learning is often characterised by relative isolation of teacher from teacher. Secondly, that a growing percentage of VET teachers come directly from industry with a Certificate IV Assessment and Workplace Training as their only teaching qualification (high vocational competence, low teaching and learning competence); and thirdly, that with an aging teacher workforce there is the need to support practice – based renewal of teaching practice with a particular focus on the development of excellence in VET teaching and learning strategies.