Converting Carmichael’s VET in Schools legacy:

Certified for university,

Yet not ready for the workforce
Introduction

• The ‘holy trinity’ of industry-driven school reviews: Finn, Mayer and Carmichael
• Carmichael on all three reviews and the Australian Vocational Certificate Training System paved the way for VETiS
• 30 years later, the role and place of VETiS remains problematic, eg, Joyce and ASQA
• NT as a case study of VETiS policy-making
Technical Education Always Contested

• State-subsidised worker training from 1920s
• Industry always seeking control (but not paying)
• Kangan’s legacies: Federal funding for VET, educational criteria primacy
• Federal take-over of VET rejected in early 1990s and the resultant National Training Reform Agenda
• Included the AVCTS nationally recognised certificates, senior secondary colleges
• Driven by *Australia Reconstructed*, youth unemployment and disconnected schools/employers
The 1990s policy geography

• Tri-partite mechanisms to change the economy and social welfare supports, including schools
• Prioritising industry knowledge
• Active welfare policies, getting people to work
• States and territories caught between increasing federal policy intervention and the necessity of accepting national funding
Theorising Senior School Certification

• The school has become the unit of VETiS analysis
• Australian Government does not run any schools, but wants to buy policy control, eg, VETiS
• Ongoing tactical ministerial moves on both sides results in contested spaces
• Ball: policy analysis has a history, no single theory explanations, policy as text or as discourse
• Cort: policy trails – policy becomes analytic unit
• Thelen: institutional change - layering, conversion
Schools, skills, labour market entry

- Problem created (Bacchi) that existing school certificates not related to skills, leading to employment, flexibility, actors need to fix
- The policy trail produces things, eg AVCTS
- Industry knowledge at start of VETiS policy trail, the ‘holy trinity’ were some of the actors
- Joyce in 2019 identified the same problems as had Carmichael in 1992.
NT landscape for VETiS policy trail

• NT historic links to South Australian education
• Self-government in 1978-9, education in last group due to the ‘education establishment’
• Political domination of the public service and start of local policy making in education
• Industry had its own local certification and knowledge since 1948 and the Apprenticeship Board
The actors and their scripts I

• NT Board of Studies created 1984
• 1985 SA School Assessed Senior Subjects and their ‘employment purposes’
• NTBOS’s education v VTC’s industry knowledge
• Industry in departments, education legislated
• 1992 NTETA created, reinvigorated industry
• Recognition, credit transfer, RPL, etc.
• VETiS particularly contested with complex processes from both sides.
The actors and their scripts II

• NTBOS claimed national excellence in 1992
• NT Cabinet accepts the AVCTS in 1992
• NTBOS’s response is to make VET quals fit a time served model, complex processes and mixed messages to schools (show demand)
• NTBOS incremental inclusion of VET, NTETA abolished in 2004, brief Training Commission in 2016, no separate industry body
• Education is local, Industry now national – a complete reversal from self-government start
National Context I

• Many federal bodies in the contest: ANTA, SA AWPA, ASTF, ECEF, ASQA, AISC, NSSC, etc
• Blame and cost-shifting have become a VET art form; numerous reviews since the 1990s
• MCEETYA gave schools a role in training 1994
• Accompanied by a shift by policy analysts from the policy itself to the performance of schools and the statistical reporting of their outcomes
National Context II – Schools analytic locus by ANTA in 2000

• VETiS sits outside school timetables, mostly
• 90 per cent of schools offer VETiS
• Non-school RTOs offer better quals perception
• Cost of VET not absorbed in school budgets
• VET has not replaced many traditional subjects
• Success is measured in retention to end of Year 12, leaving for TAFE, employment or an apprenticeship is a failure & reduced funding
Re-joining the policy trail

• Although using the school as analytic unit, Clarke offers a way to return to policy as the unit of analysis
• First, describes the role of VETiS in reproducing existing socio-economic inequalities and returning to a major theme of *Australia Reconstructed*
• Second, makes brief reference to the ‘problematic certificate paradigm’ that makes certificate attainment the major goal of schools (and how VET fits into these)
• Obscures transitions to employment and labour market
• Invites us to return to the policy trail and the contest for ascendancy between education and industry knowledge.
Carmichael’s intentions

• His intervention into schooling managed to offend just about everyone: teachers’ unions, certification authorities, Boards of Studies (eg, CBT), universities admissions and claiming equality of the two knowledges, maybe more

• This was intended as schools were seen to not be fit for purpose in the reconstructed Australia

• Carmichael intended to convert education qualifications to industry qualifications for everyone, little success, eg, St Patrick’s College
The results

• The political negotiations actually resulted *layering* of VET quals onto traditional education certification processes

• This process of ‘veridiction’ where truth is determined by an individual’s world view has left education knowledge in charge

• Hence Joyce found the same things as had Carmichael, education knowledge served as veridiction then and now

• All of this obscured by focusing on schools
Conclusions

• The NT provided a clear line of sight to the policy trail and the contest between education and industry veridictions

• Analysis of VETiS moved from the policies and all the things they imply and produce

• Given that there has been little change in the major problems with the politically attractive and perceived benefits of VETiS in spite of decades of reviews and changes in school delivery

• We have been looking in the wrong place
Conclusions

• We need to use policy trail analysis and return attention to the policy itself, who makes it and how is it framed for political consideration
• Continued attempts to ‘reform’ VETiS by focusing on schools unlikely to make a difference
• Real drivers of VETiS outcomes are the policies themselves and with the political mandates of accreditation & certification authorities
• Education knowledge (HE entry) has again raced ahead of industry knowledge (Employment) on the policy trail
Questions and Discussion

Thank you for your attendance

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