



from the president

PAUL REARDON, Federal President of the TAFE Division of the AEU

TAFE and the future?

‘TAFE institutes from directors through to teachers have found the diminishing base funding in some jurisdictions almost impossible to deal with.’

THE TAFE system is now finding it very difficult, in fact well nigh impossible, to make ends meet in regards to revenues and expenditures. Federal and state governments are to blame for blindly following

policies that have led to institutes chasing sources of finance wherever they think they might find them, onshore or offshore.

There is no doubt that policy makers believe that TAFE is too expensive, and hence

contestability of funding will continue.

Base funding for core service obligations has been whittled away. TAFE institutes from directors through to teachers have found the diminishing base funding in some

VOCED
plus

VOCEDplus
the tertiary education
research database

New features include:

- Wider coverage to include higher education and vocational education and training
- Powerful searching and browsing filters to help you find what you are looking for
- Social networking applications to share your search results
- Citation tool to make referencing easy

www.voced.edu.au

Education for work and beyond



The National Centre for Vocational Education Research produces VOCEDplus with funding assistance from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

jurisdictions almost impossible to deal with.

Government ministers continually stipulate that the TAFE system is either the core of the VET system or an extremely important part of it. But that is not reflected in policies or their implementation. Unless there are significant changes in the direction being mapped out for the VET system overall, TAFE could easily find that its role is restricted to three components.

Firstly, as the provider of foundation skills for disadvantaged students or those with literacy and numeracy needs. The objective here would be to use that part of the VET system that can reach the broadest possible area to avoid the danger of some students not being catered for.

The next would be as the provider for the priority higher level VET qualifications, as significant numbers of TAFE teaching staff have the qualifications and ability to teach at the higher level.

The third component could be that of TAFE becoming the safety net for when the market fails. Implicit in this would be an admission right from the start that there is something inherently flawed within the

structure of the system or that it is quite foreseeable that the flaw could easily develop. If the architects of the current system were actually architects of buildings or bridges the likelihood of them obtaining employment in their construction fields would be zero given the dangers that their work contains. But in VET they are allowed to build on, with escape routes often well planned.

As the policy makers and the ministers continue to construct the new VET system, the term 'entitlement' increases in frequency within the documents. They avoid the term 'voucher' like the plague, as they know that there are negative connotations attached to it. With limited funding available to governments for training and with their eyes basically only ever on the impact of training on the economy, the chances of some sections of society only being able to access the supported training is high. If not in a highly sought after trade, the chances of individuals having to pay significant amounts of their own money to establish themselves in a career are increasingly high. The thinking may be that a full government subsidy may not be available for all certificate III qualifications

and foundation pathways.

It is not hard then to draw the following conclusion: some of the traditional trades will be the top of the pile when it comes to handouts. These are predominantly male dominated. The question then becomes, where does it leave the non-traditional trades and their access to funded training?

In all of this policy development it is really only employment outcomes that is the key consideration. This is the only real determinant of what entitlement should go to whom. The rest can pay their own way. This is what is most likely to happen in an industry led system which only has employment as outcomes. It is a narrow approach to the issue of vocational education and training and one of the reasons why the system has not addressed literacy and numeracy problems.

If the level of subsidy for VET is going to be based solely on job-demand, the system will experience even more problems than it faces now. Many are hoping that surely it could not get any worse. The indications are there is only bad news for those who were hoping for something different. ❖



Learning. We take it personally.

We know that in today's digitised world you don't just want an online text; you want to make it yours.

Personal, unique, powerful.

Pearson eTexts allow you to shape the text around your course by hiding and re-ordering chapters, adding links to relevant online resources and sharing notes with students.

Learn more at pearson.com.au/vet/etexts
or contact us on 1 800 838 123 or vet@pearson.com.au