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The VET Gazette is a collection of information and relevant stories about goings on in the Vocational Education and Training sector. The VET Gazette is a free publication distributed every couple of months and hopefully includes stories and articles containing something for everyone.

If you are receiving the VET Gazette through a colleague and you would like to be on the mailing list, please [subscribe here](#) and you will automatically be added to our database.

The writer has over 25 years experience in all areas of the VET sector including training and assessing, auditing, consulting, quality and risk management, project management, instructional design, administration and business development.

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A Brilliant Mistake

For some time now, I have been questioning the way in which the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment qualification is delivered because of its pivotal nature in RTO operations, flow-on compliance matters and in the broader VET environment as an education sector. In the January 2011 edition of The VET Gazette I wrote an article called 'cause and effect' in which I outlined that the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment was more than likely an adequate qualification if it was delivered well by good trainers/teachers but that the effects of poor delivery are widespread.

A few weeks back, a paper was released on the NCVET website called "Initial training for VET teachers: a portrait within a larger canvas". You can find the paper by following [this link](#). In the executive summary of the report the following is stated.

"The poor quality of delivery of the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is a particular issue. Improving its quality may require a more stringent examination of the providers that offer it; furthermore, the minimum levels of qualification and experience of the staff teaching the program should also be increased".

I was personally involved in the consultation stages of both the TAA training package and the newer TAE training package and in both instances, the AQF level of the qualification as an entry level course was discussed. In the 2011 Productivity Commission Report, it was also reiterated that the course is 'an appropriate minimum qualification' (underline added). So given that the qualification appears to be at an acceptable level, maybe another course of action is required.

Firstly I must say that I have always found it bemusing that a person can deliver this qualification with only this qualification. Sure I hear people say that the AQTF (or RTO standards) requires a person to have 'vocational competence' as well but that's one of the most intangible terms in the standards. Determining a person's vocational competence is very subjective and almost impossible when their 'industry' is training and assessment.

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A Brilliant Mistake Cont'd

If I received my TAE twelve months ago and have taught Diploma of Business since, can I then move into a role as a teacher of TAE? I have experience in teaching at a higher level AQF, I understand the principles of adult learning, I can abide by the assessment principles and maybe even know how to develop assessment instruments.

If I had the old TAA upgraded to TAE and have been teaching retail at AQF 3 for the past five years, do I have enough 'teaching' experience to have vocational competence if I now want to teach TAE? You make the judgement. This is the dilemma that faces auditors all the time. It's not about the science and art of teaching, per se, but that science and art clashing with content.

Now I don't see a problem with someone using their TAA or TAE to deliver training in any other industry area other than training and assessment, but without a clearer definition of what constitutes vocational competence in the 'training and assessment' industry, the question is much harder to answer. The second issue here is, what exactly is the training and assessment industry? Both scenarios suggest ample trainer/ assessor experience which can't be discounted.

So here's my view on two alternative courses of action.

1. If a Certificate IV is an appropriate entry level qualification for teachers/trainers, why not have two separate qualifications. In fact if you look at the executive summary of the aforementioned report there's a small error in it but the error provoked my thoughts (again). On the first page of the executive summary it refers to the Certificate IV in Training and Education (Certificate IV TAE). Obviously it's a confusing training package code that created the error. But this maybe the key! Many authors with far more experience, academic background and research ability than I, have written about training versus education. In a very simplistic sense, training someone is attuned to the behaviourist theory of learning which involves conditioning people to display certain behaviours. Education, which incorporates more 'teaching', should be more attuned to a constructivist theory of learning in which learners construct meaning from their experiences and teachers focus on preparing the learner to problem solve, think critically and constantly reflect on their own practices. And please before Educational Psychologists start calling me, I am being very general here.

Whilst I don't want to get into a deep discussion about learning theories, the error in the report could be the answer. Why not have two Certificate IV qualifications, one called Certificate IV in Training and Assessment and the other a Certificate IV in Training and Education? Then only those who hold the latter, may teach those that require the former. The existing Certificate IV in Training and Assessment can remain the minimum compliance benchmark and be used by those who wish to train in their respective industry area, as long as it is not the 'training and assessment/education areas'.

On August 17th in the higher education section of the Australian newspaper, John Ross' article '*Minimum qualification for VET teachers threatens to become the maximum*' makes a number of references to the report but one particularly caught my eye when he wrote (inter alia) of an obsession with 'compliance to minima' rather than ongoing learning. Having the TAA/TAE written into the AQTF/RTO standards is just part of the issue.

Now before I close that can of worms, remember we work in the Vocational Education AND Training sector so that implies that we should be educating and training.

2. My second point again leans more on learning theories. But this time we look at learning theories against the AQF. As we know the higher the learner moves up in the AQF, their ability to think critically, provide specialist advice, work autonomously and operate in constantly changing environments becomes more important or at least more desirable. If we think about my previous point of having two different Certificates IV's (and notwithstanding what I suggest as the relationship between them) maybe it's worth thinking about having trainers who deliver Certificates I, II and III hold the Training and Assessment qualification and those who deliver and assess Certificate IV, Diploma and Advanced Diploma have my 'proposed' Training and Education qualification.

I have to say that I struggle with the AQF 4 sometimes as in some industries it gets promoted up but in others relegated down.

Death to Subjectivity

Along similar lines to the previous discussion is another impending change. *Please note the word **IMPENDING**.* Yes, I know we've had our quota of changes for the year but here's another one or two, and in my view good ones at that.

The NQC's newsletter, Quality Focus, contained an article in its July 2011 edition about some changes to the AQTF Trainer and Assessor Competency requirements or as we have come to affectionately know it as AQTF standard 1.4. You can [access the newsletter here](#). The article says that at the NQC meeting on 29th June this year, it was agreed that the policy regarding trainers and assessors needed to be strengthened and that when the NSSC (the new NQC) meets in late August details will be worked out regarding the process and timeline for this change. So here's the impending changes.

If RTOs have relied on demonstrating 'equivalent competencies' when discussing a trainer/assessor's compliance with the standard, they will in future have to undertake a formal RPL process for proof. Good news as it will take the subjectivity away and make the auditor's job easier. I just wonder whether there's a slight error here also. What it says is '*Demonstration of "equivalent competencies" for trainers and assessors is to occur through a formal Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process*'. Again I have added the underline.

My question is, can a trainer/assessor not achieve the qualification through a credit transfer or some other credit process?

Perhaps it should read '*Demonstration of "equivalent competencies" for trainers and assessors is to occur through a formal credit process*'. The (almost) brand new AQF defines credit as 'the value assigned for the recognition of equivalence in content and learning outcomes between different types of learning and/or qualifications. Credit reduces the amount of learning required to achieve a qualification and may be through credit transfer, articulation, recognition of prior learning or advanced standing'. That would certainly provide some better options.

Secondly, if a trainer/assessor works 'under supervision' then they must hold either the 'Enterprise Trainer Skill Set' or the 'Enterprise Trainer and Assessor Skills Set' from the TAE package. Again in my view a good move due to the magnitude of ways in which RTOs determine "supervision", some of which are at best, questionable. Another win for the auditors.

Now the third one is a bit confusing but I am sure we'll get more details soon. This change says that if a trainer/assessor works under supervision, they can only do so for a period of two years after such time they must hold a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment or demonstrate equivalent competencies. Now having read the first two, I thought that one couldn't demonstrate equivalence any more but must go through an RPL? Secondly, and my question is, does either of the skills sets only last for two years after such time they must transition to the full qualification?

Confused? Me too.

Improving Improvement

Wheretofromhere has designed and created a very unique and innovative product **specifically for RTOs**. **ITA** is the **I**mprovement **T**racking & **A**nalysis database created to record and analyse continuous improvement activities. All RTOs need to record continuous improvement activities such as assessment moderation and validation activities, staff meeting outcomes, internal and external audit outcomes as well as customer and industry feedback. **ITA** is a web based database which allows RTOs to record and track ALL these improvements within their business.

We are conducting FREE demonstrations (including a two hour PD session) in Melbourne in September, Sydney in October and Brisbane in November. To register for these workshops please respond via email or contact the office. If your organisation has six or more staff who would like to attend these sessions, please contact us about a tailored in house session.

Please register your interest [here](#).

AQF First Edition 2011



Although it looks fairly harmless, the new (ish) AQF has quite a few changes in it which I'll cover in more detail in the next edition. As we know there's now an AQF logo and I must say I love the look of it although I can see the colour guru's cringing at these colours against the red and green of the NRT logo. If you dig around in the AQF website www.aqf.edu.au you'll come across a document which outlines the conditions of use of this new logo. Click the conditions of use [here](#).

We now have the option of using the logo on qualifications, testamurs and graduation statements that accompany the qualification (those supporting documents that list the units comprising the qualification that never really had a true identity before), in student information and in certain advertising and promotional material. The document goes on to say that we can't use the logo on records of results, statements of attainment or testamurs or graduation statements for non AQF qualifications. I think the real point to watch out for here is this. It is not like the Nationally Recognised Training logo because it cannot be used on statements of attainment.

This is how I am going to remember it. It is the AQF logo and the Q stands for qualification.

WTFH New Website

Our new website is now up and running and we are currently working on making it look great but more importantly to be a great source of information for our sector.

I would like to thank those people who have taken the time to send us some great feedback about the VET Gazette. I am really pleased that we are achieving exactly what we set out to do and that is to keep you informed of the current issues and developments within the VET industry and to demystify the information and present it in an easier to understand format. To then explain how these issues may impact rather than waiting to feel the impact.

For those of you who read the VET Gazette or have been to one of my PD sessions around the country, you would have heard me talk about the Bermuda Triangle of VET, that nasty little zone where completely inexplicable VET things live. Things like 'adequate', 'sufficient', 'suitable' and 'what would an auditor want to see?' So, in the true sense of sharing, I'd like readers to start sending in tricky questions and I will make some attempt to answer these questions. Then we can all be clear together or confused together.

Auditor's Tip

Strategies for training and assessment (AQTF 1.2 or NVR Standards SNR 4.2 or 15.2) must be developed in consultation with industry. At audit, I often see these documents sitting in a folder collecting dust. The dynamic nature of the document is not always evident.

Whether your strategies are developed as a marketing tool or a 'thing' that sits waiting for the auditors, they should always reflect what industry input there has been in their development.

In the name of continuous improvement, it may be time to get them out and update them to reflect any recent industry input you have. Whether through direct consultation, outcomes of industry network groups or reactions to market analysis (or whatever other way you get information) the strategy should be updated to reflect current industry requirements.

The frequency at which training packages are updated seems to be ever increasing. You should have a mechanism for gathering this information either as a subscription to an email alert, an RSS feed or a favourite in your browser. Remember to watch these changes as they may affect your strategies.