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Ralph Blunden

Hawthorn Institute of Education, University of Melbourne

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THE PRACTICUM IN TAFE TEACHER EDUCATION: THE CHALLENGE OF CONTEXTUAL DIVERSITY

Ralph Blunden

Hawthorn Institute of Education, University of Melbourne

ABSTRACT

The Hawthorn Institute of Education has had a long tradition of training Technical and Further Education (henceforth, 'TAFE') teachers. The TAFE context in general (and the practicum context in TAFE colleges in particular) gives rise to many difficulties and challenges which do not beset the pre-service education of secondary teachers (at least not to the same degree). In this paper, after briefly sketching the historical context of TAFE and TAFE teacher preparation, attention is drawn to the diversity of TAFE in Victoria. Following this, some examples of practicum supervision situations are provided to illustrate how they differ from the standard teaching round in secondary schools. Some issues which arise from this description are discussed. The aim of the paper is to provide an expository and historical perspective on TAFE teacher preparation in Victoria.

1.1 The Historical Context: The Origins of TAFE Teacher Training in Victoria

The Hawthorn Institute of Education (henceforth, 'Hawthorn') has, since its inception as the Technical Teachers College, been concerned with the initial preparation of TAFE teachers.¹ The initial growth in technical education in Victoria occurred in the years 1911 - 1936 when technical schools were being established as a discrete system related to, and expanded from, a few senior technical colleges. The practicum, in those early days, consisted of student teachers taking a few lessons and a criticism (or 'crit lesson') was given by the regular teacher.² Technical teachers were required to have industrial experience prior to becoming teachers.³ In 1952 a day training course (with some evening attendance) was provided at the Technical Teachers Training Centre at the Melbourne Technical College (subsequently, the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology). The Training Centre became the Technical Teachers College in 1954, moving to Toorak and then to its present site in Hawthorn in 1970. Over that period of time the practicum component of training was increased to run concurrently with the length of the course which, for non-graduate trade teachers comprised two years of training.⁴

From 1952 onwards technical teachers spent up to three days in technical schools or colleges each week with a normal *pro rata* teaching load.⁵ The Training Centre supervisor and, later, the method lecturer, visited the student teacher twice in each year of the training course. The number of criticism lessons was increased to 40 each year.⁶ The two years of training were not only to compensate for the non-graduate status of many tradespeople (mostly tradesmen) but also were designed to provide experience at both secondary and TAFE levels of teaching.⁷ Right from the start there were concerns about the quality of supervision provided by the regular teachers in schools and colleges. Recent developments in the concept of partnerships between colleges and universities reflects this continuing concern.⁸

Thus, from its inception, the Technical Teachers College (and following incarnations) trained teachers for both secondary technical schools (many of which had TAFE components) and stand-alone TAFE colleges. Until quite recently (1990) most teachers trained at Hawthorn were either studentship holders or temporary teachers: that is, they were salaried employees of the Education Department and given time release to pursue teacher training. Since *circa* 1990 most TAFE teachers have been directly employed by individual college councils as permanent, contract or sessional staff, with very few permanent positions being offered.

The system of sponsorship (now discontinued) has many merits, but it brought the student teacher under the jurisdiction of the Teaching Service Act and its many regulations. Importantly, under this system, the employing authority placed individuals in schools and colleges, invariably on a staffing needs basis. Hawthorn had very little power over such placements and many were, for a variety of reasons, unsatisfactory. Although teacher preparation is now substantially under the control of universities (that is, removed from the control of State education authorities) the practicum still exerts an immense normative influence on initial courses, their content and conduct. The sponsorship system also enabled mature aged people with extensive industrial

experience (and domestic responsibilities) to undertake full time study which they otherwise would not have been able to do.

1.2 The Provincial Context: The TAFE Sector in Victoria

The TAFE sector in Victoria is not easily explained or described.⁹ Its topsy-turvy development; multi-faceted interfaces with other educational providers, industry and government and the blurred boundaries of these interfaces, purposes and philosophy combine to preclude the definition of an Archimedean point on which an exposition of TAFE might be grounded. TAFE colleges themselves have undergone amalgamations or affiliations to become massive, regionally-focused, multi-campus institutions, changing their names in the process. There can be little doubt that TAFE is undergoing disorientating organisational and curriculum change which ultimately will result in a transformation of the sector. (In regard to curriculum change, for example, all vocational courses now are required to be written in terms of competency-based approaches.)

Moreover, TAFE courses are delivered not only by TAFE colleges, but also by secondary schools and private providers. There is a growing complex arrangement between TAFE colleges, senior secondary colleges and higher education institutions which involves credit transfer, 'educational pathways', recognition of prior learning (RPL) and other accreditation and certification issues arising from the overlap between TAFE and these other sectors of education.¹⁰ This complexity is exacerbated by the fact that both the schools sector - involving both public and private institutions - and the universities (as a result of the Commonwealth's Unified National System policy (henceforth, 'UNS')) themselves have also undergone massive structural reorganization.¹¹

The best term to describe TAFE is 'diversity'.¹² There are diverse programs, diverse students - mature aged students as well as school leavers - and diverse curriculum structures, which include (particularly in apprenticeship, pre-apprenticeship and other labour market and traineeship programs) significant degrees of workplace or off-campus modes of operation.

Whilst the universities are perceived by the public to have the clear purpose of educating the brightest students and developing the research base needed in a competitive world economy, the ambit of TAFE is less well understood. TAFE

caters for vocational education - skilling the workforce - but also offers a wide range of community-based recreational and hobby-type courses.¹³ Despite the long-standing perception of TAFE as a poor cousin of universities, this emphasis on vocational education is gaining status as the community comes to realise that education for a multi-skilled workforce is as important as (thought different from) education for the professions, or for research.¹⁴ The emphasis on access and equity which characterises TAFE has tended to obscure the comparative importance of vocational education and training. Nevertheless, the Finn report says:

*TAFE is a crucial source of education and training provision for a wide range of disadvantaged people in the community. Its students include many with low school achievement...A trend towards higher enrolments from this group has been evident in the last two decades.*¹⁵

Thus, TAFE programs are organised and delivered for apprenticeships, hobbies and recreation, DEET-funded traineeships and certificate, advanced certificate and associate diploma courses linked to particular industries. Many of these programs are vocationally orientated. Moreover, TAFE colleges are now involved in extensive marketing of technical education overseas and in offering programs for non-Australian students (mainly from Southeast Asia and in some instance in Southeast Asia), particularly in the areas of business studies and the English language, though these comments are impressionistic, rather than derived from hard data based on empirical surveys. TAFE teachers are increasingly involved in tendering for specific purpose grants (from DEET, for example) and for a range of programs linked to government social policies (for example, assistance for the very long-term unemployed).

In the preceding discussion it has been suggested that TAFE courses are offered in a wide variety of settings. Not only do many state secondary and independent schools conduct the first year of TAFE certificate courses, but also four universities in Victoria have TAFE divisions. The origins of the TAFE sector in Victoria lie in the establishment of the schools of mines (at Ballarat in 1870, for example) and the workingmen's colleges and mechanics institutes which were established in the 1800s. As is noted above, the technical education system expanded into secondary levels during the decades from 1910 onwards with a rapid expansion occurring in the 1960s and 1970s.

Technical schools were largely abolished in Victoria following the recommendations of the Blackburn Report in 1985.¹⁶ However, by that time technical schools, though boasting well-equipped trade wings, were virtually offering a general education, albeit within a strong practical ethos.¹⁷ This general rather than vocational educational focus occurred following the sequestration of apprenticeship training from technical schools into the newly-created sector of TAFE colleges. In 1982, seventeen TAFE colleges were separated from the Victorian Education Department, an action which led to the rapid expansion and development of TAFE as a discrete sector of education in the State.¹⁸

It can be argued that the demise of the advanced college sector through amalgamation with universities following the Commonwealth's UNS policy that Australia now has a genuine binary system, that is, higher education and TAFE (though many reports treat both TAFE and the universities as an integral higher education system). The TAFE colleges themselves, as noted above, have not been exempt from institutional amalgamation.¹⁹ The point is that the UNS policy was intended to make a unified national higher education system from what was perceived as a genuine binary system - universities and CAEs, but, though the policy document recognised TAFE as a significant sector which was involved in the delivery of higher education it failed to sufficiently account for the fact that, at least in Victoria, a ternary system existed - that is: universities, CAEs and TAFE colleges - and the amalgamation of CAEs with universities did not create a unified national system of higher education, but actually created the potential for a genuine binary system.²⁰ Gallagher (1993) suggests,

*Following the abolition of the binary system of higher education and the designation of almost all higher education institutions as universities, post-secondary education in Australia now has two main sectors: the higher education sector, with a total enrolment of 559 365 in 1992, and the much larger Technical and Further Education sector (TAFE) with around 1 000 000 students although only ten per cent of these students are full-time.*²¹

The projected enrolment increase of 55 per cent by 2001 will make TAFE significantly larger than the university sector.²² The growth in student numbers, building programs and expenditure on TAFE - the Commonwealth has allocated \$1.1 billion in growth funding to vocational education

and training for 1993 - 1996 - has created an extremely vibrant and vigorous sector.²³

In the above TAFE has been referred to both as a 'sector' and as a 'system'. However, TAFE colleges have very substantial autonomy and are not governed by a central authority to the same degree as are schools, though even with the schools sector significant autonomy has been devolved to individual schools under the Victorian government's Schools of the Future program.²⁴ In Victoria, TAFE colleges have been centrally coordinated by a variety of State statutory authorities over the years - the TAFE Board, the State Training Board and, currently, the Office of Training and Further Education - but there is no longer any central employing authority for TAFE teachers and, in Victoria, the State Liberal Government has abolished the TAFE Teacher Registration Board. The new Federal award covering TAFE teachers makes teacher training compulsory for permanent TAFE teachers, but the increasing employment of teaching staff on a contract basis and the fact that teachers can commence work in a TAFE college in Victoria without any formal teacher training virtually means that TAFE teachers in Victoria, in spite of the intentions of the Federal Award, do not require a formal teaching qualification. Some TAFE colleges provide time for their teachers to undertake teacher training, but mostly TAFE teachers now pursue training as an individual initiative.

Oddly enough, while TAFE enjoys considerable autonomy at the state level and while the TAFE colleges have traditionally focused on local communities as their catchment areas they have, more than any of the other sectors, come under national influences. This has occurred through the development of the Australian Standards Framework, the key general competencies identified by Finn and others, the development of competency-based approaches in all TAFE award courses through the National Training Board and the forthcoming development of individual TAFE college profiles through the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), which will affect their funding arrangements.

2 The Operational Context: Some Characteristics of TAFE College Operation

It is worth drawing attention to some of the common ways in which TAFE colleges offer courses, which influence the sorts of practicum student teachers can undertake.²⁵ TAFE colleges usually start around 8.00 a.m. and continue into

the evening. Many colleges also operate on Saturdays and Sundays. A common mode of course offering in TAFE is the 'block', in which students undertake anything from one day to a number of weeks in full-time study (something akin to the teaching round, but in reverse - going from work to study). In many apprenticeship areas, teaching occurs at workplace locations and the work undertaken in the TAFE college is 'live work'. That is, work which is done to full scale which replicates the industrial conditions under which skilled tradespeople function. TAFE colleges operate throughout a 48 week year.

In all TAFE courses a competency-based teaching (henceforth, 'CBT') approach is taken or is currently under development.²⁶ CBT approaches emphasise self-paced learning whereby the students progress at their own rate ('self-paced') through modular learning packages. In the CBT approach the emphasis is on measuring observable performance outcomes rather than on completing a fixed amount of time in a course. This approach to education has had its critics, but it is well suited to practical and applied skills and knowledge learned through experience.²⁷ In some ways CBT also makes the management of heterogeneous TAFE student groups easier, since each student is working independently on his or her own program.²⁸ The emphasis for the teacher is on the organisation of learning rather than the dispensing of knowledge. Thus, teaching in TAFE places much greater emphasis on managing learning processes, organising the workplace, evaluating learning and generally adopting an approach which combines theory and practice into a tight-knit experiential approach. No conventional time-table exists in such a system and students can enter or exit a course at any time since there are few problems of keeping a whole class at the same stage of learning. Some areas of TAFE do emphasise class-based teaching more than others and, indeed, even in some of the apprenticeship areas where CBT is well developed (for example, in the automotive trades) learning blockages sometimes are cleared by bringing a small group or whole class together for a short traditional lesson.

At the Richmond campus of the Moorabbin TAFE college (formerly, Richmond College of TAFE, now the Barton Institute of TAFE) modules which are part of an apprenticeship are now offered through a 'skills supermarket'. Members of the public may come in to acquire certain skills and gain recognition for possession of those skills. It is a 'fee-for-service activity' and differs from the concept of a short course with a coherent syllabus.

The opportunities to develop practical skills to professional trade levels previously have not been available to anyone outside of the apprenticeship system.

Private providers can now deliver some of the modules of the conventional apprenticeship, providing they have both the appropriate training facility and the appropriate link with a TAFE college. One example is the Australian Chamber of Manufacturers Training Centre in Richmond (originally called the REPCO Training Centre) which was designed to train apprentices in, for example, metal fabrication, fitting and machining and electrical trades. These reciprocal arrangements between private providers and TAFE colleges are ideal for those small business or companies which do not have the facilities or the time to meet the requirements of the apprentice training scheme. (Modules include both theory and practical components. Each component involves about 36 - 40 hours of work. By and large the theory and some practice is done at the TAFE college and the practical component is fulfilled at work and/or at the training centre by agreement between the TAFE college and the private provider/employer.)

It is worth noting that many TAFE colleges have developed separate divisions or departments which are exclusively concerned with the training needs of industry. Teachers working in these units often are contracted out to specific industries to fulfil particular training needs which might involve job analysis, writing a training manual, developing staff communication skills or in other ways working closely with industry. This partnership with industry or the local community has seen the development of centres of excellence (such as the REPCO Training Centre, which has now moved into supervisor training, computer training and allied areas.)

Increasingly, fee-for-service activities will occupy TAFE colleges as the emphasis on industry-driven curriculum development gains momentum in the coming years. (Indeed, it is possible that an organisational split will occur in TAFE between the divisions which offer recurrently-funded advanced certificates and associate diplomas and the divisions which offer fee-for-service, apprenticeship and vocational training.)

3 The Training Context: Specific Difficulties relating to the Practicum

Hawthorn staff who supervise TAFE student teachers in the practicum encounter many

difficulties arising from the diverse curriculum organisation and the shifts in teaching styles which are outcomes of the CBT approach. For the purposes of this paper, some Hawthorn supervisors were asked to identify unusual locations in which they had supervised student teachers in TAFE in recent years:

3.1 For odd places of supervision, I think I have tried everything from a shearing-shed, knee deep in sheep, shearers and wool classers, to the basement of a building site in the city where First Aid classes were being given whilst heavy construction was going on. There have been horse yards, with colts being 'broken', a foundry, a golf course and classes with non-English-speaking students learning hairdressing from a Scotsman.²³

3.2 This year I have been supervising a trainer at the Sheraton Towers. He had a major problem in attending the course due to his hours of work. Variable shifts, night shifts etc. and then coming to Hawthorn all day. To arrange his supervision I have had to try and get his supervisor any time that he is available, which is difficult because staff get trained whenever it is required, night or day. There is no formal timetable for the training of staff, therefore no real time for planning, or pre-session discussion, but this has not been too much trouble as some of the training sessions are repetitive.

We have had some difficulty getting theory classes for him to teach as most training is practical. Another problem has been that most training is one-to-one. Nevertheless, he has managed to get groups together at times for some aspects of training. He eventually would like to teach in TAFE, so it is important that he at least have some groups. He has given one class to a group of managers as well. Another thing I have done is to get him to observe (in his own specialty area) a couple of other student's classes in other TAFE colleges, so that he gets the flavour and feel of TAFE colleges.

Another student I had in my class last year, but did not supervise, worked at Holmesglen College of TAFE, but only on the weekends. It was very difficult to get anyone to supervise her, as only sessional staff worked most times [and, hence, few permanent teachers were available for supervision]. I suspect she had minimal supervision, but she was very competent. Luckily, she was also teaching night classes

at one of Broadmeadow's campuses so was able to get supervision there too [Broadmeadows is now the Kangan Institute of TAFE].³⁰

3.3 I have had a few students in Skill Share and Training Centre situations where they may do very little 'class' teaching and most of their work involves one-on-one and small group practical activities. Although the Skill Share may be attached nominally to a TAFE college, little if any communication seems to take place between Field-coordinators and Field-supervisors. Students and supervisors in these situations are under a lot of pressure due to their accountability - they rely on continued funding. Facilities may also be quite primitive (sheds, converted ramshackle pavilions, for example). In TAFE colleges proper, although the Hawthorn supervisor may be given a large number of students in a single TAFE college [to supervise], it is still difficult to visit efficiently. A student teacher's teaching times are scattered across the whole seven days of the week, from 8.00 a.m. to late evening. There often is difficulty in getting mutually convenient times for supervisors' meetings. Teaching loads are heavy and some students have responsibilities which are not normally delegated to student teachers and, hence, a much greater range of advanced skills is required than is generally demanded of a beginning teacher. This year, for the first time, I have been involved in evening supervision and with evening classes at the university. This can make a particular week very hectic.³¹

3.4 In this section two practicum contexts are described:

The first involved a student teacher who is a Theatre Sister in a major hospital in the metropolitan area of Melbourne. Her teaching environment was straightforward for most of the time. That is, teaching in specialised classrooms and also on the Wards. I was invited to observe her teaching /working in an Operating Theatre where an actual patient was undergoing laser surgery on the throat. After obtaining all of the administrative approvals and consent, I was required to dress in the regulation sterile cap and gown and to be standing along side the surgeon and nurses during the procedure, observing her on the job.³²

In the second case, one practicum cycle of supervision was completed in a different way to the normal procedure for this particular student who was completing a unit by Remote Education Access and Delivery (READ) mode. The student was required to videotape a supervised lesson in which he was being observed by his supervisor and then to submit his video, supervised cycle lesson report, a copy of his lesson plan and a written reflection on how he thought his lesson went.³³

3.5 In this first example the student teacher works full time as a medical receptionist/secretary. There is no teaching or training associated with this position. She works a five day week in an inner city location. Her teaching duties are at different locations, and class times and course length vary considerably.

Her teacher training course is delivered on eight weekends during the year (Saturday and Sunday 9 - 4 p.m. together with several one-week blocks, five days each, conducted in the school vacation break).

In this second example a student teacher worked in a garage and his work involved looking after out-of-work motor mechanic apprentices. These apprentices ranged from all years of the apprenticeship (first, second and third year). The student was responsible for improving the apprentices' training, he was their mentor: a 'father figure' dealing with the problems of young people including drug use, personal relations etc. I had to go out and see him teach in very limited facilities with a compressor operating just outside the door. The phone was constantly ringing, he was on occasions called out of the room and the teaching session was continually interrupted by people coming in to ask him questions. There were other unusual demands on his time.

One final supervision involved a woman teacher at a metropolitan college of TAFE where the teaching days - teaching computers to Asians - were Saturday and Sunday. Hence, the only times available for supervision were on the weekend. We were lucky in this situation to have a field supervisor who was an ex-Hawthorn student who understood our system and was very supportive. Despite the situation being somewhat unusual it was in fact a very successful training situation.³⁴

4 Concluding Discussion

4.1 The TAFE practicum in Context

TAFE teachers enter Hawthorn's courses with their practicum location pre-determined. Entry to Hawthorn's TAFE teacher preparation courses - now Melbourne University courses conducted within a Department of Vocational Education and Training (henceforth, 'DVET') located at the Hawthorn campus - requires that those who enrol already have a teaching position within TAFE. These teaching positions must have sufficient teaching to meet the minimum course requirement of six hours of teaching each week.

As has been suggested, the nature of work in TAFE creates attendance difficulties for student teachers in addition to the range of specific difficulties which attach to the workplace. The DVET supervisor also faces a range of practical difficulties in liaising with and supervising TAFE students because of the nature of the TAFE sector.

Grading in the practicum was made mandatory by the University of Melbourne in 1994. (When Hawthorn affiliated with the University of Melbourne, all its accredited courses became University of Melbourne courses and students who successfully complete the courses receive a Melbourne University qualification.) Yet the complexity and diversity of TAFE generates particular difficulties in relation to the grading of students. These difficulties, which arise directly from the contextual diversity of TAFE, engender questions of fairness, generalisability and transformation.

The problem of fairness arises in relation to the varying contexts in which TAFE teachers perform. The practicum in Hawthorn's (or, DVET's) TAFE courses, at least up to and including 1995, involves the following: assessment of performance in the teaching context; assignment work in session planning and evaluation; observation and reflection on teaching and an assessment of the student teacher's organizational skills. Since little parity exists among TAFE teaching contexts or in the quality of supervision, Hawthorn (DVET) supervisors, in the past, have faced a difficult task in ensuring that a graded result is comparatively fair.

The problem of generalisability arises from the very different kinds of teaching which TAFE teachers do. Some teachers work one-on-one, some in classes, some in jobstart and traineeship programs, some in recurrently-funded associate

diplomas and degrees. Nevertheless, a graded H1 or H2A, for example, is meant to say (and is generally understood to say) that a teacher has high merit *per se*, obviously qualified by, but not confined to, the specific teaching context. The assessment of a teacher's performance in the workplace is problematic when workplaces differ so very much: that is, it is not easy to show how skills demonstrable in one place can be gauged as transferable or generalisable to other locations and situations.

The problem of transformation is typical of all teacher induction courses. To be relevant courses need to provide teachers with expertise in the patterns of conduct which the workplace requires. However, another aim of teacher preparation courses is to challenge existing practice, to provide the sociological, philosophical and psychological frameworks within which patterns of conduct may be analysed and understood and through which certain kinds of conduct and patterns of conduct may be challenged and transformed. These intellectual or ideological frames are often what provide teachers with a sense of professional understanding of why their students behave the way that they do. Thus, while keeping course content relevant, training teachers to work effectively within the practicum context constantly generates the risk of reproducing social circumstances which may be oppressive or discriminatory or whatever.

It is noted above that TAFE teachers also vary from their secondary counterparts in a number of crucial ways. TAFE teachers can commence teaching in a TAFE college in Victoria without any formal teaching qualification, and most do. Thus, those TAFE teachers who do undertake teacher training of their own accord often commence the course with prior teaching experience, which is sometimes considerable. In a survey conducted at Hawthorn in 1992, of 53 participants in the Diploma of Teaching (TAFE) the average prior teaching experience was given as 27.87 months (the average prior non-teaching work experience was given as 14.91 years).³⁵

4.2 The Psychological Context of TAFE

At the beginning of this paper a brief outline of the historical development of TAFE and TAFE teacher preparation was provided to set the context for supervision of TAFE teaching practice: referred to as 'the practicum'. There can be little doubt that TAFE teachers do not have a heterogeneous set of needs and that they work in contexts which differ not only from traditional

schools and university settings, but also vary within the teaching departments of TAFE colleges themselves. The widespread use of CBT in TAFE vocational courses generates a specific requirement of the teacher training institution and, moreover, often creates a tension between those who are philosophically opposed to such an approach in education and those who are paid to deliver it. This tension may be referred to as the psychological context of the TAFE practicum.

4.3 The Organisational Context of TAFE

It can be seen from the examples given that TAFE teachers face practical difficulties both in attending coursework classes and in the times which they can be supervised in their workplaces. These difficulties arise from the nature of TAFE courses such as block teaching and night work.

Moreover, many TAFE teachers teach students who are, in the main, mature aged

whilst other classes comprise students who are not only socially alienated, or in some way requiring significant counselling help from their teachers, but also so lacking in an adequate self-concept as to reject ministrations from their teachers. In some situations the TAFE student teacher is employed by a college for their specialist expertise and no other person in the college, or the university, possesses the subject expertise or experience which could provide special method assistance. This would almost never occur in a secondary practicum except, perhaps, at the sub-discipline level: that is, an art student teacher specialising in ceramics would always be supervised by another art teacher, but the supervisor might have a different major teaching area, such as painting or printmaking.

4.4 The Challenge of Contextual Diversity in TAFE

It is commonly acknowledged that TAFE teachers particularly require training in instructional design, curriculum design, industrial relations and industrial liaison skills, industrial skills audit, job analysis and understanding of motivation as a means of developing a sensitivity to a range of very different kinds of students. TAFE teacher preparation requires that the training institution develop flexible ways of offering courses to fit unusual teaching hours. TAFE teachers, like secondary teachers, need training in stress management because of the extensive changes which are occurring within the sector along with an accelerating rate of change. These changes

include the use of satellite technology and methods of teaching involving remote locations. There are also generic skills which must be imparted, such as adaptability, communication and decision making - if these things can be rightly referred to as 'skills' - which apply to all educational contexts, including the TAFE sector. Indeed, given the multicultural character of TAFE student populations these general capacities are extremely important because they enable teachers to bridge cultural divides.

The mode of operation in TAFE, that is, the way teachers go about their work, is geared to the needs of individuals and provides a degree of flexibility which is often missing from other sectors of education. TAFE students generally are respected as adults by their teachers, but are looked after in many ways which differ from the paternalism of the secondary sector or the isolated independence students often undergo in universities. Because of these features the TAFE experience can be far less alienating than other sectors of education. Of course, students can be disempowered in any system of teaching and curriculum organisation: much rests on the quality of the teacher, perhaps particularly in a CBT curriculum. In any case, there can be little doubt that the vigour of the TAFE sector provides a much more challenging and exciting atmosphere than do many secondary schools where teacher burn-out and depression caused by savage government funding cuts have taken their toll on teacher numbers, teacher morale, facilities and resources.

Indeed, when one enters a Victorian TAFE college today, in spite of the apparent positivism and reductionism of CBT, there is an overwhelming sense of commitment and energy and of a socially healthy and caring workplace. TAFE colleges have taken on, in a very real way, education for the deprived and disadvantaged, the drop-outs and the cast-offs. Their enterprise has a moral edge made keen by this concern for socially-equitable educational outcomes.

That this might change if TAFE teachers cease to be trained as educators is certainly a possibility. Nevertheless, the educational world of TAFE requires teachers who are hard-nosed realists. One of the challenges for teacher educators, then, is to provide a training course which is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the work requirements of TAFE teachers, but which also is relevant to the sorts of contextual diversity to which attention has been drawn in this paper. It is beyond the scope of the paper to outline what

might be appropriate course development responses to the challenges of contextual diversity, but the challenges are not trivial (see postscript below). At a time of rapid expansion in TAFE, of increased pressure on TAFE teachers to conform to national imperatives and to tender for continued funding of their operations, and in the context of social and economic uncertainty within the Australian community (especially the educational community) how teacher educators respond to the challenges of contextual diversity within TAFE will very largely depend on how they conceptualise the practicum and whether they allow it the central place which it certainly demands by its uniqueness.³⁶

5. Postscript

In 1995 staff within the newly created Department of Vocational Education and Training designed a completely new suite of courses to be offered to TAFE teachers and industry trainers. As from 1995 all existing courses will be phased out. The new courses, commencing in 1996, are offered from certificate level to PhD level, thus offering a sequence and coherence of study in vocational education and training hitherto unavailable in Victoria. In so far as the practicum is concerned it has been absorbed into a coursework subject called 'Professional Practice'. Although this subject focuses on the workplace and includes a 'workplace agreement' from which assignment work is derived, there is no formal practicum. Thus, there will be little visiting of student teachers to observe them teach except, possibly, for research orientated purposes. There will be little direct assessment of a teacher's actual level of workplace performance, though, no doubt, the new subjects will be reshaped by the demands of the students who undertake the courses and by the requirements of the TAFE and industry sectors more generally. In a context where many TAFE colleges now conduct their own induction-to-teaching programs focusing on the basic skills of teaching, and where many teachers who enter a TAFE teaching course at Hawthorn do so with already highly developed performance competence, there are opportunities to provide for the TAFE teacher and industry trainer a program which is fundamentally concerned with reflective insight, rather than with behavioural skills. Should this eventuate, then it might be argued that the DVET at Melbourne University has indeed met the challenge of contextual diversity in TAFE teacher preparation. A considered appraisal, however, must await another occasion.

Notes

1. The (Victorian) Technical Teachers College was established in 1954. It met the need for the training of technical and trade teachers in the expanding number of technical colleges in Victoria and the junior, or secondary, technical schools system which had been established in the years 1911 - 1930. On the historical development of technical education in Victoria see, Blake, L. J. (1973) *Vision and Realisation*, Education Department of Victoria, Government Printer, Melbourne. See especially Book 6. Docherty, J., p. 606 *et seq.*

The Technical Teachers College became a College of Advanced Education (CAE) when it was included in the nine colleges which formed the State College of Victoria system (SCV). As part of the SCV system, the Technical Teachers College ceased to be a part of the Teacher Education Branch of the Education Department of Victoria and had its own statutory governing council. The State College of Victoria's main task was the preparation of teachers. The SCV at Hawthorn was the only Victorian CAE devoted to the training of technical and TAFE teachers. The SCV was dissolved in 1981 and the former Technical Teachers College/State College of Victoria at Hawthorn became the Hawthorn Institute of Education. It was affiliated with the University of Melbourne in 1989 under the Commonwealth Government's UNS policy.

In 1995, a Department of Vocational Education and Training was established within a new Faculty of Education within the University of Melbourne. This Department is located at Hawthorn. Professor Leo Magliin was appointed to the Department's Chair in Vocational Education and Training in November 1995. The new department continues the tradition of training TAFE teachers with an expanded role focusing on industry trainers.

2. Historically, the term 'student teacher' is not entirely accurate as a term referring to TAFE teachers-in-training. The current preferred term (at Hawthorn) is 'participant' (to acknowledge the collaborative approach taken in training TAFE teachers) but traditionally the trade teacher-in-training has been referred to as 'student instructor'. However, the term 'student teacher' will be used throughout this paper as it is the term with which most readers will be familiar. Moreover, the term 'student instructor' has an instrumental connotation which many TAFE teachers would reject. It is also worth emphasising that TAFE teaching encompasses a huge range of disciplines and not just apprenticeship or trade training.

3. Keeping TAFE teachers up to date with their subjects is a pressing difficulty for the TAFE system, particularly given the rate of technological change which affects business and industry. The TAFE system attempts to solve this difficulty (which is much greater than it is for secondary school teachers, or for university academics who have significant amounts of time which they can spend on research) by industrial release and by the increasing use of sessional and contract staff with recent workplace experience.

4. It should be borne in mind that the Technical Teachers College and its subsequent incarnations trained both graduate students and non-graduate (trade) teachers and instructors. For the non-graduate the length of the course has always been longer than the one year provided for graduate teachers. There is some irony that current thinking (within the University of Melbourne, for example) regarding the practicum in teacher education favours a substantial increase in the time spent in workplace learning for graduate (as well as non-graduate) teachers. (The University of Melbourne is abandoning its four-year education degree in favour of a graduate degree plus two years of teacher preparation, the second year of which would involve about 80 per cent of time in a school.) It has to be asked, however, whether student teachers can spend too much time in practice - so much so, for example, that it become overwhelming and there is insufficient time to reflect upon and make sense of teaching experience.

5. Prior to the 1980s, Victorian technical schools generally comprised both secondary and TAFE (especially apprentice) levels.

6. This arbitrary number gave rise to a range of dubious practices including the notorious 'ghost' lesson whereby a student teacher's supervisor recorded a 'crit' which had not, in fact, occurred. In the early 1960s criticism lessons were reduced to 30 in the second year of the course if the first year had been satisfactory. It was normal practice for student instructors to spend one year teaching at the secondary level and one year teaching at the TAFE level.

7. Given the different cultures, teaching methods and purposes which characterise the TAFE and secondary levels of education, it is still desirable that novice teachers receive training in both areas if they are to be regarded as fully qualified. TAFE colleges, in fact, have followed an employment practice which prefers those who have substantial work experience in the teaching area (eight years or more). Moreover, appointment to permanent positions in TAFE usually requires at least two years of experience as a TAFE teacher. Different approaches are also taken within the senior secondary level as opposed to the junior secondary, but the contrast between these levels and the culture of TAFE is less stark.

8. See Patterson, G. (Convenor) (1994) *Partnerships for Professional Development, Report and Papers*, Hawthorn Institute of Education.

9. Peter Laver points out that post-compulsory education and training is a complex system, 'spanning three sectors, thousands of subjects and awards, and involving many thousands of people...'. See National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1992) *Fitting the Need*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. ix. For an indication of the number of award courses offered in Victorian TAFE colleges see, for example, Department of Education and Training (1993) *JAC Courses Directory*, Victoria. Australia wide, there are over 200 TAFE colleges and about 684 institutions which offer recognised TAFE courses. See Castles, I. (1992) *Education and Training in Australia*,

Australian Bureau of Statistics, Government Printer, Canberra, pp. 16, 23. See also Beazley, Hon. K., M.P. (1992) *Change and Growth - TAFE to 2001: Advice of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and its Employment and Skills Formation Council*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Change and Growth is the clearest concise statement of the developing national TAFE system and its focus on industry and vocational training. See also Crawford, M. (Chair) (1991) *Skills Training for the 21st Century*, p. 88 et seq. A good account of TAFE in Australia is provided in Goozee, G. (1993, second edition 1995) *The Development of TAFE in Australia*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide. See also, Marginson, S. (1993) *Education and Public Policy in Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne.

10. There are a number of significant pilot programs being undertaken in Victoria which arise from the interface between the different systems. See Schools Council (1993) *Post-compulsory Education and Training Arrangements in the Australian States and Territories*, National Board of Employment Education and Training, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, pp. 217 - 218.

11. On the schools sector see the Victorian Auditor-General's Office, Special Report No. 36, *The changing profile of State education: School reorganizations*, Victorian Government Printer, 1995. On the university sector see Gallagher (1993) Higher Education Division, Department of Employment, Education and Training, *National Report on Australia's Higher Education Sector*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

12. See Peoples, K. (1995) 'TAFE Under Siege', *The Australian TAFE Teacher*, Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 28 - 31. See also Chappell, C., Goncz, A., Hager, P. (1994) 'Kangan and Developments in TAFE Teacher Education', *The Australian TAFE Teacher*, Vol. 28, No. 4, 1994, pp. 58 - 64. See also, Kangan, M. (1974) *TAFE in Australia: Report on Needs in Technical and Further Education*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra.

13. It may be argued that universities no longer have the purpose of catering for an intelligent elite, but have, under the impact of the UNS (and worldwide trends) been transformed into institutions of mass education. Whilst such an argument has merit, it is still too early to discern the shape of future higher education in Australia. See Blunden, R. (1993) *Ethical Issues in the Teaching Practice of Australian Academics*, PhD thesis, La Trobe University, Chapter 1. See also Hickey, P. (1993) *The Transition from Elite to Mass Higher Education*, Australian Department of Employment, Education and Training Conference Proceedings, Commonwealth Government Printer, Canberra.

14. There are some early indications, however, that TAFE teachers will gradually come under pressure to conduct and publish research. This pressure is being exerted by ANTA and by the growing number of research programs undertaken jointly between university staff and TAFE colleges. See, for example, *The Australian TAFE Teacher*, June 1994, p. 29 et seq.

15. Australian Education Council Review Committee (1991) *Young People's Participation in Post-compulsory Education and Training* (the Finn Report) Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. 148. See also Employment and Skills Formation Council (1993) *Raising the Standard: Middle Level Skills in the Australian Workforce*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. xix.

Not all TAFE students are alienated youth, but certainly some are and they place a good deal of pressure on TAFE teachers. At a seminar held at the Box Hill College of TAFE in August 1994, Jill Baird, a teacher at the college, drew attention to the diverse range of student problems which she faced in organising training programs for youth and for the long-term unemployed. Among many things which Baird mentioned as problems were rebellious, volatile youth with very low self esteem, low literacy skills, poor attendance patterns, attitudinal problems, lack of motivation and the vast differences in entry-level skills. She especially pointed out the heterogeneity of TAFE student groups and the very wide range of ambitions and expectations which TAFE students have. According to Baird, all these features of TAFE teaching require teachers who are flexible, creative and sensitive. At a recent staff development workshop conducted by the author at a major metropolitan college of TAFE, staff listed the following as characteristics of their students:

- Many come from non-English-speaking backgrounds, different cultural backgrounds and have experienced cultural deprivation.
- Family attitudes, instability and religion influence their behaviour and performance; family problems can affect them (such as violence and unemployment)
- Students from overseas have a language problem and can suffer from cultural shock
- They are mostly western suburbs, working-class
- Significant minority is mature-aged
- They are conservative, but open to ideas [!]
- They tend to be 'sheepish' - not leaders, influenced by peers (social interaction is important to them)
- They lack commitment
- Some can be disturbed and aggressive, self centred (egotistical) and demanding
- Their emotional development is in conflict with the direction they have taken in school
- They are unclear about their career paths and can be confused and anxious about careers
- Some can be withdrawn and unmotivated
- Some students are more competitive, but this encourages isolation and a lack of self esteem
- TAFE is seen as a second-choice option
- They work to the average and are not ambitious
- Their academic achievements are average or less than average

- They try to please teachers and value friendship
- They lack organisational skills and are not good at time management
- They are honest in facing inadequate capabilities
- They are unable to follow directions and they are not good at problem solving
- They lack responsibility

16. See Blackburn, J. (1985) *Ministerial Review of Postcompulsory Schooling* (the Blackburn Report) Melbourne. Blackburn was not the first - though, obviously, she was the first successful - reviewer to recommend the amalgamation of high and technical schools in Victoria. Earlier recommendations were made by a 1931 Committee of Enquiry and by the Ramsay Committee in 1964. See *Report of the Ministerial Working Party into Secondary Technical Education* (1983) (the Bainbridge Report) Education Department of Victoria, South Central Region, p. 13.

17. The trade wings in technical schools to which reference is made here were, by and large, both expensive and technologically obsolete. The development of TAFE colleges to some extent solved the difficulty which technical education institutions face in keeping teaching staff abreast of technological developments in industry, and in the costs associated with computerised machinery and equipment and its continual upgrading to industry standards.

18. The sequestration of TAFE had important ramifications. For example, teachers who were affected were required to choose which sector - TAFE or secondary - in which they wished to teach. TAFE teachers are now governed by a different award from secondary teachers. See also Goozee, G. (1993) *The Development of TAFE in Australia*, National Centre for Vocational Educational Research, South Australia, pp. 55 - 60. In 1985, the last year that a discrete *Handbook for Technical Schools* in Victoria was produced, there were 105 Technical Schools listed for the government sector. See, Curriculum Branch (1985) *Education Handbook: Technical*, Education Department of Victoria.

19. Amalgamations and affiliations at the higher education level were a result of Commonwealth Government policy. See Dawkins, J. S. (1988) *Higher Education: A Policy Statement*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra. At the secondary level, amalgamations in Victoria have resulted from a range of policy and economic factors: structural and curriculum change recommended by Blackburn, demographic change; school retention rates, administrative changes and the like. In TAFE the amalgamations and affiliations of institutions have occurred for a number of reasons, but the policy for TAFE college development is set forth in Deveson, I. (1992) *Reorganisation of the TAFE College Network in Victoria*, State Training Board, Victoria. See also Beazley, Hon. K. C., M.P. (1992) *Change and Growth - TAFE to 2001: Advice of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training and its Skills Formation Council*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra. See also Blackburn, J. (1985) *Ibid.*

20. Dawkins, J. S. Hon. M.P. (1988) *Higher Education: a policy statement*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, pp. 63 - 70.

21. Gallagher (1993) Higher Education Division, Department of Employment, Education and Training, *National Report on Australia's Higher Education Sector*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. xxvii.

22. See National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1992) *Fitting the Need*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. 35. This report suggests that recurrent funding for TAFE will increase over the next decade by \$2.7 billion. See *Ibid.*, p. 13. The report says, 'Recurrent expenditure on post-compulsory education would be \$1.7 billion higher per annum in 2001 than in 1991'. No precise figure for enrolments in TAFE can be given. The Australian Bureau of Statistics gives the number of enrolments in 1991 as 1 824 536 and suggests that 65 per cent of these were in vocational courses (or Stream 3 000). See, Castles, I. (1992) *Education and Training in Australia*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, Government Printer, Canberra, p. 23.

23. See Keating, Hon. P. J. M.P. (1994) *Working Nation: Policies and Programs*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, pp. 93 - 94. See also, Department of Employment, Education and Training, Higher Education Division (1993) *National Report on Australia's Higher Education Sector*, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. xxvii which suggests that \$720 million will be spent on vocational education and training in the period 1993 - 1995.

24. The Schools of the Future policy in Victoria includes a commitment to significant devolution of power and autonomy to individual schools, but (as in the TAFE sector) schools are coming under increasing pressure from national and State curriculum profiles and statements which to some extent inhibit autonomy.

25. The large spectrum of differences in administration and delivery of TAFE courses will be exacerbated in the future by the introduction a national policy regarding 'flexible delivery'. See *The Australian TAFE Teacher*, Vol. 27, No. 2, June 1993, for insert giving an overview of the National Framework for implementation of Flexible Delivery in TAFE.

26. See National Board of Employment, Education and Training (1992) *Curriculum Initiatives*, Commissioned Report No. 2, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra, p. 16 and *passim*.

27. These critics have not only been university-based, but also have been TAFE teachers themselves. One report suggests that,

There was widespread criticism of CBT. Teachers regarded it as difficult to implement although several commented that they were already doing it, and had been for some time... Criticisms tended to revolve around the issue of lack of adequate planning prior to implementation.

See, Chant Link and Associates (1992) *A Report into the Perceptions of TAFE Teachers with Respect to their Current and Future Roles*, Chant Link and Associates, Victoria, p. 36.

28. While CBT may make some dimensions of teaching easier, many teachers would claim that it is a very difficult and demanding teaching method. For example, teachers have to deal across the whole spectrum of content and to be able to change from dealing with one student at an elementary level module to dealing with another student who may be working on a very advanced module, and all variations. These mental shifts in knowledge and focus where the teaching is one-on-one are difficult to sustain over long periods. Sometimes TAFE teachers work for four-hour, six-hour or eight-hour blocks and the shifts are very numerous. It is also the case that some TAFE colleges do not have adequate facilities and equipment to deliver CBT effectively which places more strain on the practising teacher (or student teacher). While CBT caters well for the students in allowing them to progress at their own rate, it has been very demanding of the teachers, who are not able to plan and deliver lessons in the traditional sense. CBT places much greater uncertainty on teaching sessions because the system is much more fluid than traditional class-based approaches.

29. I would like to thank Blair Edgar, OAM for bringing these contexts to my attention.

30. I would like to thank Julie Coleman for bringing these contexts to my attention.

31. I would like to thank Bob Hayes for bringing these contexts to my attention.

32. I would like to thank Warren Gould for these descriptions.

33. There are some training locations - particularly involving clinical instruction settings - which Hawthorn supervisors are unable to visit because of privacy and confidentiality issues, or where the consent of those involved is not forthcoming.

34. I would like to thank Ron Barker for these comments.

35. See Brinkworth, B. (1992) 'Teaching Experience Survey undertaken 25 May 1992: Melbourne Based TAFE and Vocational Education Teachers', photostat.

36. I would like to thank my colleague, John O'Sullivan, and the anonymous reviewers for this journal for making many useful comments on an earlier version of this paper. I would also like to thank Peter Goodwin, Associate Director, Northern Metropolitan College of TAFE and Roger McFarlane, Curriculum Development Unit, Ballarat School of Mines and Industries and Mary Vanderfeen, Industry Training Centre, Richmond campus, Barton Institute of TAFE for their assistance. I also thank my colleague, Ron Barker, who generously assisted me in the early stages of researching this paper.

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