Resolving the Mid-Level Qualifications Messiness

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Qualifications Maelstrom ...

Changes to the Aust. Labour market & tertiary education policy settings over last decade have created a qualifications maelstrom

- VET diplomas have lost their market differentiation as passports into paraprofessional jobs, but governments encourage RTOs to increase enrolments in diplomas
- VET diploma/ advanced diploma graduates now compete head-on with HE graduates in labour market, diploma graduates lose out
- Uncapped HE bachelor degree funding results in lower entry standards, increasingly ATAR<60 students will now chose bachelor studies over diplomas
- Market was responding sensibly, but recent government policy settings have sent VET diploma enrolments climbing in Victoria – is this a responsible approach?
- Bradley targets for increased Bachelor degree participation not aligned with COAG targets for increased VET diploma participation.
Changing Role For Diplomas ...

VET Diplomas currently perform 3 functions:

- Preparing graduates for work (*good renumeration, but not aligned with studies*)
- As tools to credential existing knowledge & skills
- As pathways into further learning, e.g. in higher education (*new AQF requirements include “preparation for further learning” but not yet addressed in all diplomas*)

2010 IBSA report “Higher Level Qualifications: towards a new future” argued that

- 3 key purposes should inform future development of VET qualifications are
  - *Immediate work opportunities, unknown future work opportunities, further learning in VET & HE*
- New, consistent architecture should be developed for higher level VET, to
  - Provide sound foundation for future study as well as future work
  - Prepare for future work roles which are currently unknown
  - Form basis for sound, explicit VET and HE pathways
  - Facilitate movement across industries.
What’s Needed?

- Aligned Qualifications architecture, including 8 unit of study structure to mirror HE
- Disciplinary knowledge needed in HE, e.g. calculus in engineering diplomas
- Content, context, learning design & delivery that build capabilities for students’ futures
- A “Qualifications Escalator”
  - Most low SES VE learners are clustered in AQF 1-3 courses
  - Many lack language, literacy & numeracy capabilities to achieve at AQF 5-8
  - Need sound core skills development in the workforce as well as within educational institutions
  - Provide multiple entry & exit points to a qualifications escalator covering AQF 5-8
    - Experienced worker with technical quals >> grad cert >> grad dip >> masters
    - Student needing academic preparation >> diploma >> assoc degree >> grad cert
- All requires more trusting relationships between universities and TAFE/VET providers
Meanwhile at Victoria University ...

Curriculum Framework to realise full potential as a dual sector institution, recommendations include:

- Develop course suites of integrated, higher level VE, UG & PG qualifications
- Build multiple entry & exit points into each destination qualification
- Guaranteed places offered at entry for further study in appropriate courses, subject to progress
- Transitions pedagogy built in to support students at identified transition hot spots, currently being developed in IEP (“integrated education program”) diplomas
- 2 categories of Bachelor degrees:
  - Career Start Bachelor Degrees
  - Professional Bachelor Degrees
- Career Start Bachelor Degrees designed to increase participation in HE, multiple entry & exit points, transition pedagogies built into intensive first year which uses combined expertise of TAFE & HE workforces
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