

To whom it may concern,

There are no VET options for Social Ballroom/Latin dance teachers anywhere in Australia.

Existing 'dance teacher' Cert IIIs and IVs train people how to teach kids in styles like contemporary, ballet, hip hop etc – skills which are not particularly useful to the Social Ballroom and Latin industry.

We employ 8 dance teachers full time. 6 of them are foreigners sponsored on visas. The other 2 are Australians that we have trained informally.

So what I am getting at?

Well, for the last 5 years I've kept abreast of changes to the VET sector, because our industry desperately needs VET training options. Having to sponsor foreign Ballroom and Latin dance teachers on visas is ridiculous considering the number of Aussies that would love this profession.

But with every VET scandal, VET regulation seems to get more onerous. The prevailing view seems to be that every problem can be fixed with regulation.

We are a small, but not tiny business (\$1 million revenue. 60k profit). Unless I win the lottery, it seems unrealistic for us to navigate the bureaucratic maze to develop training packages, and then become VET registered in our industry.

Isn't only one thing important? Whether students are getting value for their time and money? Can't this simply be determined by these 4 metrics?

1. Public servants having face-to-face chats with randomly selected students about their learning experience, where they can probe and enquire. A switched-on person, with sufficient questioning, can pick the difference between a genuine versus vexatious complaint. Or a genuine versus coached answer.
2. Dropout rates (control for background)
3. Whether students get jobs after they graduate (control for background)
4. Face-to-face chats with employers about what they think of the skills (if any) their newly graduated employees have recently acquired.

Demanding a myriad of other requirements simply puts barriers that prevent people from entering the VET sector who are passionate about training Aussies. Instead it rewards those RTOs who are already established, and those who have developed high volume, low-teacher-involvement business models which provide sufficient profit margins to cover high compliance costs.

No one likes a whinger who doesn't provide solutions. So here is what an alternate regulatory model might look like, using our dance studio as an example:

- a) Our studio registers interest in delivering a Latin & Ballroom Dancing Cert IV with ASQA. We put forward our proposed course plan and details of the people that intend to teach it. Public servants consider whether it's reasonable. We trust that bureaucrats are pretty competent people and are better equipped with guidelines rather than black and white requirements. If there are issues ASQA works with us to fix them.
- b) Given our dance studio's size/history/limited financial capacity, restrictions are *negotiated* (not imposed). For example, student capacity might be negotiated. Eg "in the first intake, you cannot teach more than 10 students" or tuition cost limited eg "The maximum you can charge for this course is \$2000"
- c) If ASQA is particularly concerned about a particular matter, we might even negotiate that student fees are held in trust until certain benchmarks are passed.
- d) ASQA conducts interviews with a high % of our students on an ongoing basis to see whether we are delivering high quality training. Issues are discussed and solutions brainstormed as a team effort between ASQA and our RTO. There is an understanding that as a new RTO *mistakes will be made*. The public servant/s overseeing our RTO has wide discretion to determine what is required to rectify these issues.
- e) As the years pass and we maintain a track record of delivering high quality tuition (as determined by the 4 metrics above) the % of students that are interviewed decreases, any restrictions removed, and more privileges provided (FEE-HELP, CRICOS etc)

My suggestions rely on the competence of public servants. Public servants sometime get a bad rap – but in all my interactions with government they've always seemed like a pretty competent bunch. The frustrating issues arise when the policy doesn't provide public servants sufficient leeway to deal with the situations that policy makers didn't consider when drafting the policy.

Warm regards,

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