



NEW SOUTH WALES TEACHERS FEDERATION

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SUBMISSION TO

THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION

ON

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION AND TRAINING WORKFORCE

Authorised by

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Submission from the NSW Teachers Federation to the Productivity Commission

Vocational Education and Training Workforce

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The following submission is from the NSW Teachers Federation, which represents teachers and other educational staff in public schools, TAFE colleges, the Adult Migrant English Service (AMES), Corrective Services, and other workplaces. There are over 60,000 members in the Teachers Federation, and of these approx 6,500 work in the post schools sector, including TAFE, AMES and Corrective Services.

The Federation supports the submission made to the Productivity Commission by the Australian Education Union. This submission aims to provide some additional comments in relation to TAFE NSW.

The Role of TAFE

The recent work by John Buchanan et al for the Australian Education Union, *Education, Work and Economic Renewal* (June 2009) argues that vocational education and training must be framed in a holistic manner, but current market competition for delivery based on competencies has led to a fragmentation of delivery across the educational system. If the importance of vocational education and training is recognised for the public good that the acquisition of skills provides in delivering opportunities and improving economic productivity through the outcomes it achieves, then it is the view of the Federation that the critical importance of TAFE, its diverse roles and contribution to Australian economic growth and society must be valued and supported.

Unfortunately governments over a number of years now have focused too narrowly on the technical part of the role of TAFE and undervalued and underfunded the further education role. The pressure which government has placed on TAFE through the artificial creation of a training market has meant a reduction of resources, increased workload, an orientation towards the business of tendering rather than supporting curriculum and professional development. Sadly underfunding has also led to increased pressure on TAFE to increase student fees and charges, and the commercialisation of courses. Expansion of VET FEE-HELP means that the cost of funding VET courses is massively shifted from government to students through the use of debt. The Federation will campaign to oppose these moves and the resultant significant hike in TAFE fees for students.

For the diversity of the 1.7 million students studying in the publicly funded VET sector, it is important that its pre-eminent role in providing quality vocational education and training is supported by government.

The *TAFE Commission Act* in NSW explicitly sets out its objectives as follows, to:

- (a) ensure that it provides technical and further education services to meet the needs of individuals and the skill needs of the workforce and, in particular, ensure that it provides basic and pre-vocational education as well as vocational education and training, and*
- (b) provide adults and young persons with a range of technical and further education services that recognise the changing nature of the working environment and the need for new skills and re-training, and*

- (c) provide, through formal arrangements and after consultation, technical and further education services that are relevant to the needs of industry, business, students and other client groups, and*
- (d) provide students with the maximum opportunity for progression by the linking or other articulation of courses and programs provided by the TAFE Commission and between those courses and programs and those provided by other education and training providers, and*
- (e) provide educationally or vocationally disadvantaged groups (such as women, Aborigines, persons of non-English speaking background, persons with disabilities and persons in rural areas) with access to technical and further education services, including a range of appropriate specialised services, and*
- (f) consult with relevant agencies to promote the effective and efficient use of resources and co-operation between TAFE establishments and other educational institutions.*

It recognises education, both basic and pre-vocational as well as vocational education and training, and the responsibility of TAFE to a range of students and equity groups. It builds the role of the VET sector, rather than reducing its role to training and assessing narrow based competencies.

TAFE Teachers within the VET Workforce

The Federation considers that the VET workforce should comprise those involved in the delivery of vocational education and training and those who directly support that role. The primary role of TAFE teachers and educational staff as VET professionals within the VET workforce must include recognition of their professional qualifications in education.

In June 2010 the Annual Conference of the Federation resolved that;

“The decision of the DET in 2008 to lower the qualification requirements for permanent TAFE teachers to the Certificate IV in Training & Assessment, demonstrated a complete lack of understanding of the teaching profession. This qualification was not designed as a teaching qualification for professional teachers.

Federation rejects the Certificate IV in the Training & Assessment Training Package and its replacement, the revised Training & Education Training Package, as inappropriate as a professional teaching qualification. Federation calls on the State Government to invest in improving qualifications for TAFE teachers. This must include funding to assist teachers to be supported and released to access tertiary teacher education qualifications as was the case prior to the decision of 2008, and for further professional development over the course of their teaching careers.”

Moreover the Annual Conference resolved that the Federation will continue to campaign that TAFE teachers must have tertiary education teaching qualifications, and will also ensure that teachers with graduate or post-graduate teaching qualifications are accepted as qualified to teach in the post-schools sector.

VET, the economy and society

The Federation strongly supports the importance of VET to both the economy and society, and regrets that the focus of governments is too often on the economic contributions rather than on the needs of society generally. Perhaps the current problems with adult literacy and numeracy in the workforce undermining productivity, result from governments underfunding TAFE’s role in this area for many years. The

Federation is concerned by moves to shift general and pre-vocational education from the TAFE sector, and that this area of education is poorly funded.

The increasing demands on TAFE by governments to focus primarily on business and the 'bottom line', has meant loss of sight of TAFE's core commitment to access and equity. The continued marketisation of TAFE NSW has seen diminution of funding for programs and support mechanisms for TAFE equity groups, and competitive tendering arrangements have led to funding being directed away from TAFE quality provision to low-cost private providers and community groups. This includes the recent loss of \$50m funding for Language, Literacy and Numeracy programs in TAFE. This is symptomatic of the shortsightedness of Federal government policies using public funds to create an artificial training market.

The Federal Government's competitive tendering policy recently stripped \$50 million of funding from NSW TAFE colleges for Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program (LLNP) courses over the next three years. Riverina, Illawarra, South Western Sydney and Sydney Institutes received no funding for LLNP courses, and for many other TAFE Institutes in NSW their level of delivery was severely reduced. AMES will also be severely impacted, as it was part of consortiums with some of these institutes.

The loss of \$50 million from NSW TAFE means students will be pushed into lower cost, lower quality education and up to 170 TAFE and AMES teaching positions will be cut in each of these years. Many of these will be part time casual teaching positions.

Private training colleges presumably were able to win these contracts because they pay lower salaries, run bigger class sizes and are not required to maintain the level of professional qualifications and standards that apply in TAFE.

Since the tenders were announced it has come to the attention of the Federation that at least one of these private providers has recently started recruiting for Language Literacy & Numeracy Teachers and Language Literacy & Numeracy Assistants at appallingly low rates of pay: \$35 per hour and \$25 per hour respectively. Another provider it seems is proposing to use volunteers.

Rather than ensuring that tender guidelines for the Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program guaranteed that delivery of teaching would take place only by well qualified teachers, the Federal Government permitted provision to include delivery by volunteers and assistants with little or lower levels of qualifications than expected by the teaching profession.

The Federation understands that local audits of the LLNP program at TAFE colleges demonstrated that delivery was of a high quality with successful outcomes. TAFE teachers involved in the delivery of these programs have university teacher education qualifications and experience working with adult learners.

While the government calls it a 'price competitive' policy, the Teachers Federation regards it as a lowering of standards through the further privatisation of public education. This approach will take TAFE students down the path to the low standards and poor practice that characterise the on-the-cheap colleges for overseas students. It is a race to the bottom in educational standards.

The Federation believes that governments need to value the high quality, post compulsory, 'second chance' education that TAFE provides. Students in those

language, literacy and numeracy courses benefited from studying in TAFE colleges that provide them with a high level of individual support, including counselling and other services. They also benefit from being able to transition from these courses to others offered by TAFE.

It is deeply disappointing that governments seem to regard the price of education as more important than quality. This can only undermine their stated aim of building a strong and prosperous nation through a highly qualified, well educated and trained Australian workforce.

Governments cannot continue to recognise the impact on society and the economy of adults with low literacy and numeracy skills, and at the same time de-professionalise the teaching of these skills. The Federation strongly supports proper government funding for TAFE to deliver in these areas, and the need to support teachers to gain high-level tertiary qualifications in literacy and numeracy.

If it is a key objective of the VET workforce, to ensure the delivery of quality vocational education to the working age population, this should also include meeting the needs of the disadvantaged and those who for a variety of reasons have not been able to gain initial education and skills that will enable them to get a satisfying job. VET has a strong obligation to individuals and the needs of communities. The role of VET and the VET workforce goes far beyond supporting the profit margins of enterprises. The operation and funding of the VET sector is currently largely skewed towards the needs of industry, often as defined by peak industry groups, rather than to industry and the economy more generally, or the needs of individuals and communities.

The Federation believes that the VET professionals, ie. teachers and educational staff, in the TAFE sector are 'innovative, flexible, industry savvy and have the ability to learn', but are often held back from exhibiting or increasing these capabilities because of poorly managed bureaucracies and lack of funding. If any government wants a VET workforce that consistently demonstrates these qualities, then it must properly invest in the workforce and value the profession. This is not the current position in Australia, unlike many other OECD countries where funding and support for VET professionals is far greater. It is hoped that one of the recommendations out of this inquiry will be greater investment in VET professionals with a workforce plan to enable them to increase their professional skills and knowledge.

The Federation believes that to meet COAG targets, there needs to be increased funding for TAFE as identified by Skills Australia and the CEET paper 'TAFE Funding and the Education Targets' prepared for the Australian Education Union. Proper investment in the VET workforce within TAFE should also take into account the current high casualisation of this workforce, and question how a profession can continue to be built upon those who have no permanent employment. Funding to ensure higher levels of permanency, particularly amongst teachers in TAFE, is critical to building the profession.

Characteristics of the VET workforce in TAFE

Statistics show that Australia is second only to Spain in OECD rankings for casualisation of the workforce with at least 27% of its workforce casually employed. Casual employment is generally employment with few rights and benefits. Of particular concern in Australia is the rapid rate of growth of the 'regular' casual, employed in an ongoing way to that of permanent employees, but denied the same rights, and often leaving employees open to abuse.

This is particularly evident in TAFE NSW, where 73% of its teaching workforce is employed in non-permanent positions. Federation declared in a 2003 campaign to improve conditions for part time casual teachers – “There is nothing casual about teaching”. Seven years later this still holds true. Federation recognises that amongst other things a highly casualised TAFE workforce limits succession planning, adversely impacts on the workload of permanent colleagues, particularly Head Teachers, and is not in the best interests of students.

The trend to casualisation in TAFE NSW came about as a response to underfunding arising from the Howard Government policy in the 1990s of ‘growth through efficiencies’. The particular response of the NSW Government at that time was to provide redundancies to over 600 permanent teachers and to put a halt on recruitment. Over a number of years only a few permanent teachers were hired, and the workforce has continued to be highly casualised. At the same time over 50% of teaching hours are taught by hourly paid casuals.

Whilst there may be a need for flexibility in TAFE staffing with some temporary and casual staff to cater for varying enrolments, industry requirements and timetabling issues, the Federation believes that the current high rate of casualisation is a quality issue that puts unfair workload and pressures on permanent staff and exploits long-term hourly paid casuals.

The NSW Teachers Federation has for some time now, expressed concerns around the ageing of the TAFE workforce in NSW, and the need for succession planning. As most teachers do not become permanent teachers in TAFE until their thirties at least, the profile of the TAFE workforce tends to be older than in many other areas. This relates to the level and breadth of industrial experience required of TAFE teachers, and that many come into TAFE teaching as a career change.

In 2008, TAFE NSW and the NSW Teachers Federation participated in a working party on ‘Renewal of the TAFE Workforce’. It considered strategies related to: attracting new staff, retention and development, and succession planning and exit strategies. In regard to retaining and developing teaching and educational staff, the report noted the following elements:

- the need for good pay and working conditions
- the importance of career development opportunities including a sabbatical policy and revamped ‘vocational currency’ policy which included support for return to industry
- well defined and satisfying jobs
- resources and support from management, including professional development
- transparent structures, good communication throughout the organisation, and the ability to address problems in a fair, transparent and timely fashion.

A number of strategies were also proposed for pre- and post-retirement options. They included:

- structured mentoring and knowledge transfer through strategies such as over-lapping concurrent employment
- supporting a range of voluntary/negotiable flexible working arrangements for pre-retirees (eg. job-sharing and permanent part time work)

- supporting a range of flexible working arrangements for post-retirement staff

Unfortunately TAFE NSW has not implemented these very sensible recommendations that would help to retain valuable VET professionals in TAFE, and help them to remain 'innovative, flexible, and industry savvy'.

The influences of varying demands on the VET sector

Most recent reports from Skills Australia and CEET indicate a growing demand for VET qualifications to address changes in the economy and possibly reduced immigration. People are staying in work longer and putting off fulltime retirement and are more likely to demand and require skills updating. Changes in the economy brought about through the global financial crisis and increasing technological change, also highlight increasing skills needs. The Australian Government has recognised this through COAG targets, and State and Territory governments have also responded with increasing the school leaving age to try and ensure that young people have every opportunity to gain a qualification before they leave school, and are on the track to further study or a job. We also appear to be experiencing a 'credential creep', with higher qualifications expected for a variety of jobs. The need to increase the number of people gaining higher VET qualifications and degree qualifications has also been set through COAG targets. We are currently seeing a significant move by universities and VET providers, particularly TAFE, to come together in partnerships to deliver degree and other programs, as well as VET providers moving into the higher education area.

These demand influences will have significant impact on the VET workforce. Many TAFE teachers may need to gain additional qualifications and skills to work across VET and universities, and many others may need to develop their pedagogical skills to work with young people still of school age. There is increased need for the flexibility to not only teach full qualifications, but to deliver courses and skills sets required by existing workforces and mature aged workers. The TAFE sector needs to be able to support its teachers in particular to gain new skills and qualifications to deliver in changed industry areas and for different cohorts of students. If teachers in the TAFE sector will require Masters degrees and doctorates to teach in the tertiary environment, then TAFE Institutes will require funding to invest in their teachers and support them to gain these qualifications. Recognition by the Federal Government of this change, and the provision of funding and incentives, is also necessary.

The same applies to the upskilling of TAFE teachers in green skills areas. When the government makes new announcements, there should automatically be consideration of the skill requirements involved and the appropriate funding attached. This should have occurred with the recent home insulation strategy and may have avoided tragedy.

The Federation has already made a number of suggestions around issues relating to recruitment and retention of teachers, and believes strongly that recognition of and investment in TAFE would be a significant step in the right direction.

Sector specific influences

Probably more than in any other educational sector, government policies affect both the VET profession and the educational opportunities for many people who want to or expect to study in VET. Funding profiles and priorities are constantly changing, along with funding mechanisms. The Federation continues strongly oppose the

marketisation of public education, and there is no doubt that current competitive tendering arrangements have led to much uncertainty amongst TAFE Institutes. In order to continue to maintain its course profiles, meet the needs of local industries and communities, and to maintain its infrastructure and facilities, TAFE needs certainty of funding from year to year. The undermining of this certainty through current funding mechanisms is undermining the whole fabric of publicly funded vocational education and training, and the quality teaching and learning TAFE provides.

Although funding has been moved around to meet new and emerging industry demands, there has still been a steady and constant demand for courses at TAFE. This is because these courses provide students with skills and knowledge for a range of jobs, such as in the continuing high demand for courses in the business area. Better forecasting and planning is often required, but some changes such as the mining boom are not always known years beforehand. The current Productivity Places Program is in many ways far more inflexible than previous funding mechanisms, as funding cannot be moved to different industry areas even if that is where demand might be. Unfortunately little of the funding attached to the Productivity Places Program has been received by TAFE. The Federation believes that governments have a responsibility to fund public education and to ensure that public vocational education and training through TAFE is its first priority, with dedicated funding for continuing and new programs.

The effects on TAFE teachers of such policies are significant, with insecurity of employment and further over reliance on casual teachers. Certainty of funding is required to continue to build the TAFE profession. It is disappointing that current Federal Government policies are skewed towards building and funding a market in vocational education and training, and in doing so putting the future of TAFE in jeopardy.

If government policies to support many learners from disadvantaged backgrounds and long term unemployed into jobs continues, then it can be expected that there will be a continuing growth in students who require additional support in order to succeed. TAFE's role in catering for equity groups is critical, and governments need to ensure that funding is provided to maintain this role. Funding applied through competitive tendering aims at rewarding lowest cost providers, and therefore does not necessarily provide the funding for disadvantaged learners. Governments need to recognise that their rhetoric around supporting such learners and the way they allocate funding, do not match, and that you cannot subject such students to the whims of the market. The Federation is concerned that many students who have previously received excellent vocational education and support through TAFE delivery of the LL&N program, will now find that quality education undermined, as funding has now been allocated to private RTOs and welfare institutions rather than educational ones.

Perhaps one of the most successful programs undertaken by TAFE NSW has been its Outreach programs, where TAFE professionals work with community groups and equity groups to deliver programs they require in their community settings. Both the programs and the delivery by highly qualified professionals have led to successful outcomes for many adults who have not initially had the confidence or skills to undertake institutional based education. Often such learners need to undertake a few lower level qualifications as they gain the confidence to move on. Government policies aimed at charging students high fees to undertake more than one course at a particular AQF level, are short sighted and damaging. They will affect many students from disadvantaged backgrounds, and such policies show complete lack of

understanding about how many people gain qualifications through their working lives by studying at the same AQF level but in different industry areas.

The effects of changes such as technology on teaching and learning

TAFE has been offering programs via flexible delivery, mixed mode and online delivery for some years now. The demands of students to be able to study in their homes or near their homes, has meant that distance education utilises e-learning and telecommunications far more these days. TAFE teachers have adopted new teaching techniques as necessary for new modes of delivery. However, despite predictions over a number of years that e-learning and other non-face-to-face delivery modes would mean the end of classroom based delivery, this has not occurred, either in TAFE or universities.

One of the issues with the use of technology for educational delivery is that it is regarded as a cheaper option than employing a teacher. Most TAFE Institutes and universities have found that this is not the case, and that putting teaching notes on-line is not a successful teaching technique. The Federation recognises that e-learning and use of other technologies is more appropriate for some learners than others, and more appropriate for some vocational areas than others. It is another tool that TAFE teachers will use when appropriate and is not a replacement for good teaching which involves interaction not just between teacher and student, but also between students.

Along with all changes in education, it is necessary that teachers are given the opportunity to undertake professional development, and that there is proper investment in the technology and facilities. Often there is criticism of VET courses, because technology and facilities are not cutting edge or up to industry standards. Governments have a responsibility to ensure that TAFE delivery remains relevant with proper funding.

The appropriateness of Training Packages and competency based training

The Federation considers it unfortunate that every time there is a review of Training Packages, governments steer away from any real changes even when it is clearly demonstrated that Training Packages, as currently constructed, are used Australia-wide as a substitute for curriculum and that they are not set up for that. Many TAFE teachers consider Training Packages to be representative of only some industry views and to be inflexible and often out-of-date. Whilst accepting that there have been moves to change these two problems, it does not address the conflict between educational curriculum and competency-based education. The proposal some years ago, to put employability skills into Training Packages did not address the need for the teaching and assessing of proper generic skills, and underpinning skills and knowledge. As mentioned earlier, the AQF is now proposing to include generic skills as part of the qualifications levels and this must mean that they should be both explicitly taught and assessed.

If we accept the need for vocational education, then we must also accept that it should be properly supported by curriculum and accredited courses. This may go some way to addressing pathways and credit transfer between the educational sectors. If there is to be a tertiary sector, then these educational pathways between TAFE and universities need to be addressed. Training Packages were designed for a particular point of time in the evolution of the VET sector, and perhaps it is time for them to be revisited.

The skills and qualifications of TAFE teachers

The Federation strongly supports the need for TAFE teachers as VET professionals to have university level teaching/educational qualifications, as does the teaching profession in schools. The complexity of teaching is no less in the VET sector as characterised by TAFE, where there is a diverse cohort of students often in the same educational group. Given the importance of the role of second chance and further education, TAFE teachers require a strong pedagogy in adult education and understanding of relevant educational theories.

The Certificate IV in Training & Assessment is not a professional teaching qualification. The establishment of the CIV TAA as the minimum qualification level for teachers/trainers in RTOs, has led to the NSW government using it as also the maximum qualification required, in order to avoid their obligations to properly qualify and develop their TAFE teaching workforce. The Federation rejects the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as inappropriate as a professional teaching qualification. The VET profession needs to be underpinned by professional teaching/educational qualifications. The funding and support for these qualifications should be the responsibility of government to ensure quality standards.

A questionnaire on teacher education qualifications was recently disseminated to TAFE teachers and educational staff through the TAFE Teachers Association of the NSW Teachers Federation, in preparation for a workshop at the 2010 AVETRA Conference. There were over 500 responses, representing all industry areas across a wide number of TAFE NSW Institutes. The following comes from the report provided to AVETRA:

Teachers and educational staff were asked questions about the current qualifications they held, both of an educational and vocational nature, and what teaching qualifications they believed were necessary for a TAFE teacher. They were also asked about the skills they believed were most important for a good teacher, and new skills and knowledge they thought they would have to acquire over the next few years. The focus was on qualifications and skills teachers had, ones they believed they would need to gain, and how these should be attained.

We found that 78% of respondents had been in TAFE for 10 years or more, 22% were part time casual, 52% had industry qualifications at less than degree level and 32% educational qualifications at degree or higher level. The vast majority indicated that they also had a CIV TAA or its predecessor. Some of the skills outlined as being of most importance for an effective teacher were empathy, communication, organisational skills, flexibility, being adaptive, professional currency and computer skills. Whilst many of these skills are not necessarily taught in any course, the overall response was that TAFE teachers needed a "Dip Ed type course which looks at education theory and not just at planning and assessment. These last two are only part of the group of skills you need to be an effective teacher." Most respondents acknowledged that the CIV TAA was not enough, also reflected in the research undertaken for NCVET by Berwyn Clayton, but they also stated that good mentoring and support was needed in the workplace to maximise qualifications.

Further comments from respondents on their experiences in initial teacher education and what sort of qualification or course they now felt was needed included the following:

A teacher needs to go to Uni to get a general degree, then a specialist dip.ed. – throw out the Cert IV, it didn't teach me a thing

A specialised teacher training course that is industry specific delivered by senior teachers who have been teaching the trade for a number of years

In general studies a university degree and diploma in education is the only way. Mentoring from fellow teachers is also important

Definitely university based. Needs to be something delivered over a longer period in order to develop in-depth understanding of teaching and learning strategies – as opposed to quick, short-term, slap-bang courses. Unfortunately some CIV TAA courses are of the latter type ... but the people with them are 'qualified teachers' in the eyes of TAFE. Any teaching qualification needs to demand high level, good quality literacy skills. I am sorry to say that I have come across too many teachers with CIV qualification who have poorly developed writing skills and a limited number of teaching strategies to suit delivery to a broad range of student ability types

Tertiary level qualifications that include the theories of learning, particularly adult learning and theory and practice relating to the development of curriculum and programs and valid assessment

Not the mickey mouse TAAs on offer from the mickey mouse RTOs – what an absolute joke! There has to be an end to "pay your dollars and get your quals here!" Training to be fair dinkum, authentic, disciplined, requiring best effort and skill, assessable – the way this is to be obtained may vary, as long as there is an end to the current madness

Much of the 'traditional' teaching qualifications offered by universities are not of a great deal of use for someone working in the VET sector. The entire way we undertake delivery and assessment is different from other educational sectors. The qualifications for TAFE teachers really need to reflect this. I think the best way for teachers to gain their initial teaching qualifications is by being supervised in their on-the-job activities, together with a program of release to undertake higher level qualifications

Mentoring with an experienced teacher and doing a degree or diploma of teaching

Whilst undertaking limited teaching duties, development of theoretical knowledge, both VET learning and industry related should run concurrently. Serious consideration should be given to develop courses that relate to the finer aspects of industry, especially trades

Initial short block release then regular face-to-face block release. This enables participants to share experiences and ideas

Teaching qualifications should be gained while employed in TAFE on a reduced program

In practice and with a nearby senior experienced mentor – plus offsite theory and reflection of practices of self and others and research – plus time to observe and absorb other teachers in action

Overall the support was for a tertiary qualification, generally from a university. When this should be acquired varied, and the make-up of such a course included general education components and those specific to the teaching area. Respondents overwhelmingly said that support from TAFE was needed including release from teaching, and they wanted both on and off-the-job components - in other words to be able to study the theory but also practice at the same time, with the support of mentors and experts.

In terms of new skills needed, the focus was on e-Learning, mixed mode delivery, development of curriculum resources and green skills. When asked how these new skills should be gained, there was a variety of responses. Importantly there was a recognition of the need for courses and further qualifications, but also return to industry, mentoring and on-the-job learning with release from teaching and time to undertake the additional study and skills acquisition properly.