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Industry Training Federation submission on the technology component of the New Zealand Curriculum

Background

The Industry Training Federation (ITF) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission on the draft technology curriculum. The Industry Training Organisation (ITO) interface with schools is increasing in importance. For example several ITOs have relationships with over 100 schools, many ITOs are involved in the Gateway programme, and over half are involved in industry recruitment activities with secondary schools.

The ITF analysis of ITO Profiles indicates that ITO involvement with schools will continue to increase in the short to medium term.¹

This submission comes from deliberations of the ITF Secondary Policy Development Group with consultation with the broader ITF membership.

Recommendations

- i. Doing/making skills should be included in the technology practice strand
- ii. Develop a professional development programme with and for technology teachers
- iii. Resolve the G3 issue

Key issues

1. The curriculum needs to include doing/making skills

The trend of the last 10 years has been to increase the academic nature of the technology curriculum. While recognising that this is a laudable move towards increasing the access of talented students at all academic levels to industry-focused programmes, the perception of many ITOs is that this has pushed some less academically inclined students away. Many ITOs are concerned that the needs of hands on / kinesthetic students, particularly males, are not going to be met and nor are many of the needs of industry. There is a perception amongst some ITOs that a student could legitimately go through the technology curriculum using only 'cardboard and glue' rather than doing and making.

¹ Toni Fraser (ITF, 2006) *Analysis of Industry Training Organisations' 2006-2008 Profiles*

This issue is sometimes characterised by the difference between technical disciplines (including traditional trades) and the broader and more academic focus of technology.

It is the experience of ITOs that many technical teachers are being turned off broadening their skills because their technical skills are undervalued and capability building for those teachers is inadequate.

The new technology curriculum can mitigate the perceptions and risks by increasing its diversity to encourage the buy-in of technical teachers and less academic students. In addition, including teachers in designing a professional development programme should develop their skills, increase their perception of being valued, and deliver better results for students.

In the current draft, technical, or doing/ making skills are not present in the technological practice strand. The argument has been put to the ITF that the contextualisation of the learning at the next level will necessarily include doing/ making. The ITF suggests that there is value in acknowledging the skills of technical teachers and the doing/making skills sought at the highest level documentation. Even were this to duplicate the work of lower level documents it should value and affirm those teachers and skills. These high level statements can be written in a generic way to allow the context of the doing/making activity to occur. ITOs have deep experience and may be prepared to assist in writing high level statements and context specific skills exemplars.

An approach that brings the technical and technology approaches together is likely to create more buy-in and success for students.

Recommendations

- iv. Doing/making skills are included in the technology practice strand
- v. Develop a professional development programme with and for technology teachers

2. We need to recruit and retain teachers with technical skills

The academic way schools are measured influences the type of technology teachers recruited - typically from a university rather than a trade background. The technical part of what is learnt will diminish if this continues.

In the experience of ITOs the G3 issue remains a sore point for technical/ technology teachers hampering recruitment and retention. ITOs take the view that the RPL solution for these teachers is an extra administrative burden that does not add sufficient value to warrant the cost.

The Ministry needs to find a solution that values teachers from a technical background rather than penalise them for their pathway to knowledge. Recognising that a degree qualification is only one way of achieving competence is a starting point. Other approaches including the RPL process, a National Degree (which could include RPL processes), or a polytechnic degree aimed at technical teachers are all second best options that arise because of the vicissitudes of previous pay rounds, not because they add value to the students. None-the-less if such pragmatic rather than principled approaches are the only way politically possible to further the pay element of the recruitment and retention issue then the ITF supports those efforts.

ITOs believe more support for teachers to become more capable of integrating the technological and technical aspects of their teaching ability needs to happen. As discussed above, capability development programmes constructed with the teachers need to occur.

Recommendations

- vi. Resolve the G3 issue.