University of Sydney
AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR INDUSTRIAL
RELATIONS RESEARCH AND TEACHING

TEACHING INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN
THE TAFE SECTOR

Robyn Alexander

ACIRRT Working Paper No. 11
June 1991
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ISBN 0 86758 390 8
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INTRODUCTION

The Technical and Further Education (TAFE) sector of tertiary education has a long and well-recognised history in the provision of vocational, remedial and general education to school leavers and adults. While TAFE owes its origins to the Mechanics Institutes and Schools of Mines in the 1880s, the TAFE systems as they operate today are largely a result of the 'reformist' movement of the 1970s. The Kangan Report (1974) challenged the prevalent view of the time that post-secondary education was restricted to universities and a select few. Another outcome of the Kangan Report is the now-accepted view that TAFE is responsible for providing educational programs relevant to government labour market priorities and the technical and para-professional needs of industry and the community.

For many years TAFE interpreted "industry-related" responsibilities primarily through its role in the education and training of trades-based vocations. However over the years industrial and economic changes affecting the skills and knowledge required of the workforce have resulted in the development of an extensive range of courses in the para-professional and technician streams as well. NSW TAFE currently offers about 3500 courses to some 400 000 students in the 108 colleges of TAFE throughout New South Wales, employing more than 11 000 teachers, 60 per cent of whom are full-time teachers and 40% part-time.

This paper reviews the provision of industrial relations courses in NSW TAFE and examines in detail the specialist industrial relations course, including course aim, structure and content, curriculum development, student and teacher profiles, teaching methods and practices. The articulation of TAFE courses to higher education bodies and possible future developments for TAFE industrial relations courses are also discussed.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND APPRENTICESHIP COURSES

A large proportion of TAFE courses include content on industrial relations and associated topics such as occupational health and safety. The industrial relations content of trade courses is regarded as particularly important for a number of reasons. As apprentices these students have certain responsibilities which require a knowledge of the industrial relations systems and practices. Also TAFE graduates often play an active role in the industrial relations arena in subsequent years on-the-job as supervisors or union delegates. Furthermore these graduates often continue their studies in higher education courses in TAFE or in degree courses at university.

Industrial relations as a topic areas has always received some treatment in NSW TAFE trades-based courses. Prior to 1984, most trade teachers included in their 'theory' lessons some discussion of the rights and responsibilities of apprentices within the apprenticeship system and as employees generally. The strategy used by teachers in addressing industrial relations concepts in trade courses depended on the extent of interest and knowledge of the individual teachers. One often-used strategy was to invite a government officer to address apprentices on government regulations regarding apprentices.

In 1983, following deputations from the Labor Council of NSW for a coordinated program on industrial relations for all apprentices, a four-hour module was developed and trialed. The actual implementation of the module has been difficult to monitor given that there are over 100 different apprenticeship courses in over 80 different colleges across New South Wales. Following an evaluation of the module in 1986 the module became Industrial Relations and Apprenticeship, which was accompanied by a revised syllabus and comprehensive Teacher's
Guide. Topics included in the module are: definition of industrial relations, role and function of trade unions and employer organisations, definition of an award, details of employment conditions covered by an award, details of the apprenticeship system.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND OTHER TAFE COURSES

Higher Education Courses with Industrial Relations Content

Many of TAFE's Associate Diploma (Higher Education) courses contain industrial relations content as compulsory subjects, as elective subjects, or as a topic integrated into technical or communication subjects. For example, the Hospitality Management Associate Diploma contains a 36 hour industrial relations subject in first year and a further 36 hour industrial relations subject in third year. In the Accounting Associate Diploma, there is an Industrial Relations subject which can be taken as one of the 54 hour elective subjects.

Many TAFE courses attracting Certificate and Advanced Certificate awards or Statements of Attainment also contain the topic of industrial relations either as a separate subject or integrated into a related subject. One example is the Management Advanced Certificate which contains a compulsory Human Resources Management subject, content of which addresses industrial relations issues and topics. Final year students in the Management course may take further industrial relations subjects as electives.

Another example of the incorporation of industrial relations as a subject is in the Graduate Certificate in Personnel Management. This one year course for university graduates is based on key subjects from the Personnel Management Advanced Certificate. One of the electives for students is an Industrial Relations subject. This 54 hour subject takes the principal features from the three industrial relations subjects offered in Stages 1 and 2 of the four human resource management related advanced certificates.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AS A SPECIALIST COURSE

Background

In the early 1970s as part of an expanded interest by industry in business-related courses, NSW TAFE introduced a three year Certificate course in Industrial Relations. The course was generally done on a part-time basis, two evenings of three hours per week over three years. It was offered at Sydney Technical College only, enrolling approximately 200 students per year. As it was one of only a few course offered in industrial relations at the time, students were by and large industrial relations practitioners, many of whom have gone on to senior positions in unions, employer organisations and the legal profession.

In 1982 the Industrial Relations Certificate, together with the related Personnel Management and Safety Management certificates, were revised. At the same time the Training and Development Certificate was introduced rounding off the four certificates under the umbrella of human resource management. In 1986 the four courses underwent minor revision and became Advanced Certificates.

Stage 1 and 2 (the first two years) of all four Advanced Certificates are the same, consisting of fourteen subjects from the social sciences and topic areas within the field of human resource management. Subjects are organised on a semester basis of 18 weeks, usually involving two
evenings per week of three hours each. In Stage 3 students specialise in one of the four streams. During this final year the subjects relate directly to the specific field of study. In the case of the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate the final year subjects are: Negotiating and Collective Bargaining, Industrial Relations Economics, Advocacy Skills Workshop, Industrial Organisations and the Industrial Relations Project, which consists of a comprehensive research project.

The Personnel Management Advanced Certificate is the most popular of the four courses with over 2000 enrolments throughout New South Wales annually. Between 1972 and 1982 the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate enrolled consistently over 200 students annually. However, Table 1 shows that in the 1980s, with the introduction of a number of university-based courses in industrial relations and more legally qualified industrial relations practitioners, the number of students declined. This corresponded with an increase in the number of people doing safety management and training development. The 1990 figures show an increase, which can be attributed to the increased interest in industrial relations issues resulting from the award restructuring process and the ongoing devolution of industrial relations responsibilities from specialist areas to line management.

**TABLE 1: INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS ADVANCED CERTIFICATE ENROLMENTS 1985 - 1990**

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SOURCE: NSW TAFE ENROLMENTS AND EFTS (1985-1990)
Statistics and Systems Analysis Division, NSW TAFE

The decision to offer a particular course at a TAFE college depends on demand and the availability of college resources and college priorities. In 1991 the first two stages of the related advanced certificate courses (Personnel Management, Industrial Relations, Safety Management and Training and Development) was offered at 25 colleges throughout NSW, while the specialist industrial relations third year was offered at five colleges.

**Aims of the Course**

The overall aim of the NSW TAFE industrial relations and related advanced certificate courses has been to provide the requisite education and training for practitioners in one of the specified areas or for those persons wishing to work in positions related to personnel management, industrial relations, occupational health and safety or training and development. The courses are designed to combine theory and practice in the development of the skills and knowledge to carry out tasks at the 'supervisor or technician level' (Board of TAFE Studies, 1986). More specifically the course aim for the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate Course is:

"To provide sound practical training in the techniques and skills of industrial relations within an appropriate theoretical background. The course fulfils the needs of industrial relations specialists as well as the needs of managers and supervisors who wish to develop expertise in the industrial relations aspects of their job. (NSW TAFE Industrial Relations Syllabus, 1981)"
Targeted vocational backgrounds for the course have been: union organisations (elected officers, organisers, research officers and advocate), private or public employers (line managers and supervisors with industrial relations responsibilities and personnel/industrial relations officers), and employer organisations (industrial officers, research officers and clerks).

Frequently students upon completion of one of the advanced certificates return for an additional year to complete another of the advanced certificates. There are former TAFE students with all four advanced certificates.

**Course Structure and Content**

As noted the four advanced certificates have a common course curricula for the first two years consisting of fourteen subjects. This broad range of subjects provides students in their first two years with an understanding of the principal responsibilities, a knowledge of the theory, and the basic skills required within the framework of human resource management. Furthermore, the common course curricula for stages 1 and 2 of the four advanced certificates recognises the inter-relatedness of the human resource management function. The third year is considered a specialist year in which students develop the skills and knowledge specific to one of the four streams, that is personnel management, safety management, industrial relations or training and development. There are three industrial relations components of the fourteen subjects undertaken in the first two years. These include -

**Industrial Relations Framework:** This subject is taken in the first semester of first year. It covers the principal characteristics of the framework within which industrial relations operates in Australia and the nature and roles of the participants in the system.

**Assessment:** An essay of 1000-1500 words, one mid-semester and one final examination, and a workbook on current industrial relations events based on media sources.

**Industrial Relations Methods I:** This subject is taken in the first semester of second year. It is skills-based and includes topics like preparation of contracts of employment, interpretation of awards, agreements and interpretation of principal pieces of industrial legislation and the implementation of procedures for making, varying and enforcing awards.

**Assessment:** A series of in-class tests on interpretation of awards, Long Service Leave Act and Annual Holidays Act, final examination and exercise on contract of employment.

**Industrial Relations Methods II:** This is a second year, second semester subject covering the area of industrial conflict and dispute-resolution. It has both theoretical and practical aspects. Topics include the theory of industrial conflict, manifestation and incidence of industrial conflict, dispute settling processes at workplace level and within the Federal and NSW systems, Sections 45D and E of the Trade Practices Act and the use of common law.
Assessment: A major essay of 1500 words, two practical minor assignments, a class test and a state-wide examination.

The final year of the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate is designed to develop the appropriate skills and knowledge required by an industrial relations practitioner.

The subjects include:

**Negotiating and Collective Bargaining:** This 3 hour per week subject identifies and develops the skills and strategies required for negotiating in an industrial relations context. As well comparative industrial relations systems are examined.

Assessment: Reports on negotiating simulations, and a final examination.

**Industrial Organisations:** In weekly 1 1/2 hour sessions over one semester the roles, activities and decision-making process of industrial organisations are discussed. The legal basis and requirements for registration, amalgamation, protection and sanctions of industrial organisations is also covered.

Assessment: Class assignments and a final state-wide examination.

**Advocacy Skills Workshop:** This practical, 3 hour per week subject develops the skills and knowledge required for preparation and advocacy of cases before Federal and NSW industrial tribunals.

Assessment: Reports on simulation exercises, preparation of materials for moots and final test.

**Industrial Relations Economics:** Students examine the effect of economic factors on industrial relations situations. Students also acquire skills in collecting information and statistics on economic issues.

Assessment: Essay of 1500 words, minor assignment, a mid-semester and final class examination.

**Industrial Relations Project:** All third year students in any of the four related advanced certificates are required to carry out a major research project culminating in a written report and oral presentation. Industrial relations students are required to research an industrial relations topic or problem which may be organisation specific.

**Curriculum Development**

All subjects within the advanced certificates have a detailed syllabus, containing the subject objectives, topics covered and objectives, suggested teaching activities, resources and references and assessment procedures. Furthermore, there are teacher guidance notes for each of the subjects.
As the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate is an accredited 'major award course' of NSW TAFE it was centrally accredited by the appropriate Faculty Academic Committee, an Industrial Review Panel and the Board of TAFE Studies. An Industrial Review Panel is made up of industrial, community and educational representatives, external to TAFE appointed for their expertise. The function of the Panel is to review the course content with regard to its appropriateness and relevance to the needs of industry and the community. The Panel reviews the course syllabus and makes recommendations on its content. Once a course is given accreditation by the Board of TAFE Studies, the Director General approves the course for delivery at the college level. The major aim of the accreditation process is to ensure high quality and relevance of TAFE's courses and their ability to respond to changing industry and community needs. Furthermore, course accreditation is regarded as the best means of ensuring quality control throughout the state.

The Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate has recently been re-accredited along with the other three related advanced certificates. While the accreditation process is designed to ensure high quality and relevance of TAFE's courses, concern has been expressed about TAFE's accreditation process being 'slow and unwieldy' (Scott, 1990).

**Student Profile**

Entrance requirements to advanced certificate courses is year 10 or its equivalent, while associate diploma and diploma courses require year 12 or its equivalent. TAFE courses, like the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate, which are vocationally oriented, also ask for some work experience (three years) preferably in an area related to the course, however this selection criterion is not applied strictly. While the industrial relations and related advanced certificate courses can be completed on a full-time basis, they are designed for people in the workforce wishing to study part-time.

Almost without exception those persons doing the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate are working, with most having some form of industrial relations responsibility. The typical industrial relations student is in their mid to late 20s, whereas the personnel management students are slightly younger. Industrial relations is not a preferred course for women. While women make up a growing majority in the first two stages of the human resource management related courses, they are in a minority in the industrial relations specialist year. Only 25 per cent of the 1990 graduating class in industrial relations was women.

Enrolment in one of the human resource related courses has traditionally involved individuals interested in doing the course attending a college offering it and enrolling on the designated enrolment day. Should the course be filled the person is placed on a stand-by list. These more 'open' enrolment procedures compared to other higher education bodies, result in a number of persons enrolling who do not in fact complete the course. While there has not been a formal evaluation to identify reasons for people not completing the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate courses, a general study into the attrition of part-time students in certificate courses found that reasons for withdrawal included: work overload because of the combination of home, work and study commitments and lack of encouragement from lecturers (Parkinson, 1987).

The fact that prior to 1989 there was no charge for TAFE courses in New South Wales has been put forward as a reason for people not committing themselves to TAFE courses. It is unknown at this stage whether or not the administrative charge can be seen as a factor in determining retention rates amongst advanced certificate students.
Teacher Profile

In 1990 there were 28 full-time teachers of human resource management employed at various TAFE colleges in New South Wales to teach in the four human resource management related advanced certificates and graduate courses. There are also full-time social science teachers which service these courses. Given the number of students and the range of subjects in the courses, there is a substantial reliance on part-time teaching staff. It is estimated that there are at any one time over 100 part-time staff teaching subjects in the advanced certificate courses.

Full-time teachers are expected to have a relevant degree and at least five years work experience in one or more of the areas of responsibility within the scope of human resource management. While some teachers are specialist industrial relations, personnel, training and development or safety management teachers, most are required to teach in a number of subject areas. As a consequence the strength of an applicant teacher is as much on the ability of the person to teach across a range of subjects, as depth of knowledge in a particular subject area. Teaching ability is regarded highly in TAFE as demonstrated by the fact that all TAFE teachers must successfully complete a TAFE sponsored teaching qualification (Dip. Ed. or Dip. Teach.) through the University of Technology during the first year of their appointment, if they do not already hold one. Teachers have a much reduced teaching load during their first year. However, upon their permanent appointment following the completion of the Diploma of Education and successfully meeting the Teacher Assessment criteria, they are expected to teach 18 hours per week, 36 weeks of the year. Teachers are expected to maintain up-to-date knowledge of developments in industry through memberships of professional bodies, return to industry programs and personal contacts.

Promotional opportunities to Head Teacher or Senior Head Teacher have traditionally not been open to teachers until they have completed six years as a teacher although there have been a few examples of accelerated progression. The system is currently being revamped with the view of providing teachers more career options and greater flexibility in the promotion lines.

Part-time teachers in the four human resource advanced certificates are expected to have a degree, diploma or advanced certificate and three to fives years experience directly related to the teaching subject. The fact that they are drawn from industry ensures, among other things, that examples and activities incorporated in lessons are industry-related and up-to-date. The detailed syllabus and guidance notes provided for each subject are designed to assist the part-time teacher, in particular, in meeting the subject and topic objectives and in providing ideas for class activities.

Survey of Part-time Industrial Relations Teachers

Because of TAFE’s heavy reliance on part-time teaching staff, a profile of part-time teachers of industrial relations was compiled, together with their views on various aspects of TAFE’s Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate. Questionnaires were sent out to 15 part-time TAFE teachers of industrial relations, with 12 being returned.

All the respondent part-time teachers had in excess of five years industrial relations experience, with half having more than 10 years. While the occupational profile of the
teachers ranged from industrial relations consultant, industrial officer, retired senior officer of an industrial tribunal to a partner in a law firm, the majority of respondents held managerial positions in personnel and industrial relations.

There was also considerable range in the academic qualifications held by respondent part-time teachers. They included honours degrees in Economics and Industrial Relations, Commerce and Psychology. Three held the TAFE Advance Certificate in Industrial Relations supplemented by a Graduate Diploma. A further three respondents held law degrees.

There would seem to be a genuine interest by part-time industrial relations teachers in the effectiveness of their classroom presentation, as demonstrated by the fact almost one-half of respondents had done the TAFE Basic Methods of Instruction course which is conducted for part-time teachers over a weekend. Of those who had not done the Basic Methods of Instruction, one-half had done some form of 'train the trainer' course. A summary of the views of respondent part-time teachers is reported in subsequent sections.

Teaching Methods

In order to achieve the combination of skill development and theoretical knowledge required in most industrial relations subjects of the advanced certificate course teachers use a variety of teaching methods. Unlike other post-school education bodies, teachers in the TAFE cannot rely primarily on the lecture and seminar format. While the theoretical component of a particular subject can be handled using a lecture format, it is usually supported by the use of overhead transparencies, a white/blackboard, flip charts and extensive review of material through questioning. The development of skill-related aspects of the subject material is done through simulations, role-playing, group work, individual presentations, and case studies.

The introductory classes in industrial relations in the TAFE course are seen as particularly taxing from the teacher’s standpoint. Substantial effort is required to not only get across seemingly complex facts and concepts about industrial relations, but also to generate interest in a subject area which is often seen as dry and dull by lay people. For many new TAFE students returning to 'school' is a major and daunting step, especially for those students whose previous experience with formal learning had not been positive. Several of the part-time teachers surveyed noted that new students in most instances know very little about industrial relations and need to be introduced to the subject in a "positive way".

Survey respondents reported relying heavily on the teacher guidance notes provided to them which detail the topics to be covered, references and suggested activities. For example, in introducing the role of unions one suggested activity is to have the class in groups outline union objectives, services, structure and contemporary issues, using union journals and other source material. Contemporary issues are also seen as important, with teachers using newspapers and periodic journals in addition to prescribed textbooks. In the introductory industrial relations subject, students are expected to keep a diary of industrial relations events which are to be analysed and submitted as part of their assessment at the end of semester.

There appears to be a demand in the industrial relations training and education market for the development of audio-visual material. Almost without exception survey respondents, noted that material which is presently available on tribunal proceedings was dated or directed more to high school students. For example, as a practical exercise, a visit to either the State or Federal Commission is often incorporated in activities for students. However, it is usually difficult for part-time teachers and part-time students to attend. Videos on proceedings, and
interviews with commissioners and industrial advocates were recommended by many of the respondent part-time teachers to complement lectures on the operation of the industrial systems.

ACCREDITATION AND ARTICULATION

The TAFE system, with courses at a number of levels, is designed to link or articulate the courses in such a way as to allow students to progress from one level to another, with recognition for studies already completed. The aim of articulation is that students progressing from, for example, a Certificate to an Advanced Certificate, or an Advanced Certificate to an Associate Diploma will make the smoothest possible transition. Courses are said to be "articulated" when an initial course is the means by which students gain admission to another course, with or without advanced standing.

There has been a great deal of discussion about the articulation of courses both within TAFE and from TAFE to higher education bodies as a result of ongoing award restructuring and the increased emphasis on training as part of micro-economic reform. Heightened consumer interest in the issue can also be expected if the community feels it is expected to pay for unnecessary duplication and overlap in tertiary education as a result of a poorly devised articulation system (Dawkins, 1988).

While there may be increased interest in the issue of articulation, particularly as part of the development of a national system for recognition of skills and the formation of new training authorities, the call for an effective system of articulation is not new (Gilmour & Lansbury, 1978). Nevertheless, Australia's record to date in providing an logical path of articulation between related courses and education sectors has been referred to as "ad hoc", "inconsistent" and "unco-ordinated" (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1989 b). There are a number of reasons for little progress in the development of a logical system of credit transfer, not least of which is the continuing perception, even if unfounded, about the worth of one institution by another (Dawkins, 1989). While negotiations are taking place to formalise articulation arrangements between TAFE and higher education institutions, this has more to do with entry into undergraduate degree programs. This would seem to be the case with the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate vis-a-vis university-based industrial relations related courses.

The TAFE Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate, as noted, is designed to provide requisite industrial relations skills within a theoretical framework. The determination of the appropriate level of 'academic rigour' of the course and assessment of credit standing for graduates depends on the selection criteria used at various New South Wales universities. Some of the questions which must be addressed in the development of selection criteria include: recognition of skill development versus theoretical development; practical assignments versus essays; recognition of individual on-the-job experience and job level; level of conceptual skill development provided in an advanced certificate course versus a degree course.

Entrance requirements to degree courses and post-graduate courses offered by higher education institutions are set by academic committees at the particular university. Recognition of the TAFE Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate for entrance and where appropriate, advanced standing in degree courses is varied. Some institutions have recognised the TAFE industrial relations course, together with other selection criteria, as meeting entrance requirements to some post-degree courses. One such course is the graduate diploma which is becoming an increasingly prevalent university award, particularly in the human resources field.
This course is particularly attractive to advanced certificate graduates, many of whom are more mature, with a number of years industrial and commercial experience, for whom the attainment of an undergraduate degree is seen as superfluous to doing advanced study in industrial relations or human resource management. There are at least six different graduate diploma programs in employee relations, industrial relations or human resources offered at universities in New South Wales. Admission to these courses is "normally" open only to degree holding applicants, with only one of the universities not having provision for admitting students who do not hold degrees.

There is considerable on-going debate in the universities about the appropriateness of accepting non-degree candidates into programs like the graduate diploma. There are number of examples of individuals with either the TAFE Personnel Management or Industrial Relations Advanced Certificates completing graduate diplomas with credit standing and going on to complete Masters degrees. At this stage, however, there is no standard criteria for articulation from the Advanced Certificate to higher education courses in industrial relations or related courses. There would seem to be a number of factors used by universities when considering non-graduate applications to graduate diploma programs. Factors considered are years and level of work experience; standing in the Advanced Certificate; number of graduate applicants, maturity of applicant, and assessment of applicants by an interview panel.

No formal evaluation of the success of advanced certificate students vis-a-vis graduates in industrial relations or related graduate diploma courses has been undertaken, but it is worth consideration. Informal generalised comments from academic staff about advanced certificate students in graduate diploma courses included that TAFE graduates were "stayers", deficient in "conceptual training", but possessing excellent on-the-job experience.

Until 1991 an avenue for further study by TAFE industrial relations graduates was the Diploma in Labour Relations and the Law offered at the University of Sydney. Many TAFE graduates did the two year part-time diploma to supplement their studies in industrial relations. This program was disbanded from 1991 as a result, it is understood, of a perceived downgrading of a diploma qualification in the workplace. It has been replaced by a Masters of Labour Relations and the Law which is only open to university graduates. The closing of this avenue of course articulation for TAFE graduates increases the necessity for the formation of alternative articulated course offerings between TAFE and universities for TAFE graduates in industrial relations and related courses.

The survey of TAFE part-time teachers of industrial relations sought their views of the advanced certificate vis-a-vis degree-level courses in industrial relations. The general view was that the Advanced Certificate course was under-rated. However, there were a range of opinions on its exact 'worth'. Comments included:

"Comparable to a degree with a large component of practical input."

"... not rigorous enough to be compared to a degree, but good for practitioners."

"Should be considered as close as possible to a degree."
"On a scale of 10 with a degree being 10, the advanced certificate is 4 or 5."

"...equips an industrial relations student for a job in a union or employer organisation better than a degree provided the student is an A or B pass."

"TAFE should review existing arrangements with universities to ensure the better students get appropriate advanced standing."

As well as the need for the development of better articulation arrangements between the TAFE and the universities, there is merit in the development of avenues for a better exchange of ideas and resources between the two education sectors. At a time when both TAFE and higher education institutions are being asked to become more industrially relevant there is considerable opportunity for the development of joint industrial relations/human resources teaching material and courses.

A further possibility is the development of combined university/TAFE course in industrial relations and/or related areas. It is envisaged that these kinds of programs would allow universities to produce practically oriented graduates with specific vocational skills. It is in this latter area, where TAFE has the expertise, that there is significant opportunity for exchange of ideas and resources between the bodies. There are already examples of these kinds of programs in other disciplines.

THE FUTURE OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN TAFE

Given TAFE's vital role in the provision of vocationally related courses, industrial relations will continue to be a significant topic in the many courses offered. As far as the future of industrial relations as a specialist course is concerned, there would seem to be two principal strands of opinion about the role of TAFE in the provision of courses in the technician, para-professional stream like the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate. One perspective sees TAFE as an integral part of the higher education sector with a well-developed "academic" role in the provision of accredited courses. The alternative view is that TAFE should concentrate on short-term 'training' with minimal or no accreditation. The latter view regards NSW TAFE's "major focus" as making TAFE relevant to industry through joint ventures and fee-for-service contracts (TAFE Annual Report, 1989), a view which can be seen as competing, if not contradictory to TAFE's ongoing commitment to accredited programs. These dual policy goals have not only given rise to tensions within TAFE, but have also set TAFE in competition with the higher education sector, on one hand, and private sector training providers on the other.

This policy dilemma for TAFE is illustrated in the teaching of industrial relations. There is considerable pressure on TAFE to respond to increased demand for industrial relations training within the context of award restructuring and in response to the current trend towards the devolution of industrial relations responsibilities in organisations necessitating the development of industrial relations skills at the enterprise level. The diversion of resources into this sector is particularly attractive in order to meet TAFE's "market-oriented" goals. Furthermore, these activities could have considerable income-generating capacity for TAFE.

An alternative opinion is that a redistribution of resources to short term training activities will reduce the quality of existing programs like the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate. It is argued that greater attention should be paid to ensuring that the course curriculum is current, that teaching methods are up-to-date and that the course is given appropriate recognition by
higher education bodies. Many TAFE personnel fear the long-run degradation of mainstream programs for the short-run financial gains offered by fee-for-service opportunities.

Another pressing dilemma for TAFE to address is the "creeping credentialism" going on in the labour market. TAFE can either attempt to keep pace with vocational credentialism by 'upgrading' TAFE qualifications, in the case of the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate making it a diploma or associate diploma, or retain its obligation to the majority of the community through its policy of open access and commitment to equity. TAFE's commitment to its role as a "second chance" education provider and as "gateway" to more advanced courses could be eroded by pressures to make courses more "academic" and admission requirements more stringent (Humphry, 1988).

TAFE occupies a pivotal role in the determination of recognition systems for vocational training and learning qualifications. This role is particularly important given the ongoing process of reassessment in the tertiary education and industry training sectors. TAFE's capacity to influence developments in this area needs to be clearly recognised by the policy-makers within TAFE so that a proactive stance can be adopted based on well-articulated underlying values and beliefs.

TAFE's part in teaching industrial relations illustrates the competing demands being placed on it as an education provider. For almost two decades TAFE has provided industrial relations training to hundreds of industrial relations practitioners which has aimed to be both practical and conceptual. Increasingly this approach is being adopted as part of award restructuring and skills development programs. Further, employer groups, governments and unions are favouring the training response which TAFE has practised for years, that is, one which is based on the development of technical skills and ongoing further education - a process where learning and working interact. However, with increased emphasis on formal industrial relations qualifications, individuals and groups are seeking to increase (or maintain) their advantage over others through the "length, status and abstruseness of their own qualifications programs". (National Board of Employment, Education and Training, 1990). This trend can be seen to be counterproductive to the 'TAFE style'. Furthermore, it has the effect of diminishing the standing of the TAFE qualification in the community. As a consequence it is increasingly imperative for TAFE to not only stand by its basic tenets, but also promote TAFE's vocational qualifications like the Industrial Relations Advanced Certificate, to ensure they are given appropriate standing not only in the workplace but also in the higher education hierarchy.
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