Chapter 8
Teaching Practice in Australian Vocational Education and Training: A Practice Theory Analysis

Sarojni Choy and Steven Hodge

Abstract In recent times practice theory has been used to analyse occupations and the dynamics of occupational reproduction. This kind of analysis throws a distinctive light on learning and teaching, which emerge as integral to the reproduction of practices. In contemporary society, however, the process of developing learners' capacities for occupations has become an occupation in its own right within systems of vocational education and training (VET). A tension is indicated between teaching practice in VET as a process internal to the reproduction of occupational practices, and as a practice external to the occupational practices being taught. In this chapter, the theory of practice architectures is used to analyse teaching in the Australian VET system, highlighting contextual influences that shape this complex practice. Evidence is presented, that suggests the theoretical tension identified by practice theory between VET teaching as internal as well as external to occupational practices, illuminates the experience of contemporary VET teachers whose role has for some time been understood as expressing a 'dual identity'. Practice theory helps to clarify this feature of contemporary VET teaching and identify factors underlying the tensions inherent in the system.

Introduction: Occupations as Practices

Since the 1980s (Ortner 1984), the concept of 'practice' has gained ground as a way of describing and analysing complex social phenomena. There are now many versions of 'practice theory' (Rouse 2006) reflecting disagreements about the fundamental nature of practices and what they encompass. However, these theories share the view that at some level, human discourse, activity and relationships can be

S. Choy (✉) · S. Hodge
School of Education and Professional Studies, Griffith University,
Mt Gravatt Campus, Mount Gravatt, QLD 4122, Australia
e-mail: s.choy@griffith.edu.au

S. Hodge
e-mail: s.hodge@griffith.edu.au

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effectively examined in terms of a loosely bounded complex of a shared social project. In this chapter, we use the generic term 'practice theory' to capture the core idea that practices (the bounded complex of a shared social project) serve as a useful unit of analysis, specifically when examining occupations and the work of educators with respect to occupations. Practice theory is recognised for its nuanced approach to studying complex phenomena in which social structures, knowledge, power relationships and individual identity coalesce. It seeks to reconcile subjective and objective dimensions of social life, and structure and agency as determinants of individual experience. The classic example of a practice phenomenon is the occupation. Occupations happen to be one of the earliest examples of social undertakings to be analysed as practices. In anthropological research in the 1980s, a number of traditional occupations were studied using the practice lens (Ortner 1984). Pelissier (1991) noted how some of these studies showed that learning emerged as a key component of the reproduction of practices. Vocational learning by newcomers was something that came about during participation in the everyday activities of the occupation rather than through formal educational endeavours. For example, in Lancy's (1980) study of becoming a blacksmith among the Gbarngasuakwelle, apprentices learned through immersion in the activities of the trade. It was Lave (1982), in her research on apprenticeships among Liberian tailors, who made clear the value of the practice lens for understanding the nature of occupations. Her later work with Wenger used the concept of practice to analyse the occupations of Yacatec midwives, U.S. Navy quartermasters and meatcutters, in addition to Vai and Gola tailors from Western Africa (Lave and Wenger 1991). In these studies, individual learning was a function of the reproduction of occupational practices.

In anthropological research, understandings about occupations of traditional societies clustered around stability and change, learning and identity, knowledge and power, and patterns of social relations (Pelissier 1991). Contemporary social theory and research on a wide range of occupations in industrialised nations contributed to the construction of practice theory (Fuller 2007), extending the concept of practice beyond occupations (Rouse 2006). Current literature on applications of practice theory includes educational occupations, such as school teaching (Kemmis 2010) and teaching in higher education (Hardy 2010). An educational sector that has received relatively little attention from practice theorists is education for occupations through 'vocational education and training' (VET). What is clear from the seminal practice theory-based studies of occupations is that learning and teaching have been regarded as central to an understanding of practices and their reproduction. Lave and Wenger (1991), for instance, derived a distinctive and influential learning theory (of situated learning) from investigations on reproduction of practices such as tailoring where teaching plays a more implicit albeit complex role in facilitating and supporting the learning process. But in modern societies, VET teaching—like other forms of teaching—has become an occupation and practice in its own right.

In this chapter, we examine the occupation of VET teaching using a practice theory lens, in particular the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis and

Grootenboer 2008; Kemmis et al. 2014). We commence by analysing VET teaching as a practice, then trace the recent history of VET teaching to explore the complexities of this kind of work. The chapter goes on to suggest that a practice theory analysis of VET teaching offers a fresh perspective on the long-standing debate about the 'dual identity' of these teachers.

VET Teaching as a Practice

In this chapter, we use practice theory to explore a tension in VET teaching work. On the one hand, educators are occupational insiders who facilitate the process of occupational practice reproduction by helping newcomers to gain the knowledge and skills for full participation in the occupation. On the other hand, contemporary VET teaching work has become institutionalised as a practice that operates externally, through formal means, upon occupational practices to reproduce them. We conceptualise these as two modes of teaching: as an 'internal function' (a process or role within an occupational practice) and an 'external practice' (a separate practice that acts on an occupational practice external to the 'internal function'). These two modes are represented in Fig. 8.1. We suggest that these two modes make conflicting demands on VET teachers and account for the tensions noted in analyses of teacher work that conceptualises it in terms of 'dual identity' (e.g. Dickie et al. 2004).

Research into the reproduction of occupational practices such as that by Lave and Wenger (1991) imply two basic modalities for the work of VET teaching. On the one hand, there is VET teaching as a process that can be understood in terms of the self-regulated reproduction of an occupational practice. On the account of

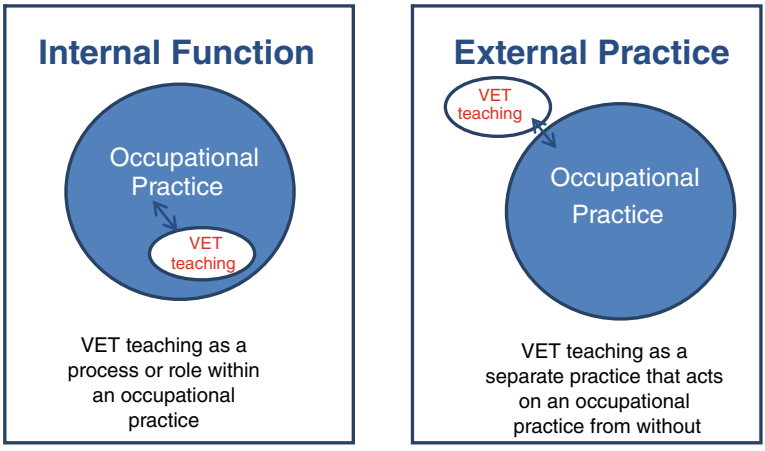

Fig. 8.1 Contrasting modes of VET teacher work using the practice theory lens

occupations generated by practice theory, they are practices that need to be reproduced and will recruit newcomers who encounter learning that is a mix of spontaneous learning opportunities (the 'learning curriculum' of the practice proposed by Lave and Wenger) and more contrived activities (the 'teaching curriculum'), both of which tending to equip the newcomer with a practitioner identity and associated abilities that eventually allow full, skilled participation. In light of this account, VET teaching is a process internal to the dynamics of the self-reproduction of an occupational practice. This role can only be fulfilled by an experienced, highly capable member of the occupational practice, who can model practitioner identity and demonstrate the expertise necessary for the ongoing success of the occupation in relation to its overarching goals. The experienced VET teacher as occupant of this role knows the activities that underpin legitimate peripheral participation and allocates them understandingly to the newcomer, helping the latter to build appropriate expertise and an individual's occupational identity in the process. In contrast, in modern VET, teachers undergo formal training for the role that is non-occupation specific. Their expertise is represented in capability frameworks and professional standards designed especially for them as an occupational group. They may belong to professional associations, and are subject to regulation. The analysis of VET teaching as an internal, practice reproducing role breaks down under these conditions. Two different accounts can be offered for this quandary.

The analytic framework of Lave and Wenger may be too limited to explain what is going on in contemporary occupations. Their case studies were predominantly of traditional occupations that were localised, stable and relatively small. Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) and Fuller (2007) highlighted the limits of Lave and Wenger's (1991) framework in the face of the complexities and breadth of contemporary occupations. In their study of school teaching, Hodkinson and Hodkinson (2004) used practice theory to throw light on subtle dimensions of teachers' work. Fuller (2007) reported on a wide range of studies that have used the practice concept to understand contemporary Western occupations that include sales and manufacturing. Lave (2008) conceded this point in a reflection on her earlier work with Wenger. One problem she identified with the original formulation of their practice theory of occupations and learning was:

> …leaving out the political economic and institutional structuring that partially determines communities of practice and their changing participants. It is difficult to imagine the differences it makes in talking about 'learning' to examine the interconnected political, economic and cultural forces at work beyond the immediate. (2008, pp. 287–288)

Importantly, analysing occupations to understand occupations as practices extends beyond an individualistic focus that views an occupation as the aggregated result of workers applying bodies of knowledge to the tasks typical of the occupation. That is, practice theory rejects the methodological or procedural priority characteristic of certain approaches to the analysis of social life (Schatzki 1996). Related to this position is the rejection of the assumption that occupations may be analysed in terms of knowledge which can be extracted, coded, manipulated, and then applied back to the work. Schön (1983), for instance, contended that

application or transfer of knowledge in the professional work context could not account for the actual behaviour of professionals when tackling ill-defined problems. Consistent with critiques like this, practice theory rejects the duality of theory and practice as an approach to understanding occupations. To view occupations as practices is also to avoid regarding them as the sum of observed tasks. The discipline of task analysis, derived from the founding work of Taylor (1906), reduces occupations to a series of tasks for the purpose of analysing, rationalising and controlling work. Task analysis remains an influential paradigm for understanding occupations (Kirwan and Ainsworth 1992; Clark et al. 2008) and incidentally underpins the competency-based curriculum which contemporary Australian VET teachers are obliged to implement. Nonetheless, practice theory rejects the reductivism inherent in the task-based perspective on occupations.

In contrast with these other perspectives on occupations, practice theory offers a distinctive account. The individual practitioner is seen as an agent constructed during the process of participation in the occupation, as someone whose identity is achieved and embedded in the practice of the occupation (Schatzki 2001). Practitioner identity formation of newcomers is influenced by the practice and contributes to an identity that cannot be understood, sustained or developed separate from the practice. At the same time, practitioner expertise is not something acquired first and then applied, but is integral to the practice. From the practice theory perspective, knowledge cannot be separated out from knowers in knowledgeable practices without losing its coherence. Rather, it is embodied, diffused, and comes to consciousness in the context of practice. It is impossible to fully extract knowledge from practice. Any attempt to do so produces an abstract representation of practice of limited, if any, value. Connected with this rejection of theory-practice dualism is the view that observable tasks belong to a practice whole. Particular tasks can only be meaningfully understood in the practice context. An occupational practice is thus more than the sum of observable tasks and certainly cannot be reduced to the latter no matter how extensive and well-researched an inventory of discrete tasks is.

Contemporary VET Teaching Through a Practice Theory Lens

We take Australian VET teaching as typical of contemporary practice in advanced economies. Australian VET teachers are charged with developing a productive workforce that serves workplaces, occupations and industries as well as contributes to a global skills base. Like VET teaching in other nations, in Australia it is a practice directly shaped by government policy and employer groups, often responding to developments such as the ‘global knowledge economy’ and reduced public expenditure on education and training. Some forms of practice theory recognise the impact of broader influences on practices, using terms such as ‘fields’ (Bourdieu 1977; Schatzki 1996; Hodkinson and Hodkinson 2004), ‘regimes’

(Foucault 2007), 'architectures' (Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008), 'landscapes' (Wenger-Trayner and Wenger-Trayner 2014) and 'social imaginaries' (Taylor 2004) to highlight the idea that particular practices can be understood within a broader structuring context or background.

We use the theory of practice architectures (Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008; Kemmis et al. 2014) to analyse the history, context and characteristics of contemporary VET teaching practice. According to this conceptualisation, practices are always influenced or shaped by 'architectures' comprising a set of 'arrangements' that extend beyond and are enmeshed in particular practices. Kemmis et al. (2014) postulate three such arrangements: 'cultural-discursive', 'material-economic' and 'social-political'. Cultural-discursive arrangements concern thought and speech, informing the 'semantic space' of what is possible to think and say within a given practice. The cultural context and discourses extend across society and inform multiple related and unrelated practices. Material-economic arrangements impact on practices in terms of the 'physical space-time' or the layout of buildings and teaching spaces, temporal patterns of activity, resources deployed in the practice and the funding arrangements underpinning them. Practices are localised in sites and among things specific to the project of the practice. Finally, there are social-political arrangements that concern power structures, hierarchies and relationships that characterise the 'social space' of the practice. Together, these three arrangements prefigure the 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' respectively that can be described as typical within a practice. These arrangements have their source outside a practice although they are 'enmeshed' within a particular practice in unique ways. Together these arrangements constitute the 'architectures' of a practice (Kemmis and Grootenboer 2008).

Bringing these elements into a framework to bear on VET teaching practice, it is noted that this practice shares a history of institutionalisation with similar educational practices across the Western world (Billett 2011). That is, the move to extract teaching for occupations from a position internal to the occupational practice to create a professional practice in its own right that is external to the occupations taught has been a long-term development ingrained in the institutionalisation of learning to establish 'education' as a feature of society as such. Contemporary practice of VET teaching has its source in the historical development of arrangements that have produced the 'institutional fact' of education (Billett 2011). Within a comparatively short history of Australian VET teaching the practice has achieved a coherent profile during what is called the 'Kangan Era' of reform in the 1970s when the then 'technical and further education' (TAFE) sector coalesced, receiving high-level recognition and support from commonwealth and state governments (Goozee 2000). The cultural-discursive arrangements obtained during this period were dominated by an egalitarian and broadly humanist vision of education that shaped practices across all educational sectors. In this context, VET teaching was informed by principles that promoted a practice whose 'project' was that of developing individuals, communities through skills and knowledge for particular occupations. Materially and economically, there was an unprecedented influx of funding and rich capital works to establish the new sector. Social-political

arrangements positioned VET teachers, like educators in other sectors, as autonomous professionals entrusted with control over curriculum and pedagogy (Hodge 2015). These arrangements served to crystallise the occupation of VET teaching as a practice in its own right, with a project that only indirectly focused on reproducing other occupational practices. Set within humanistic cultural-discursive context, individual and community development were taken as valid concerns for curriculum and pedagogical endeavours as much as occupations, while social-political arrangements strongly promoted professionalisation of VET teaching, firmly setting it apart from the specific occupations that graduates of the VET sector might enter. Material-economic arrangements provided distinctive physical spaces that gave VET a spatial locus outside occupations, underlining the separation between VET teaching practice and occupational practices. The contributions of industry to VET practice architectures narrowed the divide between VET teaching practice and occupational practices being taught.

New arrangements affecting VET teaching practice were introduced during a period known as 'training reform' (Smith and Keating 2003). These arrangements in the 1990s were coached around emerging economic and social conditions similar to those in developed, industrialised nations throughout the world. Among the triggers of these changes was internationalisation of trade that offered less expensive labour by globalising businesses leading to loss of 'low skill' work in advanced economies such as the U.S., Britain and Australia (Harvey 2007). With the closure of industries that had employed low-skilled labour in these countries, unemployment rates rose and fiscal crises engulfed financial systems that had been geared to a highly regulated, tariff-protected economy. Economists and policy makers theorised the situation in terms of 'skills equilibrium', and identified a range of changes across their societies that would need to be implemented to prompt a shift to 'high skills equilibrium'. For instance, Finegold and Soskice (1988) itemised a set of institutions that would require fundamental reform to break advanced countries out of low skills equilibrium, including industrial relations, company management and financial systems. VET systems were seen as a vehicle for economic well-being so became a high-priority target for reform. Hence, VET teaching in particular was singled out for reconceptualisation as part of a raft of changes to various dimensions of practice architectures such as funding, governance, curriculum, pedagogy and assessment across the sector (Hodge 2015).

The cultural-discursive shift that occurred with the Training Reform also introduced a discourse for talking about VET and its relationship with the economy. Part of this discourse, directly influenced by skills equilibrium theory, concerned the role of 'industry' in leading the VET system. Analysis of the dangers of becoming 'trapped' in low skills equilibrium by economists and policy makers (Finegold and Soskice 1988) suggested that the 'failure' of training was due in part to too much professional autonomy on the part of VET teachers. The conclusion was that high-level employer involvement would be necessary to better attune VET curriculum to the needs of the economy. Such a discourse might suggest that the 'Kangan Era' (c. mid-1970s) vision of VET as serving individuals, communities and occupations would be transformed into a more homogenous goal of preparing

learners for work in various occupations. Greater importance was accorded to VET for transition into multiple, related occupations to ensure opportunities for workers as old occupations shut and new ones emerged. That is, portability of skills became a focus. In the post-Training Reform era, VET teachers are compelled to work with curriculum that is developed by employer representatives and committed to 'competency standards' for occupations. An assumption of these new cultural-discursive arrangements is that employers knew best what skills and knowledge are required for occupations for viable business. In other words, an 'industry-led' system signalled a VET system in which teachers no longer operated as autonomous professionals but instead as implementers of pre-specified curriculum authored by employer representatives.

Training reform also ushered in new material-economic and social-political arrangements bearing on VET teaching practice. The discourse of industry leadership of VET was matched by expectations that VET teachers would undertake more delivery within workplaces, a shift signalled by the title of the new mandatory qualification for VET teachers, the competency-based 'Certificate IV in Assessment and Workplace Training'. The spaces in which VET teaching was practiced changed, with much teaching moving from classrooms in the old publically and privately funded educational institutions and into enterprises. Some VET teaching roles became entirely workplace-based. Other change in the arrangements for VET teaching included adoption of new technologies to create alternative modes of delivery. The term 'flexible delivery' was used to indicate a commitment to a wide range of times and spaces of delivery that contrasts strongly with the relatively rigid forms of the traditional timetabled, on-campus, face-to-face teaching approach. The rhetoric of marketisation was matched by new funding arrangements that progressively allowed 'private' providers of VET to access public funding, establishing a quasi-market in which the older TAFE institutions were forced to compete for business with non-traditional providers.

Along with these new material-economic arrangements were shifts in social-political arrangements which included forms of governance with new government and industry bodies set up to oversee the new system. Part of this move was the introduction of strong auditing requirements. Auditing mechanisms saw VET teachers and the new managerial and business oriented staff recruited to the system increasingly aware of and beholden to frameworks such as the 'Australian Quality Training Framework' that described principles of practice regularly policed by auditors external to providers now called 'Registered Training Organisations' (RTOs). Apart from a sense of surveillance from authorities outside RTOs, the VET teacher workforce was subject to increasing 'casualisation', gradually replacing the expectation of permanent positions in VET institutions. VET teachers have since become more vulnerable to market flux and been forced to become more 'entrepreneurial' in their practice, marketing themselves and acting as enterprise consultants. Such employment conditions have steadily undermined the professional solidarity of VET teachers, leaving them in often precarious employment within a fragmented field. They too had to become multi-skilled.

The shift in the practice architectures bearing on VET teaching did not, however, result in a move to a mode of teaching internal to the occupational practices being taught. The shift was rather from one external reproductive practice to another. The new arrangements affecting VET teachers positions them as part of a complex system that sits outside particular occupations and connects with occupational practices in highly formalised ways. Training organisations are expected to recruit teachers from occupations relating to training programs that they offer, and these teachers must maintain their 'industry currency'. Two formal links between the training organisation and the occupational practice are thus indicated: recruitment from the practice and ongoing engagement with the practice to maintain currency. VET teachers individually embody these connections. In addition to these links with practice, the curriculum enacted by teachers is based on units of competency that comprise national training packages. These competencies are notionally based on an analysis of the tasks that make up the occupation—the process mentioned above which conceptualises work as a set of tasks reflected in specifications of behaviours, skills and knowledge common to particular occupations. Thus a codified and reductive representation of the occupation mirrors the connection between a training organisation and the occupational practice. This forms the basis for tensions in VET teaching practice.

The day-to-day work of contemporary VET teachers comprises an intricate connection with occupational practices. There is particular curriculum alignment of taught occupations and practices to implement the intentions of the training reform. Teaching within occupational spaces is strongly promoted to mirror authentic practices and replicate contemporary work practices. However, their work also encourages learning for emerging practices, innovation etc. The concept of 'practice ecologies' (Kemmis et al. 2012) is a useful tool for analysing this lived aspect of VET teaching practice, and at the same time highlighting the contrast between this practice and that of school and higher education teaching. Contemporary VET teacher work takes place among occupational practices in multiple sites and contexts that comprise the 'ecologies'. That is, VET teaching practice is distributed across macro, meso and micro interrelated and interdependent systems and practices with potentially distinct and discrete ecologies of practice within each.

At a macro level VET teaching practice resides in the overarching education sector and is administered by the different levels of governments and industries, each with specific economic and policy arrangements. At the meso level their practice exists within the VET sector and its distinct operations. At the micro level, VET teachers' practices function in the context of their vocational areas of focus and those of the work sites where their learners gain learning experiences. Fundamentally, VET teaching involves constant movement of varying scales within ecologies of practices in ways that distinguish their practices from teachers in other educational sectors. Each of these three levels or ecologies of practice present a combination of common and distinctive characteristics and practice architectures that shape particular sayings, doings and relatings (Kemmis et al. 2014), and that enable or constrain their efforts to operationalise VET practice. In the following section, the practice ecologies of contemporary VET teaching are described. The description is scaffolded by the

distinctions between 'sayings', 'doings' and 'relatings' that reflect the underlying architecture of VET teaching practice. We acknowledge these three dimensions are interconnected or enmeshed, which makes them 'hang together' (Schatzki 2001).

Sayings in VET

Conventional sayings in educational institution settings are characterised by the language of competencies and training packages, workforce development, national training agenda, and in the day–to-day conversations about students and the nature of their work. These are framed around the intended, enacted and experienced curriculum for the teaching areas. The sayings are shaped by particular cultural-discursive arrangements; these are featured within specific practice architectures covering the culture and discourses of pedagogy, assessment and reporting to meet different client needs and purposes (learners, governments, community and regulatory bodies). Teachers' sayings also incorporate discourses of their own workplace, the way that their work is talked about and regarded socially, vocationally and academically. Typically, VET sayings in workplace settings are founded fairly expansively on the technical language of workforce capacity building; human capital; skilling workers; and using skills as a competitive advantage. It is true that some of these sayings prefigure the practices at the same time do not determine what actually happens in VET teaching and learning. The particular vernaculars reveal an instrumental perspective of VET, one that is dominated by economic imperatives. Hence, a mass 'production' of skilled workers who can quickly reproduce a practice with quick returns is highly regarded and expected. The sayings suggest input (material, space and time) and outputs (skilled workers who will make economic and social contributions), not the VET that was characterised by traditional trade training nor of the 'Kangan Era', not focused simply on skill acquisition but having a strong praxis orientation to being for example a good carpenter or a good cook and contributions to the wider society through endeavours to achieve excellence. The contemporary instrumental focus often supposes a lower status and lowly utilitarian significance to VET qualifications compared to university degrees. There is also the discourse of the administrative and legislative regulatory frameworks such as workplace health and safety that frame VET. A pervasive auditing and compliance culture characterising contemporary VET also directs distinctive ways of speaking and thinking. Because VET teachers are required to articulate the nexus between the commercial and economic language with colleagues, peers, managers and outside partners, their language to describe VET pedagogy becomes the foundation of their practice as teachers. In summary, the practice architectures for these sayings are continuously shaping mechanisms that indicate and enable and constrain the measures of success, benefits and outcomes; learning at and through work; and meeting auditing requirements.

Doings in VET

The material-economic arrangements of contemporary VET that shape the 'doings', characteristic of teaching practice bear on work in both institutional classroom settings and in the workplace. The doings that take place in the classroom are reflected in the pedagogies of the staff, their attitudes towards the provision of training, and the compliance or otherwise subjected by codes of practice and legislation. The material-economic arrangements in the form of the curriculum, resources, teaching staff, the equipment and technology that is available all form the material conditions of practice at the institutional sites.

The doings in workplaces are founded on taking advantage of the workplace pedagogical opportunities and affordances, employer supported training; in-house guided learning provision; and externally supported learning provisions. A consequence of VET teaching practice activity in workplaces is that the teaching is undertaken in close proximity to the work and business imperatives of productivity and competition. These doings transpire through interaction with peers, co-workers, managers and other agents who facilitate and support learning (e.g. workplace trainers, supervisors, suppliers, clients who may assist students). All of this happens in the course of completing work tasks and tend to be unstructured and not necessarily aimed as a learning outcome. The apprenticeship model however, allows a more structured approach to the doings to complete the agreed training plan. Variations in provisions at each learning site are also accommodated. Industries with intentional work arrangements (e.g. in aged care where learners and inexperienced workers operate with a more experienced 'buddy') that facilitate learning can enable or constrain the doings for VET teachers. Most models of VET provision tend to rely on the good will of employers, and other workers. At the operative level, material-economic arrangements manifest in the layout of work sites, deployment of resources and co-workers, and the kinds of equipment, technology and the environment of each workplace. Regardless of the different provisions and practice architectures, VET teachers' doings are also enabled or constrained by their learners' motivation, readiness to learn, and agency in accessing the affordances and opportunities available in the workplace.

VET teachers' understandings and knowledge of the sayings and doings in the two settings make them valuable connective agents to assist their students with integration of what is learnt in VET institutions and workplaces. It also forms the basis for relatings.

Relatings in VET

VET teachers' relatings reflect the social-political arrangements impacting on VET and the distinctive social spaces it creates. VET teacher practice involves constantly relating with internal and external partners, clients and networks to achieve different

outcomes and interests. Such interplay occurs on many levels with varying degrees of intensity and complexity, in the social and community spaces within and outside the education institute site. These are mediated with the social and political world of the VET system, policies, procedures and the politics of industry. This interplay happens through negotiation and mediation of relationships with a wide variety of people—students, workplaces/employers as clients, and reporting bodies.

Relatings in workplaces become apparent through person-to-person interplay that occur on many levels and are contextualised and mediated within the business and social spaces. Social-political arrangements that shape the world of business and social relations and obligations, the life world relationships, and the respective power relationships that occur in the workplace both enable and constrain relatings typical of VET teaching practice. This facet of VET teaching is by no means effortless. It tests the experience and expertise of the teachers.

As mentioned earlier, it is the enmeshment of the sayings, doings and relatings that hang together and sustain VET teachers' practice and at the same time as an amalgamation that illustrates the integrated nature of their work across boundaries.

Thus far we have analysed VET teaching in Australia from a practice theory perspective, briefly describing the ecologies of practice and practice architectures that shape the work of teachers. Ecologies of VET practice transcend the complex socially located contributions in different practice sites that are subject to constant evolution of their own kind. This suggests that VET teachers' work is complex and multifaceted. Their roles demand collaborative decision making, regular problem solving, impromptu measures as well as mandatory activities such as formal assessment. These can be achieved through social interactions in appropriate ecologies of practice supported with the right kinds of practice architectures for specific instances, contexts and sites. It is the relational interdependence between their multifaceted practices that enable or constrain their practice. Fundamentally, VET teachers operate interdependently, but collaboratively in partnership with others such as learners, educational institutions and their staff, workplaces/enterprises that afford work related learning, governments, professional bodies and unions, and the local communities. They mediate and reconcile practice architectures comprising the social political world, the world of business and social relations and obligations, the life world relationships, and the respective power relationships that occur in the workplace either enable or constrain the relatings.

A Practice Theory Perspective on VET Teacher 'Dual Identity'

In this chapter, we presented an analysis of VET teaching using the theory of practice architectures to represent VET teaching work as internal to the reproduction of occupational practices (Lave and Wenger 1991). Yet since the industrial revolution, teaching work has been institutionalised, constituting the practice as an occupation in its own right (Billett 2011). This development has reconfigured VET

teaching practice, reconstructing it as an occupation that is separate to the occupations taught by VET teachers. In Australia, VET teaching practice was shaped by architectures configured by the Kangan Era reforms in the 1970s and then by the more recent neoliberal training reform agenda of the 1990s. In this final section of the chapter the potential for tension between the two modes of VET teaching highlighted by analysis through a practice theory lens—internal function and external practice—is explored.

Tensions in VET teaching practice illuminated by practice theory are consistent with a long-standing acceptance of the idea that VET teachers have a 'dual identity'. Chappell and Johnston (2003) drew attention to competing claims on the allegiance of VET teachers to occupations they teach and the world of VET itself. Their research investigated the changing nature of VET teaching work in the wake of the training reform. Dickie et al. (2004) used the term 'dual identity' to capture the new practice which they said combined the identities of an 'industry professional' with that of an 'educational professional'. For example, an experienced plumber who becomes a VET teacher mediates between dualities of identity as a tradesperson (plumber) and a teacher. Identity confusion was elaborated by Palmieri (2004), who distinguished the two occupational platforms of VET teachers that propagated tensions between identities. Robertson (2008) identified different aspects of VET teacher dual identities, including the fact that in the world of VET, education is competency-based while other traditional models of learning form the basis of VET teaching. Similarly, Wheelahan and Curtin (2010) articulated VET teaching work in terms of dual identity [which emphasised the complexity of their work as a result of this duality (see also Orr 2008)].

Apart from the acknowledgement of VET teacher dual identity, there is criticism of the legitimacy of ways in which the external reproductive practices of contemporary VET may be operationalised. Lave and Wenger (1991) challenged the assumption that occupational practices can be reproduced using formal, institutional mechanisms. They argued that learning and teaching for the reproduction of occupational practices was driven by a 'learning curriculum' implicit in the structure of the practice and realised in the activities of legitimate peripheral participation. A common belief, central to formal education systems, that this learning curriculum could be abstracted from practice and applied formally and externally to the practice (eg. in RTOs) is undermined by an account of practice reproduction. In subsequent research that employed alternative theoretical perspectives a similar point has been made. For instance, within workplace learning research there is an emphasis on the inappropriateness of a total institutional basis to teach occupations (e.g. Billett 2011). The obligation on teachers in contemporary Australian VET to use competency standards as a basis for curriculum design, teaching and assessment is therefore challenged by practice theory and workplace learning theory, each questioning the assumption that formalised curriculum imposed by the practice architectures of VET teaching is an effective vehicle for reproducing an occupation.

There is evidence that VET teachers exercise agency with respect to the identity-constructing demands of the different modes of their practice. A string of research projects beginning with Robinson (1993), and including Lowrie et al. (1999),

Harris et al. (2005), Harris and Hodge (2009), through to Hodge (2014) suggest that VET teachers construe the demands associated with the practice architectures of training reform as problematic. That is, teachers make decisions about their practice that embody a stance on their part in relation to occupational reproduction. In part, these decisions are consciously informed by imperatives surrounding competency-based training. Hodge (2014) suggested that some VET teachers intentionally augment the official curriculum and supplement with insights directly garnered from occupational practice. Earlier, research by Chappell and Johnston (2003) indicated that VET teachers took a principled stand on their allegiance to a more traditional practice that can be interpreted as internal to occupations. Chappell and Johnston (2003) found that teachers, in what was at the time the still-new environment of practice in the Training Reform era, maintained their focus on quality teaching for the occupation in the face of competing demands of compliance with the new arrangements. More recently, Martin (2012) reported that VET teachers maintained an 'unofficial code' of professional conduct that could set them at odds with institutional objectives aligned to the practice architectures of contemporary VET.

What research and theory relating to contemporary VET teaching practice in Australia hints at is a tension that can be illuminated by practice theory. Analysis using the theory suggests two modes of practice: a process within the dynamics of occupational practice reproduction, and as participation in an external reproductive practice. The former positions the VET teacher as an occupational expert whose identity is aligned to the occupation and primarily concerned with the occupational practice: its quality, its traditions and culture, and its sustainability including processes of reproduction with which they are directly concerned. The latter positions the VET teacher as a VET specialist with a background in the occupation, who is highly responsive to the practice architectures of the VET system and has an identity bound up with roles connected with registered training organisation-based provisions that include facility in competency-based design, delivery and assessment, and who maintains 'industry currency' through formalised processes of engagement with an occupation. This teaching practice has been conceptualised in terms of a 'dual identity', straddling internal and external roles with respect to the reproduction of occupational practices. Evidence has been cited that suggests this dual identity, reflecting the two modes of practice causes tensions in the work of VET teachers, creates tensions associated with competing demands and courses of action that can be interpreted in terms of resistance, subversion of official curriculum, and maintenance of unofficial codes of conduct.

Conclusion

Use of a practice theory lens implies that the tension postulated in VET teacher work between internal and external modes of occupational practice reproduction is more than a subjective experience. Rather it may be a sign of complexities around

VET practices in Australia and other countries with advanced economies. The analysis of these complexities using practice theory illuminates the actuality of practices, the importance of the processes of reproduction, and the position of the practice expert as facilitator of reproduction. If practice architectures that are not specifically aligned to particular occupational practices shape the work of these experts—VET teachers—then practices may be formed that are characterised by reproductive work separate from or external to the occupation. But this transposition of the mode of VET teacher work could only be effective if curricular mechanisms and the cultural-discursive, material-economic, and social-political arrangements are available to support VET practice separately from the occupational practice. However, theory and empirical evidence indicates that such mechanisms are not adequate. Tensions in VET teaching practice thus suggest deeper issues with the way occupations are represented in the curriculum of contemporary VET. VET teachers are thrust into a position where they must negotiate complex demands, some of which stem from practice architectures that fall short of supporting VET practice.

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