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Rehumanising the Educational Sphere in Australia

—an explanatory critique to uncover the restricting mechanisms of marketization in the Australian sphere of VET & schooling
IMPLICATIONS FOR VOCATIONAL & TECHNICAL EDUCATION IN AUSTRALIA

1. Critical realist 6 stages of explanatory research;
2. Description of historical development of technical and vocational education – social structures & individuals;
3. Underpinning theoretical frameworks and philosophies – cultural structures;
4. Transcendental critical realist questions;
5. Comparing theories and abstractions & concretization and contextualization.
What are the necessary conditions for rehumanising Vocational Education and Training in Australia?

**THIS PAPER’S CENTRAL TRANSCENDENTAL QUESTION**
1. The Real – WHAT IS
[Church Bells]

2. The Actual -
WHAT HAPPENS
[Church Bells ringing]

3. The Empirical – WHAT IS EXPERIENCED
[observation of or participation in Church Bells ringing]

WHY CRITICAL REALISM?

A HOLISTIC REALIST THEORY about how to make sense of THE SOCIAL WORLD & INDIVIDUALS.

Coupled with MARXIST BASED CRITICAL QUESTIONING to uncover the essential /contingent /non essential factors [relational structures] that prevent individuals from having AGENCY

That is the theory has an EMANCIPATORY AGENDA

1. A MULTI-TIERED
STRATIFICATION OF REALITY

2. A MODEL OF HOW SOCIETY & INDIVIDUALS CAN ENABLE OR LIMIT CHANGE

Bhaskar's Transformational Model
of the Society/Person Connection
(1979, p. 46)

SOCIETY

socialization

reproduction / transformation

INDIVIDUALS
CRITICAL REALIST - STAGES IN EXPLANATORY RESEARCH


STAGE 1: Description
STAGE 2: Analytical Resolution
STAGE 3: Abduction / Theoretical Redescription
STAGE 4: Retroduction
STAGE 5: Comparison between different Theories and Abstractions
STAGE 6: Concretization and Contextualization

CRITICAL REALIST METHODOLOGY
Stage 1: Description
Stage 2: Analytical Resolution – Individuals & Social Structures

Historical development, of Technical & Vocational Education in Australia:

• *The colonial period* from the first apprenticeship laws of 1828 to 1900;
• *Federation in 1901* when Australia became an independent nation to 1945;
• *Post World War II*, years 1946-1970;
• *TAFE-National Technical Education System*, years 1970 to 1987;
• *From TAFE to VET*, years 1987 to 1996.

*Present Format*, of VET in Australia.
The colonial period – 1828/1900

STRUCTURAL:

- **Social structures-post school education bodies** [post school education bodies: the mechanics institutes & working men’s colleges (UK and Australia); schools of mines, schools of arts)]

- **Social structures-education governing bodies** [industry bodies, boards, governing structures, government legislation and departments, centralized or regionalized provision, government or independent oversight]

- **Social structures-education programs and resources** [subjects taught, curriculums],

- **Social structures-national/global inquiries and reports** [London’s International Conference of Technical Education in 1897]
STRUCTURAL:

- Social structures-political process [Australian government structures: federating system (division of powers, taxation); commissions; reports; legislation: Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Act 1900; Financial Agreement Act 1928, Uniform Tax Act 1942]

- Social structures-global socio-political phenomenon [World Wars I and II; the Great Depression; emergency measures: Commonwealth income tax]

- Social structures-education bodies [State education departments: Department of Public Instruction; Boards of Technical Education]

- Social structures-education programs and resources [Practices: apprentice study leave days]

- Social structures-national / global inquiries and reports [international developments in technical education; conferences; State government inquiries into technical education and apprenticeships].
Post World War II - 1946/1970

INDIVIDUAL: [prominent individuals who affected change such as Mr Murray and Mr Martin leaders of two pivotal investigations; Mr Menzies the Liberal Prime Minister of Australia who initiated the Martin investigation and then enacted legislation to create a binary higher education system of CAEs and universities]

STRUCTURAL:
- Social structures-political process [change in the Australian constitution loosely allowing Commonwealth government to fund State education, government; union commissioned reports]
- Social structures-global socio-political phenomenon [increased immigration, the post War baby boom; subsequent much increased high school attendance]
- Social structures-education bodies [differentiated high schooling; establishment of new educational bodies: Australian Education Commission (AEC), Universities Commission, the Commission of Advanced Education (CAE), Technical and Further Education Teachers’ Association of Australia (TFETAA)]
- Social structures-funding education [needed funding for buildings and teacher training; increased Commonwealth funding].
TAFE-National Technical Education System
1970/1987

INDIVIDUAL: [Australian Prime Ministers Whitlam, Fraser & Hawke; federal government ministers: Keating, Dawkins, Ryan; chairs of government inquiries]

STRUCTURAL:
- Social structures-political process [election process & change of government; political parties and party factions; close alliance of Labor Party with ACTU; Acts of parliament],
- Social structures-global socio/political phenomenon [economic boom and recessions; oil crises; spread of technology; globalisation]
- Social structures-education bodies [establishment of new educational bodies: TAFE Commission (TAFEC); disbanding of educational bodies & replacement: TAFEC/ Australian Universities Commission/Advanced Education Commission by Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC)]
TAFE-National Technical Education System 1970/1987

STRUCTURAL:

- **Social structures-education programs and resources** [Pre-Vocational Programs for unemployed/equity groups, curriculum/resource development; TAFE teacher training programs; Employment related Vocational programs for youth 15-19]

- **Social structures-labelling (political and educational)** [introduction of name TAFE for: Education Departments, units within Departments, Statutory authorities, within reports]

- **Social structures-national/global inquiries and reports** [Kangan report, Williams report, Kirby report]

- **Social structures-emergent properties of inquiries and reports** [component properties and their definitions: TAFE, competency based training]

- **Social structures-funding education** [charging students fees, abolishing student fees; Commonwealth education funding, States education funding; initiating and withdrawing funding; grant schemes: triennial recurring grants, the Tertiary Edn Assistance Scheme (TEAS), the Adult Secondary Education Allowance Scheme (ASEAS)]
From TAFE to VET -1987/1996


STRUCTURAL:
- S structures-political process [close alliance of Labor Party with ACTU; legislative Acts implemented many report recommendations; public statements: One Nation 1992]
- S structures-global socio-political phenomenon [economic boom and recessions; spread of technology; globalisation; youth unemployment]
- S structures-education bodies [amalgamation of government education dept with employment; CTEC ceased to exist replaced by National Board of Employment Education and Training (NBEET) 1988; National Training Board 1990; CAEs ceased to exist 1991; Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) 1992]
- S structures-education bodies, inclusion/exclusion members [representatives from: industry/ trade/ technical education/ higher education/ schools/ economics/ government]
- S structures-education programs and resources [VET kept “time served” but also introduced CBT “skills” training; inclusion of additional LLN & employability ‘competencies’; Australian Vocational Certificate Scheme; Performance levels; Assessment principles; Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) 1993; National Training Packages]
From TAFE to VET -1987/1996

STRUCTURAL:

• S structures-labelling (political and educational) [name of govt departments; name of technical education (TAFE replaced by VET); ‘curriculum’ lost its political clout to ‘training package’; terms introduced: ‘client’ for students, ‘user buys’ for fees charged]


• S structures-emergent properties of inquires and reports [system changes resulting from reports; ideas floated: that TAFE should share their physical facilities with private colleges/ of HECs for VET students/ that more private trainers should enter the ‘training market’]

• S structures-funding education [HECs for university students; proposal to make better economic use by sharing TAFE facilities with other higher education providers; funding guidelines; Training Guarantee Scheme; trainee wage as well as apprenticeship pay based on award classification; State VET funding tied to adherence to Commonwealth Training Package and RTO regulatory guidelines.]
STRUCTURAL:

- Social structures-political process [the regulatory system (regulatory bodies both governmental and industry based, laws, policies, standards, education frameworks)]

- Social structures-education bodies [RTOs, (registered schools, TAFEs as public colleges and private colleges), other supports provided to students (library, counselling, academic and LLN support teachers, online support programs)]

- Social structures-education bodies, inclusion/exclusion members [teachers and students]

- Social structures-education programs and resources [national Training Packages, formal certificate and diploma courses, informal courses, teacher developed curriculum materials]
Stage 3: Abduction
& Theoretical Redescription - Cultural Structures
**Basics & Classics models**
- Rote learning
- Discursive debate
- Social skills

**Apprenticeship model**
- Formal learning - skills practice
- Informal learning - discussion on the job
- Social skills

**Behaviourist Learning Theory**
- Passive learner
- Stimulus response learning
- Multiple forms of practice
- Prescriptive curriculum
- Adherence to standards

**Cognitive Constructivism**
- External knowledge apprehended and internally constructed
- Teachers facilitate & guide learning
- Experiential learning

**Cognitive Education Theories**
- Person's set of mental capacities
- Cognitive skills development
- Citizen with transportable skills
- Intelligence testing

**Humanist, Social Cognitive, Social-Cultural & Critical Theories**
- Learner & Needs centred
- H-self actualizing learner
- S Cog-discursively co-constructed meaning
- S Cult-teacher aware of students' socio-cultural backgrounds & learning context
- Critical-students made aware of discourses of power

**Discrete skills**
- Direct teaching

**Discursive Social skills**
- Experiential learning

**Taylor's Scientific Management Theory & Fordism**
- Division of labour /simplest components
- Competency Based Training
- National Training Packages

**Rational Choice Theory**
- Neo liberal & New right DISCOURSES
- Thatcherism
- Tony Blair's New Labour

**Human Capital Theory**
- Investment in technical & vocational education
- Improve productivity to benefit individuals & society
- Commodify human beings

**Essentials of Education Theories**
- Learner centred
- Teacher scaffolding

- NOT subject-centred
- Social cultural – of learning context; of learner
- Critical – student empowerment
Stage 4: Retroduction

MARXIST TRANSCENDENTAL QUESTIONING

• This is where we return to review this paper’s central transcendental question:

What are the necessary conditions for re-humanising Vocational Education and Training in Australia?

• To answer this question several sub-questions will be posed concerning the underlying elements of the social world:
  – the emergent cultural structures, the realm of theoretical constructs;
  – the emergent social structures,
  – individuals with agency

involved in the historical construction of Australian VET to emerge in its present format.
THE FIRST SUB-QUESTION:

What educational and monetary theories and allied concepts make possible the necessary conditions for re-humanising VET in Australia?

Abducting aspects of educational theories, concepts & models necessary to make possible a humanistic society where:

“the free flourishing of each as a condition of the free flourishing of all, which is the good society for human being”

(Hartwig, 2007a, p.187)

Abducted based on condition that they are in alignment with two humanist premises:

1. “Individuals are relational beings and need positive productive truly collaborative relationships to flourish”;
2. There is mutual societal benefit in work when the outcomes of that work will “minimize the inequities of circumstance and ability” of some, so “as many as possible can enjoy a good life” (American Humanist Association, 2003, p.2).
NECESSARY CULTURAL [ Theoretical] STRUCTURES

- From behaviourist /cognitive education theories + model of Competency Based Training essential strategies to be competent in the workplace are:
  - direct explicit teaching and mastery of ...
  - discrete practical skills and thinking skills.

- From cognitive constructivism and social constructivism LEARNERS NEED TO have opportunity to internalise knowledge through:
  - experiential real life tasks,
  - in a cooperative co-constructivist learning environment,
  - where teachers provide all needed scaffolded supports.

- From humanistic, social-cultural and critical education theories necessary components to humanise VET are LEARNER CENTRED:
  - teachers are not churning out content while neglecting students’ understandings,
  - taking into consideration all learners’ social /cultural backgrounds and prior learning,
  - enabling all learners to become aware of powerful social-cultural discourses of the workplace.
NON-NECESSARY CULTURAL STRUCTURES

From an education perspective:
1. teaching that *omits explicitly teaching skills* needed in the workplace, or
2. teaching *that treats learners as passive receptacles* of object like knowledge and skills.

THESE TWO APPROACHES
1. Firstly fail to enable learners to operate successfully in the workplace and gain satisfaction from work, and
2. Secondly fail to enable learners as cooperative social beings to think creatively and critically

As needed in the present day complex technological world of work and social life (Mikulecky, 2004).
NON-NECESSARY CULTURAL STRUCTURES

From the perspective of monetary theories discussed:

- *Rational Choice Theory* which reconceptualises education as a deregulated market place, wrongly assumes learners will make beneficial informed choices,
- *Human Capital Theory* commodifies learners.
- *Competency Based Training* encapsulated in *national training packages*,
  - based on the theories of *Scientific Management, division of labour and Fordist production*
    - results in mastery of discrete skills
    - rather than an integrated holistic mastery of a trade;
  - fails to transmit underpinning knowledge needed for further academic study,
  - limits critical and creative thinking (Smith, 2002).

These components dehumanise VET making it a mechanistic and technicist training system, devaluing human being (Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2003).
THE SECOND SUB-QUESTION:

What necessary components from the historical past and the emergent present VET sphere align with necessary education components to re-humanise VET in Australia?
NECESSARY SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Historical and present VET components aligning with necessary behaviourist and cognitive direct instruction in practical and thinking skills were:

- **Technical Schools** extent from 1800s, and in existence under the post World War II differentiated high school system;

- **Standardised National VET System** under Dawkins from the late 1980s to the present:
  - VET skills delineated in minute detail in national training packages,
  - featuring “a uniform approach” across states and “portability of skills” (Australian Government Department of Industry, 2014, pp.19, 9).
NON-NECESSARY SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Constricting implementation of necessary behaviourist and cognitive components:

• 1997 Competency Based Training Packages moved responsibility of curriculum development from State authorities to VET teachers,

• Lack of adequate teacher training to effectively design curriculum materials,

• Dismissal between 2012 and 2015 of over ten thousand long term, experienced VET teachers from the TAFE system across Australia. Under the guise of offering generous redundancy packages to those who felt they would not be in alignment with the new philosophy [unstated but meaning the marketized approach to VET]

• Casualisation of the workforce, an inexperienced workforce that now has even more time constraints in developing an effective curriculum

These issues have been swept under the carpet by governmental structures such as regulatory bodies and reports – eg 2014 Review of Training Packages and Accredited Courses, Discussion Paper [not one word was said about this issue of poor VET curriculum design resulting from a casualised, time pressed, poorly trained VET teaching workforce]
NECESSARY SOCIAL STRUCTURES

*Historical and present VET components that align with necessary cognitive constructivist and social constructivist principles:*

- **The co-construction of technical and academic knowledge**
  - *In the 1800s and early 1900s loosely taken place* [night classes of the mechanics institutes, working men’s colleges and schools of arts].
  - *1970s Whitlam era, specific implementation* [plethora of community based vocational programs began].
  - this decade was one where schooling education in Australia sought to implement progressive student centred teaching methods which began to be adopted in TAFE.
  - *These were continued by the Fraser government.*
  - *In the 1980s the early Hawke government a consensus approach* where representatives from TAFE, industry, unions and government were equally and collaboratively consulted for input into TAFE development.
NECESSARY SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Historical and present VET components that align with necessary humanistic, social-cultural and critical education principles:

- VET programs specifically tailored to the socio-cultural needs of this group of learners] learner centred programs
  - Implemented during the Whitlam, Fraser and the early Hawke years & under the ministerial oversight of Senator Ryan between 1983 and 1987 [plethora of youth centred VET programs specifically tailored to the socio-cultural needs of this group of learners]

- Rogers and Maslow’s humanistic theories of enabling personal growth &self-actualization theories that also were influential in 1970s as exemplified by the TAFE community outreach programs and reflected in Senator Ryan’s youth programs.

- Regarding critical theory
  - From late 1970s to the present both schooling and vocational education have given some acknowledgement of the need for making students aware of discourses of power
  - Critical component inserted into the 2008 national adult literacy framework, the Australian Core Skills Framework,
  - For schooling, Education Queensland’s 2010 New Basics project [since defunct];

Nevertheless historically explicit teaching of critical discourses has had little impact on day to day VET teaching. Recurrent criticisms in the research literature points to a dearth of critical skills being taught in VET (Smith, 2013; Ryan et al., 2015; Livock, 2016).
NON-NECESSARY SOCIAL STRUCTURES

Constricting implementation of necessary constructivist, humanistic, social-cultural and critical education principles components:

• **FIRSTLY**, 1980s multiplicity of youth programs BUT short lived / changing oversight & financial models *caused frustration*,

• Instead of improving the administrative structures and maintaining the necessary pedagogic practices for human development – *underlying humanist approaches cancelled*,

• **SECOND**, other missing necessary components:
  – *After World War I* move from the more informal work based apprenticeship model, to a model of work release and prescriptive behaviourist formal teaching at technical schools,
  – *1970s and 1980s humanist approaches were evident*,
  – *After 1987 underlying humanist learner centred approaches replaced by*:
    • an atomised content based approach,
    • a philosophy that prioritized making money over human well being and development.
Monetary philosophies and movements based on Rational Choice Theory

- In 2008 the OECD and Bradley reviews emphasised the importance of various structural changes linked to a marketized approach to funding VET in Australia – with a much increased private provider presence:
  - Non-TAFE providers have been increasing their market share of public VET funding. Between 2008 and 2012, payments to these providers increased by A$950 million, an increase of more than 200%. (Noonan, 2014 Aug., ¶2) ... [and]
  - Since 2008 in Victoria TAFE market share of government funded student load has fallen from almost 70% to 45% and in South Australia, it fell from 71% in 2011 to 51% in 2012. (ibid., ¶5). [[ie Vic -25% & SA -20%]]

- In 2012 a student entitlement model for the VET sector endorsed by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) as part of the 2012-2016 National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development.

- “Entitlement” like “user choice” has positive connotations, however, its meaning is less positive in that it is purely an entitlement for many to become burdened with debt.

- “Demand based approach” context for VET Fee Help
  - VET market meets customer demands;
  - Training providers charge what the market will bear.
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  – “Demand based approach” has been drastically cut with exponential rises in course costs.

ENTITLEMENT
(i) to obtain one Certificate III with fees that are subsidised, and/or
(ii) to borrow money under the VET Fee Help model for Diploma, Advanced Diploma and a limited number of Certificate IV courses.

DEMAND BASED APPROACH

➢ Under VET Fee Help, the Australian Commonwealth government pays VET students’ fees upfront in the context of a “demand-based approach to funding higher education”

➢ A result of the demand based approach, government direct funding for publicly provided TAFE courses has been drastically cut with exponential rises in course costs.
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- "Demand based approach" context for VET Fee Help
  - VET market meets customer demands;
  - Training providers charge what the market will bear.

- Exponential Rises In Course Costs:
  - 2012 diplomas and advanced diplomas cost a few thousand dollars.
  - 2016 they cost tens of thousands of dollars.

- EXORBITANT FEES OF PRIVATE RTOs

  
  EG Double Diploma of Business
  Careers Australia = $23,250
  TAFE Queensland South West = $6,800

- DETRIMENTAL TO WHOLE SOCIETY
  - 2008 VET feel help bill = $A25 million
  - 2016 VET fee help bill = $A5.5 billion

- Private RTOs collecting 80% monies from VET Fee Help scheme

  At the moment it is being recommended to extend the VET Fee "Help" "entitlement" down to certificate levels, where such lower levels often result in the VET student either:
  - obtaining low paid jobs, or
  - retaining their present low paid position to comply with workplace regulatory practices,
  - thus being without the ability to repay a large debt.
What are the necessary conditions for rehumanising Vocational Education and Training in Australia?

Individuals

In 1987 sharp U-Turn to deregulated VET market place effected by 2 individuals:

- **Paul Keating**: Treasurer /Prime Minister AND **John Dawkins**: minister for Finance, Trade & then Employment Education and Training minister.

1972-1986 individuals upholding more humanistic learner centred approaches:

- **Prime Minister Whitlam** whose personal influence brought about the introduction of a program of social justice in all spheres of public life including VET;
- **Prime Ministers Fraser and Hawke** (in his early years) who generally maintained the humanist approach and Whitlam initiatives.

1949-1966 a mostly positive impact on the formative development of both schooling and higher education in post war Australia:

- **Prime Minister Menzies** although not explicitly following humanist principles, nevertheless did value building individual human capacities.
What are the necessary conditions for rehumanising Vocational Education and Training in Australia?

Structural – social & cultural

• Many positive components as delineated above constituting necessary conditions for rehumanising VET in present day Australia.

The most necessary condition is the theoretical or philosophical undergirding mechanism that gives the impetus for the structure above:

• One that values the human beings involved: the teachers’ experience, the value of the student / teacher relationship, the administrative staff input, and the value of collaboration of all stakeholders.

There now needs to be another U-turn in VET’s undergirding theoretical approach
CONCLUSION

It is evident that in spite of the many independent research projects which promote this U-turn …

• despite pleas and submission from VET teachers,
• despite community protests;

Nevertheless those individuals with the most agency, the key politicians in both Australian Labor and Liberal parties have greater agency. These have used this agency to not only maintain the marketized approach since 1987 but have increased the intensity of its implementation, contrary to all human common sense.

It is therefore beholden on those individuals and their associates to facilitate the U-turn to the humanistic approach utilizing the necessary components from the several education theories and positive past structural examples as named herein to rehumanise VET in Australia.