The Para-professionalisation of Australia’s Community Services Sector: An Analysis of Contemporary Employment Patterns

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The views we express today are ours as academics rather than the positions we hold.
Australian Learning & Teaching Council (Carrick) Grant aimed to:

- Identify and analyse the current workforce characteristics and emerging trends;
- Identify the educational and training needs and priorities;
- Map the existing curriculum across the sector; and
- Bring key stakeholders together to develop a workforce educational plan that secures the long-term sustainable development of the industry.
Broad Sector Workforce Trends

- Broad and complex in diverse functions it serves (e.g. health, welfare, child protection, disability, community-based development etc);
- Continuing profound alterations to its structures, service delivery processes, and workforce practices as a result of economic, social, demographic and governance changes;
- Rapidly ageing (more so than the general workforce);
- Rapidly growing and predicted to continue to do so.
Study Method

- A blurred picture of trends and issues due to issues of diverse data sources with variable definitions and methodologies
- Need to integrate the vision to distil the salient issues and identify key trends
- Web-based search of higher education & TAFE curriculum
  - Course structure, scope and length
  - Key components – knowledge, skills & values/attitudes
  - Pathway identification
- Workforce data analysis (ABS Census & Labour force projections data, DEEWR data & projections)
- Graduate data (DEEWR - undergraduate & postgraduate data, Graduate Careers, NCVER, Uni entrance scores)
Growth in Community Services Sector

› Emerging para-professionalisation of community services sector

› In some of the main professional and paraprofessional groups (Welfare and Community Workers and Welfare Associate Professionals) that operate in the sector, employment has almost tripled over a decade

› Those groups have higher proportions of the Diploma/Certificate qualified

› Also these have higher percentages of non post school qualified
Number of Welfare and Community Workers and Welfare Associate Professionals employed 1996 - 2008
(November 2008 Quarter data - ABS surveys)
Percent of Worker's Specified Level of Education (those who identified) of Social Welfare Professionals and Welfare Associate Professionals (ASCO)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Postgraduate Degree Level</th>
<th>Graduate Diploma and Graduate Certificate Level</th>
<th>Bachelor Degree Level</th>
<th>Advanced Diploma and Diploma Level</th>
<th>Certificate Level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Welfare Associate Professionals</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Workers</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Welfare and Community Workers</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Counsellors</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministers of Religion</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Category (Source ABS Census of Population and Housing)</td>
<td>Social Workers</td>
<td>Welfare and Community Workers</td>
<td>Counsellors</td>
<td>Psychologists</td>
<td>Welfare Associate Professionals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Total in Category that indicated that they did not hold a Post School Qualification</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Why have these changes occurred?

- Response of VET Sector
- To legislation
- To targeted funding
- Recognition of paraprofessional work as a career option/ladder
- Emerging articulation arrangements
Students Enrolled in CHC Training Package Courses (Certificate Levels I, II and II) Group by Skills Council Industry Work Areas
(2003 -2007)

Number of Students Enrolled

Industry Work Area

- Child Protection
- Childrens Services
- Community Services
  - Work – General
  - Work – Specialisation
- Community Services
  - Work – Specialisation Aged Care and Disability
- Employment Services
- Social Housing
- Youth Work and Juvenile Justice

- 2003
- 2004
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scope</th>
<th>Subdivision</th>
<th>Employed after Training</th>
<th>Difference in proportion employed from before training to after</th>
<th>Employed or in Further Study after training</th>
<th>Fully or Partly Achieved Their Main Reason for doing the Training</th>
<th>Satisfied with the overall Quality of Training</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All VET</td>
<td>All AQF Levels</td>
<td>81.1</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>89.2</td>
<td>86.7</td>
<td>88.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certificate IV</td>
<td>85.1</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>92.8</td>
<td>85.4</td>
<td>87.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Diploma</td>
<td>84.9</td>
<td>5.3</td>
<td>92.3</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>87.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CHC Training Package</td>
<td>All AQF Levels</td>
<td>83.9</td>
<td>11.3</td>
<td>89.8</td>
<td>87.9</td>
<td>90.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Certificate IV +</td>
<td>87.2</td>
<td>6.3</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>87.4</td>
<td>89.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The Implications

› Rapid growth in sector supplied by para-professionalisation – training = jobs

› Some areas & fields accessing greater numbers of skilled staff

› General trend of enhanced practice standards

› An increasing driver for wage cost restraint in sector, particularly in not-for-profit orgns?

› May require industrial response to ensure workforce sustainability
The Implications

› Raises issues of job design and structuring, particularly higher-level responsibilities in workforce shortage environment

› Generally ad hoc educational articulation from VET to Higher Education – educational ceiling?

› Articulation a key source of skilled labour to replace the rapidly ageing professionals

› Continued workforce shortages may influence program characteristics if insufficient skills to deal with increasingly complex issues and vulnerable people (eg comorbidity)

› Need for employer training and educational pathways to promote articulation
Any questions??
Or clarifications?
Thank you for your attention. Have a great day!

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