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# Individual Practical Forms and Means of Improving Vocational Education Through Developing the Initial Mechanisms of National Craftsmanship in Primary Grade Students

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**Abstract:** This article discusses the effectiveness of all education systems depends critically on the quality of teaching and learning in the classrooms, workshops, laboratories and other spaces in which the education takes place 1. While outstanding teachers (including lecturers, trainers, tutors, and coaches), engaged students, well-designed courses, facilities which are fit for purpose, and a good level of resources are necessary if any kind of educational provision is to be excellent, they alone are not sufficient. The real answers to improving outcomes from vocational education lie in the 'classroom', in understanding the many decisions 'teachers' take as they interact with students.

**Keywords:** Socio-moral competencies, pedagogical technologies, national and universal values, democratic educational environment, innovative methods.

**Introduction:** Specifically, we need to understand more precisely how you best engage particular kinds of learners to undertake the particular kind of learning on which they are embarked to achieve whatever vocational outcomes are desired. This is the essence of what we understand by 'vocational pedagogy' and what we will be exploring in this report. The evidence suggests that serious consideration of pedagogy is largely missing in vocational education and we will argue that vocational learners are the losers as a result of this omission. 1 There are a huge range of different designed learning environments in VE but, unless we are

focusing on a specific space, we will use the word 'classroom' throughout the rest of this report for ease of understanding. Similarly, in FE, the role of teaching is carried out by a number of people: lecturers, trainers, coaches, and tutors. Unless referring to one of these specific roles, we use the term 'teacher'. In English education, pedagogy was until recently an under-used concept. Debate has tended to be dominated by discussions of structures, funding, syllabus and assessment. A recent exception to this was the deliberate attempt by the Qualifications and Curriculum Agency (Centre for Education and Industry: University of Warwick, 2008) to provoke a discussion about the best ways of teaching the Diploma when it was introduced in 2008. Curriculum designers and teachers were invited to reflect on which learning approaches might be most likely to lead to the desired outcomes of this new qualification. Would learners in specific occupational sectors benefit more, for example, from watching an expert demonstration or through trial and error, by being coached or by undertaking their own enquiry? These are often difficult questions, calling on the skills of teachers, their understanding of learners, the nature of the subject and the broader context in which it is being taught. But these kinds of questions are the stuff of pedagogy and the way they are answered impacts directly on the quality of learners' experiences in vocational education. There are also welcome signs of change in the attitude of Ofsted. Their new framework for the learning and skills sector places a much more explicit focus on the quality of learning and teaching. We seek to add to this revitalisation of concern with pedagogy. Pedagogy, in our view, is the science, art, and craft of teaching. Pedagogy also fundamentally includes the decisions which are taken in the creation of the broader learning culture in which the teaching takes place, and the values which inform all interactions. Pedagogy has been neglected partly because it is undeniably complex, leading some agencies to prefer to focus on more controllable factors such as qualifications, funding or a nebulous notion of 'teacher quality'. Teaching methods can also become political footballs, one method being labelled 'traditional' while another, equally unhelpfully, seen as 'trendy'. When vocational education and training systems were initially created, discussions about vocational pedagogy were likely to be derived from the principles of general education. Even today, there is a sense in which vocational pedagogy sits in a no man's land between what is taught, in colleges and by training providers, and what is needed in the workplace. And too often employers complain that the content taught does not connect closely enough with the requirements of a particular occupation. 3 For a

classic discussion of the term pedagogy see Watkins, C. & P. Mortimore (1999). *Pedagogy: What do we know?* In Mortimore, P. (ed.) *Understanding Pedagogy and its Impact on Learning*. London: Paul Chapman Publishing Ltd. Vocational education faces two major challenges. Firstly, the dual worlds of educational institution and workplace require two sets of expertise – teachers with current experience of the workplace and workers who can teach. And many vocational learners have diverse needs which may be challenging. Of whatever age, vocational learners may not have had fulfilling experiences in their general education to date leaving their motivation impaired. Alternatively, they may be so hungry for paid employment in the real world that they are impatient to leave formal education. Any approach to vocational pedagogy will need to respond to these additional challenges. The role and nature of vocational pedagogy is currently being debated by the Commission on Adult Vocational Teaching and Learning 4, chaired by Frank McLoughlin. The commission, announced in December (BIS, 2011) was established as a response to the Wolf Review and aims to raise the quality, and improve the outcomes and impact, of adult vocational teaching and learning in the further education and skills sector for learners and employers. Two of the Commission's aims are to appraise the range of pedagogical approaches to adult vocational teaching, and to develop a framework that will raise the quality of teaching and learning.

## CONCLUSIONS

practices in a range of vocations, we have aimed primarily at those which are taught to adults and young people who may or may not have higher qualifications in colleges rather than on the vocational education which is taught largely in universities – medicine, the law, engineering, for example. Within 'work', we include both employed ('having a job') and self-employed activity. With the decline of jobs in many traditional trades in large, established companies, we think it is essential to see vocational education as aiming to give all students the knowledge, confidence and attitudes needed to pursue their vocation entrepreneurially. There is no agreed definition of vocational education in England. Our working understanding is that vocational education is the 'provision of materials, activities and teaching that is designed to prepare people to function, at a specified level, in specific roles in the context of (usually) paid employment' (Lucas, Claxton & Webster, 2010, p. 3). We thus use vocational education to mean the orchestration of strategies and structures so that learning leads to its desired outcomes. Vocational education is concerned with courses, timetables, syllabuses, qualifications and so on. Vocational education concerns the development of practical

competence within, or for, a defined work 'domain'. We believe that two other elements suggested by Chris Winch are important too – the element of personal development and the enabling of young people to see how their work and their place in the economy has a wider impact on society, (Winch, quoted in Lucas et al., 2010: 4). In thinking about pedagogy, we have come to the view that one aspect of what really matters in vocational education has been particularly neglected: a pride in craftsmanship (Crawford, 2010; Rose, 2005; Sennett, 2008) and excellence (Berger, 2003) and we specifically include this in our approach to the development of a vocational pedagogy. The vocational education we are mainly thinking of is what you might expect to see in the prospectus of a general FE college or non-specialist publicly funded training provider anywhere in the UK. It might be being learned by young adults or older adults. While we recognise that there are some specific differences in the way education is experienced by older learners (Knowles, 1970) the evidence we have looked at suggests that the broad approaches to vocational pedagogy which we are offering suit young and older adults alike. Where there are important differences of emphasis, we describe these. Vocational pedagogy, as we have already suggested, is the science, art, and craft of teaching that prepares people for certain kinds of working lives.

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