



Charles Darwin University

The results of asking a deceptively simple question

What is for sale in Australian VET markets?

Zoellner, Don

Published in:
Journal of Vocational Education and Training

DOI:
[10.1080/13636820.2023.2280951](https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2023.2280951)

E-pub ahead of print: 16/11/2023

Document Version
E-pub ahead of print

[Link to publication](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Zoellner, D. (2023). The results of asking a deceptively simple question: What is for sale in Australian VET markets? *Journal of Vocational Education and Training*, 1-20. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2023.2280951>

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

The results of asking a deceptively simple question: what is for sale in Australian VET markets?

Don Zoellner

To cite this article: Don Zoellner (16 Nov 2023): The results of asking a deceptively simple question: what is for sale in Australian VET markets?, Journal of Vocational Education & Training, DOI: [10.1080/13636820.2023.2280951](https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2023.2280951)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/13636820.2023.2280951>



© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group.



Published online: 16 Nov 2023.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 32



View related articles [↗](#)



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

The results of asking a deceptively simple question: what is for sale in Australian VET markets?

Don Zoellner 

Northern Institute Charles Darwin University, Alice Springs, Northern Territory, Australia

ABSTRACT

Assuming Australian training markets represent successful policy implementation facilitates an exploration of the implications for their future evolution by querying what is sold in these markets. A Foucauldian discourse analysis of relevant documentation suggests that training markets overwhelmingly provide products and/or services. Further examination finds that these two are conceptually confused as is the contention of a single national vocational education and training market. Ontological rhetorics have been used to indiscriminately conflate products and services in pursuit of preferred political values. The performative work being done by uncritically mingling the discourses of two distinctively different markets for bureaucratic and political purposes, when combined with executive federalism, contributes to VET's exasperating complexity. Brief transactions that provide multiple useful, yet low-value, compliance-driven products differ substantially from markets that deliver educational services by developing longer term relationships that increase the national stock of higher level occupational skills. Making explicit the different perspectives that have fashioned the product and services artefacts invites more tailored market operational and regulatory approaches as well as creating the possibility of a more inclusive approach to VET policy making and delivery of vocational knowledges.

ARTICLE HISTORY

Received 20 March 2023
Accepted 26 October 2023

KEYWORDS

Training markets; conceptual confusion; ontological rhetorics; regulation; VET

Introduction

Marginson (1997, 361) presciently observed:

It is no longer viable for critics and opponents of markets in education to base their strategies on a return to the old non-market structures and conditions. The road to something better must now pass through the marketised systems and will be affected by their evolution and implosion. The questions of who benefits from markets can be opened for scrutiny, long before market organisation is abandoned. Such strategies have their limits, but they point to a world beyond markets.

CONTACT Don Zoellner  don.zoellner@cdu.edu.au

© 2023 The Author(s). Published by Informa UK Limited, trading as Taylor & Francis Group. This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>), which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited. The terms on which this article has been published allow the posting of the Accepted Manuscript in a repository by the author(s) or with their consent.

Using this guidance, the following analysis of Australian vocational education and training (VET) public policy avoids the fascination with arguments over the relative merits of market versus non-market delivery (for example, Productivity Commission 2012; Quiggin 2019; Wolf 1993). Rather, contemporary training markets are considered to be examples of successful public policy implementation where ‘state and territory governments manage VET delivery within their jurisdiction’ (Productivity Commission 2016, 5.2). Bowman and McKenna (2016, 16) report that the objective of ‘an effective training market with public and private providers’ was first agreed between state, territory and federal governments in 1992 and has appeared in ‘all subsequent national funding agreements’. The heads of agreement between these governments on how competitive VET markets were envisaged to contribute to post-pandemic economic recovery maintain this unbroken policy pedigree (Commonwealth of Australia 2020).

The election of the national Labor Government in May 2022 has created the conditions to accept Marginson’s invitation. The federal Treasurer lists skills and training as one of the national ‘vulnerabilities that had been neglected for so long they had become urgent’ (Chalmers 2023, 3). In advocating for market redesign rather than the unadventurous policy solution of greater competition, Chalmers (2023, 16–17) promotes the shaping of markets to create public value that includes a highly skilled workforce. To realise the Treasurer’s exhortation to modernise VET markets, understanding what is for sale appears to be a sensible prerequisite.

Background

The delivery of VET is a large undertaking. Providers in state and territory markets are subject to legislation designating them as registered training organisations (RTOs) of which 4132 were listed in 2022 (Australian Skills Quality Authority 2022b, 1). RTOs collectively enrolled 4.5 million students in 2022 representing 25% of the 15- to 64-year-old resident population (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2023c, 1). They trained 1.3 million government-funded students, 3.4 million fee-for-service domestic and 227,000 fee-for-service international students (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2023c, 6). In the government-funded sector, each jurisdiction places their individual *de facto* cap on the cost of training at the qualification level through published price lists while the charges in fee-for-service markets are generally uncontrolled (Joyce 2019, 67–68). Australian governments collectively allocated \$10.8 billion to the VET sector in 2021 (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2022).

Many other occupationally aligned training and skills providers exist alongside the regulated VET system. Digital occupations include Google, LinkedIn and Microsoft offering vendor certification and other micro-credentials (e.g. Digital Transformation Expert Panel 2021, 67). Non-RTOs operating outside the formal system make a significant contribution to the national skills base (Bowman and

Callan 2021, 7) but are not considered further as they are excluded from specific VET registration and reporting requirements.

Well-established training markets are an unremarkable consequence of 'executive federalism' - a mechanism that facilitates national-state government cooperation (Ryan 2002, 7). It provides long periods of policy stability and only incremental change because the various administrations share a common perception of what expert knowledge is and who the experts are. These proficient policy-makers have fabricated an ostensible national training system with 'consistent qualifications recognised across borders while at the same time allowing for the diversity of eight different approaches at the local level' (Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2014, 11).

Before describing the analytic theory and method, several significant features of Australian VET will be explored to provide context. Firstly, from the mid-1970s, Technical and Further Education institutions (TAFEs) delivered apprenticeship training, migrant/adult education and a series of general courses. By the mid-1980s a national TAFE coalition had developed mechanisms to manage 'curriculum and qualification arrangements' (Goozee 2001, 61). In 1992, the federal government, with the agreement of the states and territories, established the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) to implement a market-based VET system (Goozee 2001, 58) to break the perceived delivery and curriculum 'monopoly' exercised by TAFEs (Deveson 1990, 10 and 57).

Using empirical ontology, Smith (2006, 3) describes how the emergence of the Australian National Training Package 'displaced curriculum as the means through which nationally recognised VET is organised and regulated'. The locus of control of vocational knowledge, training policy and practice shifted 'from training and further education (TAFE) institutions and authorities to Australian industry' with a different generalising logic giving rise to distinct modes of ordering VET (Smith 2006, 3). The replacement of TAFE curriculum with training packages was, and in some quarters remains, fiercely contested. Wheelahan's (2008, 1) criticism of training packages noted that national policy 'insists that training packages are not curriculum'. The ideological effort to remove the very word *curriculum* from the official VET policy vocabulary has been successful. The *Glossary of VET* contains over 700 words and acronyms; and *curriculum* does not appear, other than in reference to VET in secondary schools or in the name of pre-ANTA committees (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2020).

Secondly, since the early 1990s there have been continual references to a single training or VET market (e.g. Australian National Training Authority 1993; Kemp 1998; mpconsulting 2020, 15). More recently there have been efforts to describe various segments of a nominal, monolithic VET market in recognition of its confusing complexity, the availability of increased data/analytic capacity and to better meet the expressed needs of various stakeholder groups. The eight state and territory markets remain foundational segments of

the VET sector (Bowman and McKenna 2016) and distinguishing public from private provision has also provided for consistent policy responses (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2018). In their data-driven analysis of Australia's increasingly competitive VET provider market, Korbel and Misko (2016, 9) divide the market by both enrolment sizes and 13 provider types. Palmer (2022) uses algorithms of student clustering to identify different segments but these were not particularly meaningful to practitioners and policy makers. In a similar vein, the Productivity Commission's (2020a, 91) use of geographical product offerings to calculate the existence of 7874 'unique VET markets in Australia' is potentially locally useful but difficult to translate into national policy relevance.

Describing what is being sold in classic economic terms provides another way of segmenting Australian VET markets that can be traced back to their establishment. In pursuit of a national take-over of TAFE the Keating Labor Government singled out the sector for the initial implementation of national competition policy by proclaiming a singular VET sector (Ryan 1998, 106). This economically driven renaming performed an important policy role: identifying a VET sector to replace TAFE was a significant enabler of marketisation and privatisation (Goozee 2001, 90).

Established in 1998, the Productivity Commission remains the Australian Government's guardian and promulgator of pro-market competition policy. Given the VET sector's genesis, the Productivity Commission's views as to the nature of the economy and markets are relevant to Marginson's exhortation to look beyond the existing markets. The Australian economy is divided into two parts. Agriculture, mining and manufacturing form the goods, henceforth referred to as products, sector while everything else is considered to be in the services segment (McLachlan, Clark, and Monday 2002, xiii). Services, including VET, comprise '80% of the economy and employ 90% of the workforce' (Productivity Commission 2022, ix).

Distinguishing features of services are their intangible or immaterial nature, non-storability, non-transferability and the existence of a direct connection between the service provider and the consumer; however, there are many exceptions to these features because some service activities also deliver a tangible outcome such as restaurants producing meals (McLachlan, Clark, and Monday 2002, 6–7). These hybrid businesses are increasingly blurring the distinction between the two (Productivity Commission 2021, 38–41). The overarching definition of the service sector is residual in that it is defined by what it is not, i.e. neither agriculture, mining or manufacturing, which unfortunately does not tell us anything about what services are (McLachlan, Clark, and Monday 2002, xiii). Similarly, TAFE, and consequently VET, was also defined by what it was not – neither a school or a university (Commonwealth of Australia 1977). The classical economic distinction between product and service segments of the broader economy sets the scene for the VET sector to be constructed as

a response to competition policy built upon these two residual and ill-defined foundations that are analysed in this article.

Method and theory

This exploration of VET markets draws upon Foucault's archaeological analytics to identify a major discontinuity of thought. This is followed by his unique genealogical understanding that power is integrally linked to knowledge and is productive rather than coercive in nature. Proceeding on the basis that words matter and, more crucially, create the things they describe (Butler 1993; Law 2002; Mol 2002), considering how these markets are segmented and consequently represented to be (Bacchi 2009) become important factors in trying to determine how they operate. Bacchi (2000, 45–51) proposes that the frequent use of categories in policy discourses comes about because they can be initially defined for certain purposes, redefined for other uses and are actively marshalled for political intentions. Because the categories contained in strategic and tactical discourses delineate knowledge, they require scrutiny of the historical and political conditions that produced them rather than uncritical acceptance. Fairclough (2013, 185) notes 'what various groups of people take to be problems' cannot always be taken at face value; discourse analysis is a critique that 'asks what the problems really are with the same issue'. Ball (1993, 10) uses two different conceptualisations of policy – one as text and the other as discourse to demonstrate that 'policies are also processes and outcomes'. This analysis uses policy texts (documents) to examine what words (discourses) express a competitive VET market narrative.

The documents were chosen because they purport to describe what VET is or the characteristics of VET and the markets in which it is delivered based on their appearance in the *Timeline of Australian VET policy Initiatives* (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2023b). Selection criteria for further analysis were based on each document's contribution to policy development (i.e. the propositions appeared in part or in whole in policies that resulted from executive federalism). Subjecting this wide range of official policy documents, reform proposals and regulatory reports to a discourse analysis (Foucault 2010) found two words repeatedly associated with the policies that create and maintain VET markets – product and service. A Foucauldian (2010, 204) archaeological interpretation of these artefacts suggests that they identify 'thresholds, ruptures and transformations' that change a discursive formation's 'objects, operations, concepts and theoretical options' (Foucault 1991, 56).

Despite the intellectual difficulties encountered when describing social phenomena as dualisms (Dow 1990), the disruptive impact of these two words establishes 'the limits of what is sayable' (Foucault 1991, 59) and thinkable. Consequently, they are performing an important task in the production and understanding of Australia's regulated VET sector. To canvas what might lie

beyond the existing policy vista of competitive markets contested by thousands of providers, a deceptively simple question provided the departure point for gazing beyond this policy environment – what is sold in Australia’s training markets?

The answer is significant because all Australian governments use VET to pursue numerous economic and social objectives (Productivity Commission 2020a, 170). By having a better understanding of Australia’s multiple training markets and what they supply, a different policy domain can be envisaged in which distinctive markets can be given bespoke regulation, appropriate funding mechanisms and encouraged to move beyond the intellectually and administratively limiting state-based, market-nonmarket dualism (Marginson 1997, 48–49) that currently dominates the sector’s conceptual capacity.

Continuing with the Foucauldian notion of discourse, Carusi (2021, 234) explains that ‘policy as discourse emphasises the ability of policy to define reality’ and ‘policy is inherently political in its ability to create the objects of which it speaks’. Mol (1999, 75) also proposes that ‘reality is historically, culturally and materially located’ and that the ontological politics that fashion the realities of something like Australia’s negotiated national training system also occur in manifold forms because existence is experienced in different ways.

Rather than observing a fixed system, defining reality as multiples suggests that the training markets are both understood and enacted by a variety of interest groups who each have an assortment of political perspectives and supportive discourses; ‘reality is manipulated by means of various tools in the course of a diversity of practices’ (Mol 1999, 77). The numerous Antipodean training markets have come to be described and sustained by using ontological rhetorics that are deployed as metaphors that position VET and a training market as interchangeable – VET is a market, and a market is VET. In this configuration, ontological refers to multiple realities and rhetoric describes language that is designed to be doctrinally persuasive and value laden.

Szkudlarek (2019, 435) believes rhetorical instruments to be indispensable in the construction of political discourses in education because they operate as a ‘pedagogical vacuum cleaner’ by evacuating significance from actual experience and displacing it to the domain of values (428). For example, the Productivity Commission’s (2020a, 2) ontological rhetoric equates the national training system with ‘a more efficient and competitive VET market through informed user choice and a focus on quality’. Competition policies, contestable markets and regulation are the political values that have been crafted into reality in the form of the national training system where VET is the competitive market, and the competitive market is VET.

Indiscriminate use of ontological rhetorics can lead to conceptual confusion which is described as ‘the lack of explicit conceptual language at a research field level’ (Tahtinen and Havila 2019, 534) and it can contribute an uncoupling of business relationships. Fields, like VET, that are residually defined and

experienced from diverse vantage points (e.g. student, employer, educator or policymaker) often assign contrasting definitions to the same words and possess distinctive variations of important concepts where there is no correct or single best meaning. Researchers that are operating in a field where key concepts are [frequently] implicit and where conceptual language is complex must attempt to deal with the resulting confusion and serve as expert translators (Tahtinen and Havila 2019, 536–549).

Given that both VET and services are defined by what they are not, there is ample scope for conceptual variation, and consequent confusion, as to what they are and what they provide. The authoritative and complicated language of VET, reflecting the political compromises enabled by Australia's executive federalism, creates an environment where the policy makers create rhetorical tactics that conceptually confuses products and services. The discourse analysis found no evidence of these experts being asked to consider the difference between these artefacts of policy discontinuity.

Jacobsson and Jacobsson (2014, 812) propose that conceptual confusion provides a critical obstacle to cross-disciplinary communications regarding structures and functions. Because the VET sector caters for a broad and diverse range of occupations, industries, students and political purposes, cross-disciplinary communication about the functions expected of the system can easily produce misunderstandings when the specialist language of one discipline is uncritically imported and/or imposed on separate field. The resulting tendency to use concepts 'that are linguistically identical but different in content' inhibits clear communications (Jacobsson and Jacobsson 2014, 820).

The next section explores several examples of conceptual confusion evident in the public policy processes that have created and sustained the Australian VET sector – practices whereby ontological rhetorics are used to arbitrarily mix and make equivalent the distinctive languages of markets and vocational knowledge.

Comparing products and services

Businesses that are product leaders continually endeavour to introduce 'leading edge products' or unique applications of existing products to the market; the proposition to buyers is 'best product, period' (Treacy and Wiersema 1995, 35). Companies that lack this disciplined focus let products indiscriminately proliferate without a clear focus on pricing or shaping customer's expectations (Treacy and Wiersema 1995, 49).

Additionally, there are fundamental differences between how businesses conduct themselves when selling a product or a service. This is reflected in different levels of investment, styles of marketing, supply chains and capital investment (ZenBusiness 2022). Infosurv Research (2022) identifies six key differences:

- products are tangible; services intangible
- products fill customer needs or wants; service marketing and delivery builds trustful relationships
- products come in limited ranges; services are more unique and customisable
- service quality is more difficult to evaluate than a purchased product
- products can be returned more easily than a service
- every day that a service is offered and not consumed, it is lost forever; whereas products last until superseded or withdrawn.

Service-based businesses generally only generate income if someone is actively working, while products can be sold online 24/7 without always having someone at a physical location allowing for continuous income flows and/or marketing opportunities. Businesses that offer services have the potential to commence revenue almost immediately after setting up while product providers frequently must make substantial upfront investments to procure products/technologies before receiving income (ZenBusiness 2022). So, what are the thousands of RTOs selling in Australia's VET markets?

Results

This section identifies and gives examples of the ontological rhetorics that have been used to describe what is being sold in the various training markets. Ryan (1998, 79) explains that the Australian Government Department of Employment and Industrial Relations had formed the view as early as 1985 'that vocational education was not a community service but a training market, which like all markets, would work more efficiently with greater competition'.

Most Australian markets for outsourced government social assistance delivery sell services rather than products. Of the 15 markets analysed in two comprehensive studies (Considine 2022; Meagher and Stebbing 2022), only portions of VET markets and the superannuation industry are considered to offer products. The national VET regulator requires RTOs to have a 'scope of registration' that details 'the particular services and products that a provider is registered to provide' (Australian Skills Quality Authority 2022a, 156), allowing providers to operate specialist business models or to practice hybridity by combining services and products.

VET products

'A training product can be defined as an item on your RTO's explicit scope of registration as published on the national register, training.gov.au' (emphasis in original, Australian Skills Quality Authority 2019, 55). This website also contains the list of all registered

training organisations that can legally sell these standards-compliant products to clients. Training products are further identified as ‘an AQF qualification, skill set, unit of competency, accredited short course and module’. (Australian Skills Quality Authority 2019, 117)

The Australian Government’s long-standing commitment to developing and maintaining training markets has seen it assume the role of training product manufacturer and developer (Australian Industry and Skills Committee 2016), standards regulator and assurer (Department of Industry 2012) as well as wholesaler (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021b) to RTOs that retail their preferred products to the clients. The proliferative wholesale catalogue of more than 1,200 qualifications, 1,500 skill sets and 15,000 units of competency (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations 2023b, 1) that are available for approved vendors to sell is available at the online National Register of VET (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021a) which, notably, makes no reference to the selling of services. While RTOs do not purchase these products in a conventional wholesale sense, they do have to pay to enter and operate in the markets. Initial registration, renewals and changes to scope fees are paid to the VET regulator which is deemed a full cost recovery agency by the Australian Government (Australian Skills Quality Authority 2022a, 2).

In order to set a price for government-funded training products ‘Contact Hour Funds paid by the Department to the Training Provider in respect of an Eligible Individual will be calculated at the unit of competency level’ (Department of Education and Training 2018, 25). ‘Victorian purchasing guides contain nominal hour allocation for units of competency and maximum hour allocations for qualifications within training packages’ (Victorian Government 2022b). These nominal hours are used by the other State and Territory Training Authorities to benchmark their rates of funding for those training products they choose to subsidise and to enable nationally consistent data collection (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2023a). Through these processes industry defined vocational knowledge has been conceptually unitised and monetised as a product.

In 1989 the Australian Government established the tripartite (employers, unions and government) National Training Board ‘to promote national training standards and accreditation arrangements’ (Dawkins 1989, 30–31) that would enable ‘the accreditation of training providers and their products’. The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) continued this sole focus on products: ‘there has been apparent a great desire to see more information available on what is happening in vocational education and training, but more particularly what the products are and how to access them’ (Moran 1997, 62). That pervasive focus remains evident; ‘improvements to the design and development of training products will support the development of

a simpler, streamlined VET system that better meets user needs' (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations 2022a, 4).

However, conceptual confusion about what is for sale is apparent despite this simplistic policy pedigree. The Victorian Government (2022a) maintains the original view that 'Vocational Education and Training (VET) is made up of different training products that are recognised across Australia'. Given the vagaries of Australia's federation, it is all but guaranteed that another jurisdiction will express a dissimilar view; 'There are a range of service providers helping to deliver quality vocational education and training in New South Wales' (Training Services NSW 2022). Depending on which training market a student or employer accesses to make a purchase, ostensibly nationally consistent VET can be advertised as either a product or a service.

Responding to a variety of occupational regulatory requirements legislated by the individual states and territories, considerable numbers of VET providers have specialised in selling a tangible product through a purely brief transactional relationship with those who wish to purchase a certificate or statement of attainment. This has become the dominant segment of Australian training markets with some 3 million students (66.7%) enrolled in subjects that were not delivered as part of a nationally recognised program (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2023c, 4). The top six subject enrolments in this group are *provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation* (1.75 million), *provide first aid* (1.04 million) and *provide basic emergency life support* (0.73 million). The remaining top ten enrolments in descending order were in *provide responsible service of alcohol* (RSA), *prepare to work safely in the construction industry* (White Card), *work safely at heights*, *provide first aid in education and care setting*, *licence to operate a forklift truck*, *enter and work in confined spaces* and *perform rescue from a live Low Voltage panel*.

An online registered training provider, RSA Express Pty Ltd (2022), exemplifies the high-volume/low-cost nature of the seller-buyer transaction in specialist VET product training markets. Qualifications offered include RSA, White Card and COVID Safety which can be bundled together at a reduced price. The website's descriptive promotional statements include 'lowest price guarantee; no boring classes; pay when you pass; download and print certificate' (RSA Express Pty Ltd 2022). It is possible for the buyer to complete the online course work, pay by credit card, receive their product and never interact with a person.

Numerous occupational regulators require practitioners to obtain first aid products and in late 2022 nearly 1,200 RTOs had the most popular unit, *provide cardiopulmonary resuscitation*, on their scope of registration (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021a). Many of these providers have created short transactional relationships by offering online training and assessment. One RTO offers to email certificates within one business day of completion while hoping to increase enrolments through an 'opening sale of 33% off all courses' (ABC First Aid 2022). These qualifications bear the hallmarks of unitised

and monetised products that enable employees and businesses to comply with non-VET regulations (National Careers Institute 2023, 14). This category of VET products undoubtedly meets occupationally important health and workplace safety requirements and is suitable for delivery in contestable markets. On the other hand, they can be considered low value in terms of increasing the national stocks of high-level, vocational knowledge and productive skills required by industry that are delivered through long-term, service-like relationships such as apprenticeships.

VET services

In recommending the first federal funding to support public Technical and Further Education (TAFE) colleges, the Kangan Review (Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education 1974) made repeated references to TAFE's institutionalised offerings:

- 'providing education services to students' (244)
- 'counselling services' (135)
- 'student services' including 'student information, assistance and services in respect of health, housing and non-academic welfare' (135) and
- a wide range of 'library services' (136).

This committee (1974, xvii) envisaged that all Australian residents would have access to recurrent educational services based on a lifelong relationship with these state-owned and operated educational institutions to create the greatest return to society, communities and the individual. Advanced level qualifications delivered through such long-term service relationships were envisaged to give individuals marketable skills that are more highly valued, compensated and respected.

The contemporary standards for RTOs (Department of Education and Training 2019, 12) define services as 'training, assessment, related educational and support services and/or any activities related to the recruitment of prospective learners. It does **not** (emphasis added) include services such as 'student counselling, mediation or ICT support'. Yet the same set of standards demonstrates conceptual confusion in its definition of 'educational and support services' which does include 'mediation services, counselling services and ICT support' (Department of Education and Training 2019, 8).

Community Colleges Australia (2022) unambiguously stakes a claim in the category of VET services when describing the policy and program areas in which affiliates have most interest: 'CCA members are active providers of adult literacy and numeracy services; every CCA member engages with young people [by] providing a wide range of services; many of Australia's Not-For-Profit community education providers deliver education services to

migrants and refugees'. This group of RTOs are physically located in their communities, generally have staff available on premises and clearly have a very different business model to those product specialist RTOs described previously.

The peak lobby group for public providers, TAFE Directors Australia (2020, 9), also states that their members 'offer education and training services'. Similarly, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training (2019, 14–15), now known as the Independent Tertiary Education Council Australia, described a trend towards its members providing more services to society in general and 'professional student services' in particular. And the national regulator describes that registered training organisations 'are diverse in size, structure and governance and in the scope and volume of services they provide' (Australian Skills Quality Authority 2019, 3). Wibrow (2023, 3) notes that 'student support services have some influence on student choice [of provider]', but cost and travel time were more significant.

The Productivity Commission (2020b, 5.1, for example) annually publishes its *Report on Government Services* which includes a chapter that 'reports performance information for Vocational Education and Training (VET) services'. 'The Commission's approach recognises that VET is a human service supplied with a managed market' (Productivity Commission 2020a, 66). As with products, specific ontological rhetorics exist that support the sale of services in VET markets.

Conceptually confusing services and products

The Productivity Commission's (2021, 27) report *Things you can't drop on your feet* contributes to the conceptual confusion that permeates the VET sector with comments such as '*intangible products (services)* (emphasis added) are a large and increasing share of economic activity'. Outpost Consulting's (2021, 19) review of regional and remote post-school education and training provision maintains the uncertainty when referring to 'support services products'. The ontological rhetorics that enable different conceptions of what training markets sell to Australian residents demonstrate two politically inspired versions of reality that contribute to VET's complexity by unproblematically interchanging the meanings of products and services.

Discussion

As a result of three decades of bipartisan policy consistency that has guided the Australian VET system, it becomes possible to make some confident observations about the results of introducing contestable and regulated training markets (Kovacic and Lopez-Galdos 2016) and what has been achieved by the markets, registered providers, regulators and the products/services since the

power/knowledge used to define vocational knowledge was moved from educational institutions to industry.

Education systems of many liberal market democracies (Adamson, Astrand, and Darling-Hammond 2016), including Australia's 'global pioneering' efforts in VET marketisation (Peters 2021, 2), have been reformed by using standards-based accountability. This approach has 'few difficulties in reducing complex learning goals and instructional learning content down to bite-sized pieces', delivered by teachers and trainers who considered to be interchangeable parts of a vertically integrated system in which learning goals are simplified rather than being expanded to meet the needs of evolving societies (Fuller and Kim 2022, 13). 'The classic orthodoxies of liberal development, including human capital development, proliferate the creation of markets, commodifying as much as possible and monetising the value of everything' (Mezzadra, Julian, and Ranabir 2013, 3).

In Australian training markets, the most popularly sold commodities are in the form of heavily specified products which have been transactionally priced at the unit of competency level. RTOS that sell educational services command a much smaller market share, possibly because their offerings are considerably more difficult to unitise/monetise in long-term relationships. This can explain why services, despite being legislated as part of a provider's scope of registration, are not included on the National VET Register which only lists providers and products (Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021a). Further evidence of the incongruity of educational services with the industry-led training package environment comes from recent reforms to training product development processes using industry owned and led organisations contracted to the Australian Government. 'No applicant demonstrated sufficient ability to effectively represent the education and training industry and take on responsibility' for the 'training and assessment and foundation skills training packages' (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations 2023a, 4–5).

'Real world markets depend critically on a range of non-market coordination mechanisms, governance regimes and regulatory frameworks, within which they are deeply embedded' (Peck and Theodore 2007, 741). Australian governments support training markets by regulating, manufacturing and wholesaling VET products and providing regulatory oversight of the RTO retailers. The Australian Government has allocated over \$400 million to carry out these functions from 2022 to 2026 (Department of Employment and Workplace Relations 2022b, 41). Thousands of RTOs are free to decide their profit margins and determine whether they wish to sell products, services or a combination of the two in the marketplaces (e.g. Yu and Oliver 2015).

Liberal and coordinated economies have 'distinctive modalities of economic action' which causes individual firms to produce different responses 'even though the external stimulus is the same in both cases' (Peck and Theodore 2007, 736–737). Each RTO interprets the market signals of identical words in

their own way, and as described earlier, this leads to conceptual confusion because the same words are validly understood differently. This tendency also masks the reality of multiple markets that would likely benefit from more bespoke regulation rather than a solitary regulatory approach based upon the pretence of the national market.

Policymakers have progressively gained access to the data and the knowledge to understand which variants of the training markets work efficiently and effectively. An examination of the original entry date of RTOs onto the National Register of VET in the five smallest jurisdictions indicates that almost two-thirds of training providers have been successfully trading for more than ten years while 40% have operated longer than 16 years (Zoellne 2022). The transactional relationship between students and providers for the delivery of the White Card, first aid and Responsible Service of Alcohol products bears the hallmarks of a classic efficient and contestable free market successfully operating. At the educational service end of the policy spectrum, competitive markets have not improved the socio-economic conditions for a single one of the equity groups that were identified in the seminal Kangan Review of TAFE fifty years ago (National Centre for Vocational Education Research 2021) and has seen RTOs reduce or completely withdraw operations in many regional, rural and remote communities (Halsey 2018), thus suggesting the beneficial possibilities of shaping new varieties of markets designed to create public value (Mazzucato and Ryan-Collins 2019).

This Foucauldian (2010, 204) archaeological discourse analysis has identified products and services as significant artefacts of the 'ruptures and transformations' that established the set of rules in Australian VET; it revealed how ideological preferences were used to build new foundations from 'objects, operations, concepts and theoretical options' (Foucault 1991, 56). Using Foucault's genealogical understanding of the inseparable nature of power/knowledge that is productive (Oksala 2007, 70–71) demonstrates that VET policy has been based on a coercive view of power. This initially privileged TAFE's educational services curricular knowledge that is currently repressed by industry-led training package product knowledge. This suppressive conceptualisation of power and decoupling it from knowledge has created a policy environment that allows market-based ontological rhetorics to flourish based upon the conceptual confusion of basic system features including the number of markets, what is for sale and what is regulated.

Conclusion

This Foucauldian-inspired investigation into what is for sale in Australian VET markets initially discovered two artefacts of the discontinuity created when industry-led knowledge replaced that of publicly owned institutions providing educational curricula. The findings suggest that taking up Marginson's

invitation to look to the future through the markets and Chalmer's desire to create public value will require revisiting the simplistic, and theoretically limited, understanding of power exercised by policy makers in the pursuit of executive federalism in vocational education and training. Since the entry of the federal government into the residually defined TAFE/VET sector in the early 1970s, policy making has inhabited either end of a spectrum that places educational knowledge at one extreme and opposed to industry knowledge at the other.

The product/service distinction provided the objects that opened a much deeper interrogation of how power/knowledge have been used by the VET policy making community. While product and service differences are not unimportant, their analytic significance demonstrates how conceptual confusion and ontological rhetorics have been used to produce contemporary VET markets. This opens the possibility of considering alternative future options that could become available to the experts in the policy community when the impact of conceptually confused ontological rhetorics are explicitly recognised.

The insistence of applying ostensibly uniform standards, funding and national regulation creates discourses that limit what is thinkable and sayable. Resolving the sector's ubiquitous conceptual confusion by developing more inclusive ontological rhetorics that recognise a shared education/industry power nexus, and uses the most useful aspects from each, can reposition VET between the two extreme policy discourses that have dominated the country's vocational education and training efforts for the past 50 years. Sharing the power to define vocational knowledge between educationalists and industry could be one way of identifying and meeting contemporary skills needs at both high and low levels that, in turn, create increased public value.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

ORCID

Don Zoellner  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8065-6728>

References

- ABC First Aid. 2022. "How First Aid Online Works." First Aid Online, Accessed December 7, 2022. https://firstaidonline.com.au/?gclid=EAlaIqobChMI89LJ15Hm-wIVrJ1LBR3q0QXQEAAAYASAAEglraFD_BwE.
- Adamson, Frank, Bjorn Astrand, and Linda Darling-Hammond, edited by 2016. *Global Education Reform: How Privatisation and Public Investment Influence Education Outcomes*. New York: Routledge.

- Australian Committee on Technical and Further Education. 1974. *TAFE in Australia: Report on Needs in Technical and Further Education (Kangan Report)* Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Australian Council for Private Education and Training. 2019. *Submission: Review into the Australian Vocational Education and Training System*. Canberra: Australian Council for Private Education and Training.
- Australian Industry and Skills Committee. 2016. "Terms of Reference." Australian Industry and Skills Committee, Accessed May 8, 2016. <https://www.aisc.net.au/>.
- Australian National Training Authority. 1993. *National Vocational Education and Training System: Priorities for 1994*. Brisbane: Australian National Training Authority.
- Australian Skills Quality Authority. 2019. *Users' Guide to the Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015: Version 2.2*. Brisbane: Australian Government.
- Australian Skills Quality Authority. 2022a. *ASQA Corporate Plan 2022-23*. Brisbane: Australian Government.
- Australian Skills Quality Authority. 2022b. *State of the Vocational Education and Training Sector Report*. Melbourne: Australian Government.
- Bacchi, Carol. 2000. "Policy as Discourse: What Does It Mean? Where Does It Get Us?" *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 21 (1): 45–57.
- Bacchi, Carol. 2009. *Analysing Policy: What's the Problem Represented to Be?*. Frenchs Forest: Pearson.
- Ball, Stephen J. 1993. "What is Policy?: Texts, Trajectories and Toolboxes." *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education* 13 (2): 10–17. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0159630930130203>.
- Bowman, Kaye, and Victor Callan. 2021. *Engaging More Employers in Nationally Recognised Training to Develop Their Workforce*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Bowman, Kaye, and Suzy McKenna. 2016. *The Development of Australia's National Training System: A Dynamic Tension Between Skills and Flexibility*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Butler, Judith. 1993. *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limits of "Sex"*. London: Routledge Classics.
- Carusi, F. Tony. 2021. "The Ontological Rhetorics of Education Policy: A Non-Instrumental Theory." *Journal of Education Policy* 36 (2): 232–252.
- Chalmers, Jim. 2023. "Capitalism After the Crises." *The Monthly*, Accessed February 7, 2023. <https://www.themonthly.com.au/issue/2023/february/jim-chalmers/capitalism-after-crises#mtr>.
- Commonwealth of Australia. 1977. *Tertiary Education Commission Act 1977*. Canberra: Australian Parliament.
- Commonwealth of Australia. 2020. *Heads of Agreement for Skills Reform*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Community Colleges Australia. 2022. "What We Do: Policy and Research." Community Colleges Australia, Accessed December 8, 2022. <https://cca.edu.au/what-we-do/policy-research/>.
- Considine, Mark. 2022. *The Careless State: Reforming Australia's Social Services*. Carlton: Melbourne University Press.
- Dawkins, John. 1989. *Improving Australia's Training System*. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Department of Education and Training. 2018. *2018-19 Standard VET Funding Contract: Skills First Program*. Melbourne: Victoria State Government.
- Department of Education and Training. 2019. *Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) 2015: Compilation No. 3*. Canberra: Australian Government.

- Department of Education, Skills and Employment 2021a. "National Register of VET." Australian Government, Accessed June 30, 2021. <https://training.gov.au/Home/Tga>.
- Department of Education, Skills and Employment. 2021b. *New Industry Engagement Architecture*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. 2022a. Consultation Paper: Reforms to Improve the Quality of Training Delivery - Draft Revised Standards for RTOs. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. 2022b. Portfolio Budget Statements 2022-23 Budget Related Paper No. 16: Employment and Workplace Relations Portfolio. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. 2023a. *Industry Engagement Reforms: Frequently Asked Questions*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. 2023b. "Qualification Model Consultation." Australian Government, Accessed January 31, 2023. https://www.dewr.gov.au/skills-reform/skills-reform-overview/qualifications-reforms/qualification-model-consultation?utm_source=sendgrid.com&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=website.
- Department of Industry. 2012. *Standards for Training Packages*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet. 2014. Reform of Federation White Paper: Roles and Responsibilities in Education Part B: Vocational Education and Training and Higher Education: Issues Paper 4. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Deveson, Ivan. 1990. Training Costs of Award Restructuring: Report of the Training Costs Review Committee: Volume One. Canberra: Australian Government Publishing Service.
- Digital Transformation Expert Panel. 2021. *The Learning Country: Digital Transformation Skills Strategy*. Melbourne: Australian Industry Standards.
- Dow, Sheila. 1990. "Beyond dualism." *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 14 (2): 143–157.
- Fairclough, Norman. 2013. "Critical Discourse Analysis and Critical Policy Studies." *Critical Policy Studies* 7 (2): 177–197.
- Foucault, Michel. 1991. "Politics and the Study of Discourse." In *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, edited by Colin Gordon, Graham Burchell, and Peter Miller, 53–72. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Foucault, Michel. 2010. *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*. 1972. Third ed. New York: Vintage Books. Original edition.
- Fuller, Brad, and Hoyun Kim. 2022. *Systems Thinking to Transform Schools: Identifying Levers That Lift Educational Quality*. Washington: Brookings Institute.
- Goozee, Gillian. 2001. *The Development of TAFE in Australia*. Third ed. Leabrook: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Halsey, John. 2018. *Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education*. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Education and Training.
- Infosurv. 2022. "6 Key Differences Between Services and Products." Infosurv, Accessed October 18, 2022. <https://www.infosurv.com/6-key-differences-between-marketing-services-and-products/>.
- Jacobsson, Thomas, and Staffan Jacobsson. 2014. "Conceptual Confusion – an Analysis of the Meaning of Concepts in Technological Innovation Systems and Sociological Functionalism." *Technology Analysis & Strategic Management* 26 (7): 811–823.
- Joyce, Steven. 2019. *Strengthening Skills: Expert Review of Australia's Vocational Education and Training System*. Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet.

- Kemp, David. 1998. "The VET Market." In *The Market for Vocational Education and Training*, edited by Chris Robinson and Richard Kenyon, 1–10. Leabrook: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Korbel, Patrick, and Josie Misko. 2016. *VET Provider Market Structures: History, Growth and Change*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Kovacic, William E, and Marianela Lopez-Galdos. 2016. "The Life Cycles of Competition Systems: Explaining Variation in the Implementation of New Regimes." *Law & Contemporary Problems* 79 (85): 85–122.
- Law, John. 2002. *Aircraft Stories: Decentering the Object in Technoscience*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Marginson, Simon. 1997. *Markets in Education*. St Leonards: Allen and Unwin.
- Mazzucato, Mariana, and Josh Ryan-Collins. 2019. Putting Value Creation Back into 'Public value': From Market Fixing to Market Shaping. London: UCL Institute for Innovation and Public Purpose, Working Paper Series (IIPP WP 2019-05).
- McLachlan, Rosalie, Colin Clark, and Ian Monday. 2002. Australia's Service Sector: A Study in Diversity. Canberra: Productivity Commission Staff Research Paper.
- Meagher, Gabrielle, and Adam Stebbing. 2022. *Designing Social Service Markets: Risk, Regulation and Rent-Seeking*, edited by Diana Perche. Canberra: ANU Press.
- Mezzadra, Sandro, Reid Julian, and Samaddar. Ranabir. 2013. "Introduction: Reading Foucault in the Postcolonial Present." In *The Biopolitics of Development: Reading Michel Foucault in the Postcolonial Present*, edited by Sandro Mezzadra, Julian Reid, and Ranabir Samaddar, 1–14. New Delhi: Springer.
- Mol, Annemarie. 1999. "Ontological Politics: A Word and Some Questions." In *Actor Network Theory and After*, edited by John Law and John Hassard, 74–89. Oxford: The Sociological Review Blackwell Publishers.
- Mol, Annemarie. 2002. *The Body Multiple: Ontology in Medical Practice*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Moran, Terry. 1997. "The National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training: 1998 and Beyond." In ANTA Training Update Seminar July 10 1997: Seminar Proceedings, edited by Australian National Training Authority, 52–64. Brisbane: Australian National Training Authority.
- mpconsulting. 2020. *Rapid Review of the Australian Skills Quality Authority's Regulatory Practices and Processes*. Canberra: Department of Education, Skills and Employment.
- National Careers Institute. 2023. *Australian Jobs 2022*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2018. *Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics: Total VET Students and Courses 2017*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2020. *Glossary of VET*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2021. *Student Equity in VET: Participation, Achievement and Outcomes*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2022. "Government Funding of VET 2021." National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Accessed February 20, 2023. <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/government-funding-of-vet-2021>.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2023a. "Nationally Agreed Nominal Hours." National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Accessed June 8, 2023. <https://www.ncver.edu.au/rto-hub/statistical-standard-software/nationally-agreed-nominal-hours>.

- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2023b. *Timeline of Australian VET Policy Initiatives 1998-2022*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research. 2023c. *Total VET Students and Courses 2022*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Oksala, Johanna. 2007. *How to Read Foucault*. New York: W. W. Norton and Company.
- Outpost Consulting. 2021. *Research into Support Services for Tertiary Students in RRR Areas: Final Report*. Brisbane: Outpost Consulting.
- Palmer, Brian. 2022. *Exploratory Analysis of VET Market Segments*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Peck, Jamie, and Nik Theodore. 2007. "Variegated capitalism." *Progress in Human Geography* 31 (6): 731–772.
- Peters, Susanne. 2021. "Market Conditions of International VET Providers: A Comparative Analysis of Australia, UK, USA, and Germany." *Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training* 13 (23): 1–19.
- Productivity Commission. 2012. *Impacts of COAG Reforms: Business Regulation and VET, Research Report, Volume 3 - VET*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Productivity Commission. 2016. *Report on Government Services 2015: Chapter Five Vocational Education and Training*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Productivity Commission. 2020a. *National Agreement for Skills and Workforce Development Review*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Productivity Commission. 2020b. *Report on Government Services Section 5: Vocational Education and Training*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Productivity Commission. 2021. *Things You Can't Drop on Your Feet: An Overview of Australia's Services Sector Productivity*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Productivity Commission. 2022. *5-Year Productivity Inquiry: The Key to Prosperity Interim Report*. Canberra: Australian Government.
- Quiggin, John. 2019. "Why the Profit Motive Fails in Education." *The Conversation*, Accessed February 6, 2020. https://theconversation.com/why-the-profit-motive-fails-in-education-128091?mc_cid=f79d7b23b7&mc_eid=0066d488ee.
- RSA Express Pty Ltd. 2022. "Eot.Edu.au: Express Online Training." *Express Online Training*, Accessed December 7, 2022. https://www.eot.edu.au/online-courses/RSA/VIC/?gclid=EAlalQobChMI14z5mpXI-wIVDJlmAh160wn-EAAYASAAEgJt_D_BwE&.
- Ryan, Robin. 1998. "Building the Institutions of a National Vocational Education and Training System." In *School of Education - Faculty of Education*. Humanities, Law and Theology, Flinders University.
- Ryan, Robin. 2002. *Building a National Vocational Education System*. Adelaide: Flinders University Institute of International Education Research.
- Smith, Helen. 2006. *From technical education to workplace training: emergence of the Australian national training package*. PhD, Department of History and Philosophy of Science, The University of Melbourne.
- Szkudlarek, Tomasz. 2019. "Postulational Rhetoric and Presumptive Tautologies: The Genre of the Pedagogical, Negativity and the Political." *Studies in Philosophy and Education* 38 (1): 427–437. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11217-018-9621-8>.
- TAFE Directors Australia. 2020. *Submission to Productivity Commission: Response to Interim Report on Review of National Agreement on (Sic) Skills and Workforce Development*. Canberra: TAFE Directors Australia.
- Tahtinen, Jaana, and Virpi Havila. 2019. "Conceptually Confused, but on a Field Level? A Method for Conceptual Analysis and Its Application." *Marketing Theory* 19 (4): 533–557.

- Training Services NSW. 2022. "Types of Service Providers: Vocational Education and Training." New South Wales Government, Accessed October 27, 2022. <https://www.nsw.gov.au/education-and-training/vocational/types-of-providers>.
- Treacy, Michael, and Fred Wiersema. 1995. *The Discipline of Market Leaders*. London: Harper Collins Publishers.
- Victorian Government. 2022a. "Training Products." Victorian Government, Accessed October 19, 2022.
- Victorian Government. 2022b. "Victorian Training Package Purchasing Guides." Victorian Government, Accessed October 19, 2022. <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorian-training-package-purchasing-guides>.
- Wheelahan, Leesa. 2008. "Can Learning Outcomes Be Divorced from Processes of Learning? Or Why Training Packages Make Very Bad Curriculum." Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association Conference, Melbourne.
- Wibrow, Bridget. 2023. *Drivers of Student Training Choices: A Focus on Student Support Services*. Adelaide: National Centre for Vocational Education Research.
- Wolf, Charles. 1993. *Markets or Governments: Choosing Between Imperfect Alternatives*. Second ed. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Yu, Serena, and Damian Oliver. 2015. *The Capture of Public Wealth by the For-Profit VET Sector: A Report Prepared for the Australian Education Union*. Sydney: University of Sydney Workplace Research Centre.
- ZenBusiness. 2022. "Products Vs Services: The Key Differences Small Business Owners Should Know." ZenBusiness, Accessed October 18, 2022. <https://www.zenbusiness.com/products-vs-services/>.
- Zoellner, Don. 2022. "Mature Australian VET Markets: A Data-Driven Case Study of Public Policy Implementation Empirical Research in Vocational Education and Training." 14 (5): 1–17.