



Applied learning in an online VET teacher-education degree



**ACDEVEG Conference
Melbourne
December, 2015**

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Overview of the presentation:

- Student profile in VET teacher-education degrees
- Overview of my doctoral study
- Applied Learning design principles
- Key findings and implications for Applied Learning design in online teacher-education degrees
- Areas ripe for further research
- Questions
- Recommended reading!

Who are our students?





Design Principles of Applied Learning

1. Provide learning activities that connect theory and application in authentic contexts.
 2. Recognise the lived experience of students
 3. Provide meaningful opportunities for collaborative construction of knowledge within the learning community
 4. Encourage the development of a professional identity through collegial interactions in a range of settings
 5. Provide authentic assessment tasks that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real work settings
 6. Encourage an increasing level of student ownership of learning
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Overview of my doctoral study

- 52 participants (48 students and 4 lecturers) over two years
- Student participants were all TAFE teachers undertaking a four year fully online teacher-education degree - Bachelor of Education (Applied Learning)
- 3 iterations (semester-long) where the design principles were implemented, reviewed and modified in light of feedback on the student and teacher experience
- Data collected through surveys, interviews, focus groups and artefact collection
- Leading to final, tested design principles for applied learning in an online teacher-education course



1. Provide learning activities that connect theory and application in authentic contexts.

Key finding:

- The most effective and engaging activities take place over a prolonged period of time, have a demonstrated relevance to the 'real-world' and involve collegial interactions between all stakeholders (students, staff, industry).

Implications for practice:

- ✓ Consider making the learning activities ones that help build the final assessment products (constructive alignment is critical here!);
- ✓ Widen your view of work-integrated learning – bring experts to the learning environment;
- ✓ Be prepared to flex or modify activities to fit with authentic contexts that the students may be working in.



2. Recognise the lived experience of students

Key finding:

- Recognising the prior and current lived experience of students improves engagement and satisfaction but has implications for teaching staff, who need to be prepared to adopt a role that is more responsive to a diverse cohort.

Implications for practice:

- ✓ Encourage, value and respond to students' existing beliefs and perspectives;
- ✓ Be willing to challenge and be challenged;
- ✓ Be flexible and responsive to the realities of students' circumstances;
- ✓ Encourage and model the attributes of a life-long learner.



3. Provide meaningful opportunities for collaborative construction of knowledge within the learning community

Key finding:

- Students are willing to collaborate with others, and often contribute altruistically to the learning environment, but do not (in the online environment at least) enjoy collaborative assessment tasks.

Implications for practice:

- ✓ Encourage collaboration that leads to mutual benefits and meaningful knowledge creation
- ✓ Provide opportunities for students to contribute altruistically to the learning environment
- ✓ Foster a learning community by encouraging a range of different ways to contribute – utilise the affordances of technology where possible.



4. Encourage the development of a professional identity through collegial interactions in a range of settings

Key finding:

- Nurture the students' sense of professional identity over their course of study and, critically, ensure teaching staff model a professional identity themselves.
 - ***Implications for practice***
 - ✓ Allow students to rehearse the skills of professional interactions with diverse practitioners – build it into learning and assessment activities;
 - ✓ Facilitate the students' foray into membership in professional communities and valuing networks in their discipline;
 - ✓ Maximise the affordances of technology to facilitate a range of interactions with other professionals
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5. Provide authentic assessment tasks that reflect the way the knowledge will be used in real work settings

Key finding:

- Non-traditional students are likely to begin their studies with fears and misconceptions about assessment. Authentic assessment tasks foster engagement and learning, but require more flexibility from teaching staff.

Implications for practice:

- ✓ Create assessment tasks that will be recognised as having value beyond the viewing of the lecturer;
- ✓ Integrate learning activities with assessment - aim for tasks that are completed over time and are multi-dimensional;
- ✓ Adopt a flexible approach in terms what constitutes knowledge and how it is demonstrated.



6. Encourage an increasing level of student ownership of learning

Key finding:

- Developing the students' confidence to take ownership of their learning will significantly contribute to desired graduate outcomes. Plan for progression over their course of study, recognising the implications for the role of teaching staff.

Implications for practice:

- ✓ Ensure teaching staff feel confident in their capacity to create a more autonomous learning environment;
- ✓ Support students as they begin to take more ownership, be prepared to be flexible in the pursuit of applied, authentic activities;
- ✓ Integrate technology that can support diverse approaches to the learning and assessment activities;

The role of teaching staff in a course underpinned by applied learning principles:

- To provide a supportive, responsive learning environment that respects and values what each student brings to the learning environment
- To encourage each student to take greater responsibility for their learning, accepting that this will entail greater differentiation and diversity in the ways in which students engage and evidence their learning
- To feel comfortable in a role that positions themselves as life-long learners, engaging in collegial discussions and modelling the attributes of a professional educator within and beyond the learning community

Recommended reading!

- Herrington, J., Reeves, T., & Oliver, R. (2010). *A guide to authentic e-learning*. New York, NY: Routledge.
- Brookfield, S. (1995). *Becoming a critically reflective teacher*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Knowles, M., Holton, E., & Swanson, R. (2011). *The adult learner: The definitive classic in adult education and human resource development* (7th ed.). Oxford, UK: Elsevier.
- Salmon, G. (2011). *E-moderating: The key to teaching and learning online* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge
- Shulman, L. (2004). *The wisdom of practice: Essays on teaching, learning, and learning to teach*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.