

EXAMINING TEACHERS' VIEWS OF WHAT MAKES A GOOD VET TEACHER

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The study & the data for this paper

The project

- ARC Linkage Project: Would more highly qualified teachers & trainers help to address quality problems in the Australian VET system?

Stage 1 phase 1

- RTO managers, teachers & students interviews on 'what makes a good VET teacher'

This paper

- Teacher interview data from 2 RTOs: a private RTO & a TAFE

The RTOs

Private RTO

- Mainly international students (face to face) and some local students (online)
- AQF 5 (Diploma) to AQF 7 (Bachelor's degree)
- Non-trades courses only

TAFE

- Large diversity of student cohorts
- AQF 1 (Certificate 1) to AQF 8 (Graduate Diploma)
- Trades & non-trades courses

The teachers

Private RTO

- 4 teachers teaching Diploma & Advanced Diploma courses in Business, Management, Events, Tourism

TAFE

- 7 teachers teaching:
 - 2 teaching Cert 2 – Cert 4 courses in Electrical Trades;
 - 1 Cert 2 – Bachelor's degree courses in IT;
 - 4 teaching pre-Cert 1 – Cert 3 in Foundation Skills courses & learner support

Teachers' metaphors for the teacher- learner relationship

Private RTO

- Mentor
- Leader

TAFE

- Nurturer (LLN teachers)
- Big brother, your uncle, father figure (Trade teachers)

What good VET teachers do

Private RTO

- 'explain everything clearly and succinctly'
- 'give examples of their workplace ... based on their pure VET experience'
- 'read your audience'
- 'mix up the conventional lecture style stuff [with getting students] to participate, group work'

TAFE

- 'get the students keen to learn and direct the students to the areas or places for them to be able to do their own research and be able to develop themselves'
- '[build] relationships [with the students] in a way that ... caters for their different needs so they won't be scared to be in the classroom'

Similarities in views: characteristics of a good VET teacher

Relevant knowledge and experience:

- *First of all they need to be an expert in the field they’re delivering (TAFE)*

Skills to explain concepts ‘clearly and succinctly’:

- *just being able to demystify and simplify the jargon and bring in examples (Private RTO)*

Care for the students:

- *one that has empathy for the student ... (Private RTO)*

Recognition of learners’ individual differences and needs:

- *building relationships in a way that we can approach our students so we can cater for their different needs (TAFE)*

Respect for learners’ different challenges:

- *appreciating how brave ... someone is to leave their own country to come to live in a country where their language is not their first language (Private RTO)*

Flexibility in teaching and learning approaches:

- *adaptability is a really big issue ... really willing to listen .. And change the way [you do] things. ... listens to the students... takes notices of the students (TAFE)*

..... *Teaching as a cognitive and affective practice (Kemmis 2005, 2012)*

Comparison of the VET teaching practice contexts

The agency of the 'subjects':

- Private employs *trainers*;
- TAFE employs *teachers*

'The pedagogical tools and resources:

- Case studies, group work & presentations, quizzes using 'kahoot' - Private RTO
- Classroom activities with LLN learner support plus simulated workplaces & material artefacts - TAFE

The pedagogical community:

- Mostly Dip/ Adv Dip international students with 1 VET trainer – Private RTO
- Mostly local Cert 2/3 students with 1 VET teacher and 1 LLN support teacher - TAFE

The 'rules'/ traditions:

- Legal requirements about (international) student attendance – Private RTO
- 'Second chance' opportunities - TAFE

..... *differently configured cultural-historical activity systems (Engestrom 2001)*

Conclusions ... and emerging questions

- There is a verbal consensus about what 'good VET teaching' is.
- The teachers' views can be mapped to many 'established' characteristics of good teaching & good VET teaching (eg QTC Professional Standards).
- But the socio-material contexts in which the teachers are making meaning of teaching as a practice can be very different.
- Does '*VET teaching*' adequately capture the diverse *cognitive and affective practices* that exist in the sector?

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