

'I place myself in the shoes of a learner':
VET teachers' and trainers' descriptions of
their practice

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Professor Erica Smith

Dr Jacqueline Tuck



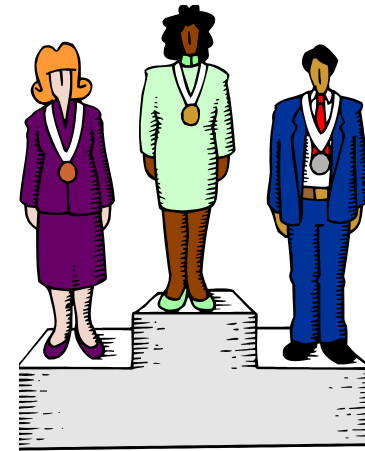
Australian Research Council-funded project 2015-2017

- ***Would more highly qualified teachers and trainers help to address quality problems in the Australian VET system?***
- Research team: Erica Smith, Keiko Yasukawa (UTS), Roger Harris (UniSA), Jackie Tuck (Fed Uni Business School).
- Partner Organisations: Australian Council for Private Education and Training, VET Development Centre, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Federation Training, Queensland TAFE.

VET teachers and trainers... The bronze medal?

Compared with school teachers & academics....

- No name for VET teachers;
- Not a recognised career destination;
- Pay is often worse than the relevant industry;
- Hardly ever in the news;
- Until quite recently, no awards for VET teachers.



VET teacher qualifications: A brief history

- Prior to mid-1990s most full-time TAFE teachers undertook 'in-service' VET/adult education degrees.
- Advent of the requirement for a Certificate IV level qualification in 1998; TAFE gradually stopped requiring degrees.
- Non-TAFE training providers don't have any general requirement for qualifications beyond the regulatory minimum.
- Now, only about 1000 people undertake higher education quals in VET pedagogy voluntarily, at around 10 universities.

What's been happening in the past five years?

- Productivity Commission inquiry into the VET workforce 2011 cited:
 - problems in recruitment of VET teachers;
 - lack of firm evidence that higher-level qualifications for teachers improve quality of teaching;
- State governments, who employ TAFE teachers, are generally reluctant to support teachers becoming qualified, with money or time release;
- But.... two States have higher pay points for TAFE teachers with degree qualifications
- And ASQA now requires the Dip VET to teach the Cert IV TAE; and allows a higher level 'adult education' qualification in lieu of Cert IV TAE.
- Victoria currently looking at VET teacher qualifications.

Our project's research questions

- What differences do VET teachers' levels of qualification (**pedagogical and discipline-based**) make to their teaching concepts, approaches & practice?
- What differences do VET teachers' levels of qualification make to their ability to navigate complex training contexts, to teach a diversity of learners, and to achieve improved student outcomes?
- How do levels of qualification affect VET teachers' engagement in further professional development activities and how can PD be tailored for different groups?
- **How can more highly-qualified VET teachers contribute to improved quality in VET?** What actual and potential barriers and facilitators are there?

Note: We are not only looking at teaching/training qualifications

Project method: Completed/**still to do**

1. 2015 preliminary focus groups with teachers (5 groups), students (6 groups) and 11 stakeholder interviews: What makes a good VET teacher?
2. 2015 Case studies in four TAFE and four non-TAFE RTOs.
3. **2016 National teacher/trainer survey to investigate differences in teacher attitudes and practices by level of teaching qualification – administered through 7 TAFE Institutes, 36 ACPET RTOs & 12 enterprise RTOs. 574 valid responses.**
4. 2016 Analysis of professional development practices to see whether engagement is affected by level of qualification. In RTO case studies (six); and via survey through external PD providers (November 2016). *365 valid responses.*
5. **‘Delphi’ (Expert consultation) exercise with two streams of stakeholders: policy people and senior TAFE/RTO managers; plus an international stream (February – March 2017).**

National Teacher/Trainer Survey

- Survey was administered May/June 2016;
- The survey was distributed through 7 TAFE Institutes, 36 Private RTOs and 12 Enterprise RTOs (*so that we knew response rates*): 574 responses;
- Of respondents, 58% were from TAFE, 30% from private RTOs, 10% from enterprise RTOs and 2% from community RTOs.
- Questions on demographics, qualifications, teaching, professional development, views about quality in the VET sector.
- **Teaching practice questions (404 responses) were based on five domains from the Queensland College of Teachers' *Professional Standards for Vocational Education and Training Practitioners***

Teaching and training practices: Questions about importance of, and self-confidence in, items from the Queensland standards.

Example: *Domain 3: Plan, design and deliver effective teaching/training experiences*

	How important do you think this item is for VET teachers/ trainers in general? (1 to 5)	Is this item (activity or knowledge area) required in your current teaching role? (Y, N, Occasionally)	What is your personal level of confidence in this activity or knowledge area? (1 to 5)
Item 3.1 - Plan, design and deliver engaging and inclusive learning experiences.			
Item 3.2 - Select, develop and use a range of teaching/training strategies and resources including new and emerging technologies.			
Item 3.3 - Utilise local, national and global content through real and/or virtual environments for learning experiences.			
Item 3.4 - Reflect on your practice to improve the learning experience.			

Teachers' views about importance and confidence of the items

For the five domains in the Queensland standards, the descending order of **confidence** was:

1. Know the content and how it can be taught - MOST CONFIDENT
2. Assess, provide feedback and report on learning.
3. Know learners, their context and how they learn.
4. Plan, design and deliver effective teaching/training experiences.
5. Engage with industry, community, regulatory and professional bodies - LEAST CONFIDENT

Views about importance of the items to the job of a teacher/trainer were in the same order; but CONFIDENCE was always lower than IMPORTANCE.

Question sequence about practice, asked for each of the QCT domains.

- We'd like to know a little more about how you use these skills. We will ask you to choose an item from the above list and then to provide, in a few words or sentences, an example of how you implement the skill described in that particular item.
- Please select one of the items from the list above - state item number:

- What is an example of how you implement that particular skill?

For this paper: Items selected for detailed qualitative analysis Analysed by RTO type and by discipline area

Know learners, their context and how they learn

- Understand effective teaching/training strategies that are responsive to the community, cultural setting, linguistic background and histories of learners. (n=54)

Know the content and how it can be taught

- Demonstrate current industry knowledge and skills in your vocational area. (n=162)
- Understand a variety of effective strategies to support the learners' language literacy and numeracy requirements. (n=57)

Plan, design and deliver effective teaching/training experiences

- Plan, design and deliver engaging and inclusive learning experiences. (n=96)
- Reflect on your practice to improve the learning experience. (n=216)

Assess, provide feedback and report on learning

- Use a range of assessment methods and tools. (n=67)

Engage with industry, colleagues, community, regulatory and professional bodies

- Engage with educational, professional, industry and vocational networks/associations in order to keep abreast of contemporary VET issues, research and practice. (n=126)

Analysis by RTO type

- TAFE institutes ('TAFE' respondents)
- ACPET member RTOs— mainly private RTOs and a few community RTOs ('ACPET' respondents)
- ERTOA member RTOs ('ERTO' respondents)

Over half of the respondents were from TAFE institutes; approx. one-third from ACPET member RTOs; approx. one-tenth from ERTOA member RTOs.

Confidence: Which group was more confident for which item?

Know learners, their context and how they learn

- Effective teaching/training strategies (TAFE respondents)

Know the content and how it can be taught

- Current industry knowledge and skills (ACPET respondents)
- Understand effective strategies (TAFE respondents)

Plan, design and deliver effective teaching/training experiences

- Engaging and inclusive learning experiences (TAFE respondents)
- Reflect on practice (TAFE respondents)

Assess, provide feedback and report on learning

- Use a range of assessment (ACPET respondents)

Engage with industry, colleagues, community, regulatory and professional bodies

- Engage with networks/associations (ACPET respondents)



For all items, lower levels of confidence were evident for the ERTO respondents.

Selected responses from each item

Demonstrate current industry knowledge (162)



Understand effective teaching/training strategies that are responsive to [varied] learners(54)

Different teaching and learning strategies that are culturally and linguistically appropriate. (TAFE)

I engage with each student to identify the community, cultural setting and history, so I may tailor my training strategy as to better target their specific educational needs. (ACPET)

My extensive industry experience allows me to create realistic scenarios, activities and assessments for my classes to better prepare them for industry. (TAFE)

Whilst current industry skills are important, a common mistake for trade teachers as that they still regard themselves as trade people and pay little respect to the fact they are also educators and they should work on these skills ... (TAFE)

Having relevant industry experience in the area definitely assists with the learning and development process. (ACPET)

Required for the students to correctly absorb the training information and build respect between student and facilitator. (ERTO)



**Understand effective strategies to support learners'
LL&N requirements (57)**

Allow a variety of methods to complete assessments e.g. written, oral, practical. (TAFE)

I use a range of digital resources that allow multiple modes of interacting with the material including audio/visual/computer applications. (TAFE)

Finding the individual student learning style and adapting training to support any issues they have around language and literacy to ensure that all students have quality training. (ACPET)

Assess the level of competence and develop strategies. (ERTO)

Plan, design and deliver a range of engaging and inclusive experiences (96)

I practice and preach 'Active Learning'. I aim to have the students finding the answers by research/discussion, rather than me delivering a 'Death by PowerPoint'. (TAFE)

Using relevant authentic contexts so that the learning simulates what the student can transfer knowledge in the workplace. (TAFE)

I assess the group and work out what drives them (motivation) and how I can introduce something which is useful (skill development), that they will enjoy (fun) and build skills and engagement so they come back. (ACPET)

All training is centred on equal participation that encourages learner development. (ERTO)

Reflect on your practice to improve the learning experience

This is done both individually and collectively. We reflect as a whole team at the end of the year, in smaller groups at hub meetings and with those we team-teach with after classes, giving each other feedback and underline opportunities for changes. I also reflect on individual lessons according to time or need and where issues are identified. (TAFE)

I always seek feedback from participants and look for ways to improve the quality of content, ensure it is relevant to their workplace and ensure my delivery is clear. (ACPET)

I am constantly adapting and changing my practices to suit the changing nature of our industry as well as the changing nature of the newer generation [of workers]. (ERTO)

Student feedback

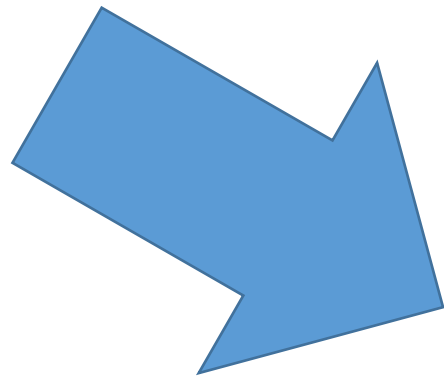
Debriefing

Student observation

Reflective journals

Peer review/reflection

Course reviews



Use a range of assessment methods & tools (67)

You simply have to mix it up and assess more than one facet of a student's understanding of the learning. (TAFE)

Customising assessment tools to a business and their scenarios makes for a far more successful program. (ACPET)

We use written and practical assessments to confirm if a student is competent or not yet competent. Also I use verbal questions during the practical assessment too. (ERTO)

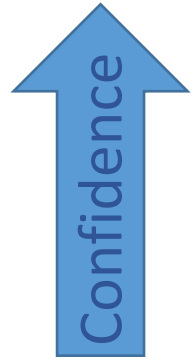
Engage with educational, professional and industry networks/associations (126)

I have been and am currently involved in a range of educational and industry networks. (TAFE)

I actually work in the industry to ensure my skills are current. Go to industry meetings and seminars. Present at industry seminars and conferences. (TAFE)

Attend current industry events, working with real world clients, being more industry aware. (ACPET)

Summary of teaching and training approaches by RTO type



Domains

Know the content and how it can be taught.

Assess, provide feedback and report on learning.

Know learners, their context and how they learn.

Plan, design and deliver effective teaching/training experiences.

Engage with industry, community, regulatory and professional bodies.

- Consistently higher levels of confidence across all domains for TAFE and ACPET respondents compared to the ERTTO respondents (Perhaps a reflection of activities of ERTTOA teachers/trainers?)

Analysis of the detailed responses for the selected items for each of the RTO types shows:

- **Diverse teaching and training practices** which showed commonalities between TAFE and ACPET respondents;
- On **engagement**, ACPET respondents showed more focus on industry; TAFE respondents were more likely to mention a combination of the categories (i.e. educational, professional and industry networks/associations)

Analysis by discipline/industry domain

11 domains

- 1. Agriculture and Animals**
- 2. Arts, Media and Culture**
- 3. Business, Financial Services and IT**
- 4. Community Services**
- 5. Construction and Property (inc. Electrical)**
- 6. Foundation Skills, English Language and General Studies**
- 7. Health and Fitness**
- 8. Manufacturing and Automotive**
- 9. TAE**
- 10. Transport, Infrastructure, Safety and Resources**
- 11. Wholesale, Retail and Personal Services**

Example analysis for Standard 1: Know learners, their context and how they learn

	Importance	Confidence
Agriculture and Animals		
Arts, Media and Culture	Lowest	Lowest
Business, Financial Services, IT		Highest
Community Services	Highest	
Construction, Property, Elec		
Foundation Skills, English Language and General Studies	Highest	Highest
Health and Fitness		
Manufacturing and Automotive	Lowest	Lowest
TAE	Highest	Highest
Transport, Infrastructure, Safety and Resources	Lowest	Lowest
Wholesale, Retail & Personal Services		

Example quotes for 'Plan, design and deliver engaging and inclusive learning experiences'

I like to provide a range of learning experiences which scaffold learning in progressive steps to continue to challenge the students (Foundation Skills- High)

Just giving students a workbook and expecting this to be engaging is stupid and the sooner this old wives tale is debunked the better (Manufacturing - Low)

Using instructional intelligence (Barry Bennett) has provided me with a number of tactics and strategies for student engagement (WRAPS – Mid)

- ... but every industry area had a mixture of more sophisticated and less sophisticated answers

Example quotes for 'Reflect on your practice to improve the learning experience'

Look at assessment – if no one has 'got' that particular question, what do I need to do to improve this? (Community services - High)

I think about the day at the traffic lights on the way home and ponder what could have been done better and then plan how to do it that way (Transport etc - Low)

I have a reflective journal in which I write my reflections, particularly if something really good or bad happens in my class (Construction - Mid)

- The more confident disciplines did not necessarily provide the more sophisticated responses
- Quite a few responses were 'normative' – e.g. 'Reflection is very important in making sure that your delivery suits the students' capabilities and needs' or 'It is extremely important to reflect on your own practices'

Aligning with the industry

Nurse reflection

Every nurse needs to reflect on the day, All students are required to write a clinical reflection whilst on student placement. As the TAFE teacher we need to lead by example – the student needs to see us noting what has worked in the classroom, acting on this and making changes based on feedback.



Carpenter reflection

As a carpenter and joiner I was always attempting to do the best job I could and was basically always looking for a better way to do it. Now as a teacher the drive is still the same, I am always looking for a better way to deliver my course and a better way to connect with my students.

More questions than answers so far...

- How far does confidence in aspects of teaching align with actual teaching practices as displayed in the qualitative comments?

(We have seen that there is a high correlation between perceptions of importance of an item and personal confidence in the item. But there are great differences among different items on actual 'scores' for items)

- How important are the discipline differences compared with individual teacher/trainer differences?
- How much importance should we ascribe to the choice of item on which people chose to comment, within each domain?

..and

- Why does Manufacturing/Automotive score lowest on almost every measure?

‘I place myself in the "shoes" of a learner as having been in that position myself previously.’

- What was the industry area?
- What type of RTO did the teacher work in?

Erica Smith

e.smith@federation.edu.au

Project web site

<http://federation.edu.au/research-vet-quality>

