

Aligning VET Research, Policy and Practice: Impacts and worthiness

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Aligning VET Research, Policy and Practice: Impacts and worthiness

- **Purpose**
- **Research approach**
- **Perspectives on 'impact'**
- **Impact factors**
- **Australian VET research context**
- **Capturing the worth of research**

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Purpose of project

- To draw together material on take up and use of research in VET in Australia and overseas
- To map dimensions of funded VET research in Australia
- To document nature and character of VET research and links with policy and practice

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Research questions

1. What research evidence is there for the impact of research on VET policy and practice?
2. What are the current sources of funding for VET research in Australia?
3. What have been the major areas of VET research output in Australia in the past five years?
4. What are the perceptions of the current role of VET research in influencing VET policy and practice among researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners?

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Research approach

- *Phase 1*: A review of Australian and international literature
- *Phase 2*: Identifying main sources of funding for VET research in Australia
- *Phase 3*: Summarising nature of VET research
 - NCVET publications
 - VET-related theses
 - AVETRA conference papers
 - Selected journals - past 5 years.
- *Phase 4*: Perceptions of impact of VET research
 - semi-structured interviews

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Research approach

33 semi-structured interviews:

- TAFE/RTO 12
- Industry 9
- Universities 7
- Government 5

+ other inputs and discussions incl NCVET 3

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Research impact – key points

- A range of perspectives among stakeholders about what constitutes research, and about worth of particular research outcomes, i.e. about 'impact'.
- Impact occurs through engagement with research and requires action at all points and interaction among the players - dissemination alone is not sufficient.

Perspectives...

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Research impact – perspectives

- 'use' – whether the research has served a particular purpose
- 'influence' – whether the research has had an effect on decision-making

Selby Smith et al (1998, 4)

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Research impact – perspectives

Gallagher (2002, 1):

- Research applications in health and technology have given 'consumers' unrealistic expectations of what might be achieved in educational research
- in education, only modest changes possible through intervention.

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Research impact – perspectives

- Impact often complex and non-linear
- Establishing cause and effect is problematic
- Impacts differ by discipline area
- Time taken for research to benefit end user.

Stanwick, Hargreaves, Beddie (2008)

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Research impact – perspectives

- To talk about the impact of educational research is a gross distortion of the situation in that it takes a uni-directional view: it implies that the researcher is the sole active agent.
- In fact, practitioners and policy-makers are equally (or more) active in creating 'impact'.

Figgis, Zubrick, Butorac, and Alderson (2000, 356)

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Research impact – exploring the process

- Researchers uncover the complexity of learning and make it explicit.
- Practitioners experience the complexity of learning and strive to make it simple enough to shape the next steps in learning.
- These different purposes are like different wheels with cogs moving at different paces.

Cordingly, 2008, 42

Research impact – exploring the process

- Research must always compete with other influences on policy and practice
 - including other forms of evidence like management information, personal experience, peer opinion.
- reliability of research and reputation of researcher are important determinants of its competitive advantage and consequent impact.

Nutley et al (2003, 19)

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Research impact – perspectives

...undertaking a range of research projects in an area, rather than a single project, has a far more significant impact, especially when that work is coming from different angles and offering differing perspectives ...

Robinson (2007, 10)

Summary...

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Research impact – summary

- Relationship between researchers and end-users is influenced by a number of factors that interact to a greater or lesser extent
 - These factors are unpredictable – depend on such factors as how it is disseminated and how potential users choose to engage with it.

SB...

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