

A-NEWS
**The Newsletter of the Australian Vocational Education and Training
Research Association**

December 2011



AVETRA News

From the President

Greetings to all AVETRA members!



As we try and tie up the work and relations we have built up this year it is also time to start some reflection on what has passed. This has been a year of natural disasters and social revolution. As researchers it might place two concepts into our minds; how we can better understand ways of adapting our plans and accelerating learning and training to help responses to crises; and how we can use social media networks to change our modes of data gathering and dissemination of findings.

In VET research land our conference, journals, A-News, Research Today, OctoberVET, Mentoring, Experienced Researcher's workshops, and research teleconferences have provided more AVETRA researcher interaction than ever before - and attracted an increasing membership.

I have been blessed this year with a wonderful executive who give their time to plan and organise for nothing more than a desire to see our community survive and grow. I hope that they all nominate to serve a further two years in January 2012, but inevitably work pressure may mean there are some gaps and this is a great time for you to consider getting more involved in AVETRA activity.

In the past months I found myself in Singapore discussing VET research with Australian colleagues, in a video link discussing student learning with a colleague in Bangalore, in a mail conversation with a funding body in South Africa who had supported delegates to come to our annual conference, and listened to a VET researcher from China describe the system she researches while at the Western Australian OctoberVET event. Our network of learning has always been international, built strongly upon our Australian base. However, increasingly there appears to be more flow of interaction between researchers and reflective practitioners across borders, especially those closer to us. Not so much a Commonwealth, but more a common interest attracts us, and I think in the future this may be an important development area for us and AVETRA.

A few weeks ago I made time for a student when I was rushed by conflicting priorities. I found myself repeating much the same story that I had given in class and which was also supplied in various written forms. "Thank you", she said - "I

just really needed to hear you say it to me - I've realised that is the way I learn, it's important to me". The more we organise ourselves to determine and then deliver the key messages, the more we focus on efficient mass delivery. Her response made me remember how important it is to listen to what is wanted and give some time to differentiating our delivery and dissemination. One look at the continued creep in tertiary education ratios tells us why we are all more pressured than before, and yet, while we get cleverer in orchestrating our teaching and researching, we must preserve time to walk the job, to listen and to try and send out our messages in different ways.



*Llandis Barratt-Pugh
President of AVETRA, Edith Cowan University, December, 2011.*

AVETRA Member News

OctoberVET 2011 wrap-up

2011 was another successful year for OctoberVET – the series of local events in which practitioners and researchers come together to explore VET issues. About 235 people attended nine OctoberVET events throughout October and November. The events addressed a range of current concerns in VET, including the VET workforce, VET learners and national and international developments.

Two new players appeared in the 2011 OctoberVET season, with Sunshine Coast TAFE in Queensland running an ambitious and well organised event, while another event was conducted in Tasmania for the first time ever.

The success of OctoberVET depends on the efforts of convenors and their teams who give up their time to raise the profile of VET and give VET practitioners and researchers valuable opportunities to meet, share views and learn more about the complex VET landscape.

Sincere thanks go to the following convenors for making OctoberVET 2011 possible:

Tracey Singh (Sunshine Coast TAFE)
Rod Mason (Tasmanian Skills Institute)
Wendy De Luca (Charles Sturt University)
Anita Wesney (Canberra Institute of Technology)
Keiko Yasukawa (University of Technology Sydney)
Priscilla Shorne (West Coast Institute of Training)
Llandis Barratt-Pugh (Edith Cowan University)
Alicia Boyle (Charles Darwin University)
Erica Smith (University of Ballarat)
Lauri Grace (Deakin University)

The 2011 October VET schedule, including themes and dates, was as follows:

Views On VET: New Realities, New Perspectives Sunshine Coast TAFE Mooloolaba Campus, 34 Lady Musgrave Drive Mountain Creek	4 October
How to use NCVET to inform policy and practice Skills Institute Drysdale Campus (South), 59 Collins Street Hobart	18 October
Skills for Prosperity: The challenges ahead Charles Sturt University Wine & Food Centre, Wagga Wagga Campus	19 October
Work – A Common Ground Canberra Institute of Technology Sustainability Centre, K Block, Bruce Campus (Hayden Drive Bruce)	26 October
Skills for whose prosperity? Critical agendas for research in workplace learning University of Technology, Sydney	28 October
Current VET Research in WA: A Review by VET Researchers West Coast TAFE, Joondalup	3 November
VET Research Methodologies and International Students and VET Charles Darwin University Main Lecture Theatre, Building Blue, 5.1.01	11 November
VET and Social Inclusion University of Ballarat	11 November
The VET Profession: Beyond 2011 Deakin University, Geelong AND Deakin at Your Doorstep Learning Centres at Sunraysia TAFE – Swan Hill Campus, GO TAFE- Wangaratta Campus, Chisholm TAFE – Mornington Peninsula and Dandenong Campuses, East Gippsland TAFE – Bairnsdale Campus and South West TAFE – Portland Campus	18 November

A selection of reports about the events

1. Sunshine Coast TAFE event

Sunshine Coast TAFE Manager Stakeholder Engagement Tracey Singh said the Institute was proud to be able to offer the 'Views on VET: New Realities, New Perspectives' to the education and business community of the Sunshine Coast.

"This forum reaffirmed our commitment to opening opportunities for building VET research capacity and improving the understanding of changes occurring in VET Institutes," Ms Singh said.

Forum participants gained valuable insight into the research development occurring within the VET sector and also had the opportunity to learn from 2010 Fulbright Professional Scholarship in Vocational Education and Training recipient Mark Harris who was the keynote speaker.

The forum was well attended and participants posted very positive feedback through the online post event survey.

2. *Tasmanian Skills Institute event*

The Tasmanian Skills Institute (TSI) was pleased to be able to host Tasmania's inaugural OctoberVET event which was held on the 18th of October in Hobart at one of the TSI campus locations. Convenor Rod Mason who is TSI's Manager Learning and Development welcomed the 19 participants (which included staff from the TSI, Tasmanian Polytechnic and University of Tasmania) before introducing the presenter, Dr Josie Misko, a Senior Research Fellow at the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) in Adelaide. Josie delivered three sessions. The first was 'Getting to know NCVER research and statistics'. Josie then provided an overview of some of her research findings – 'Doing an apprenticeship: What young people think'; and 'Combining formal, informal and non-formal learning'.

3. *West Coast Institute of Training event*

Co-Convenor Llandis Barratt-Pugh reported that participants were able to learn about the issues for Chinese VET, the dilemmas of casual staff, and how to support trainees with disabilities. The research approach of auto-ethnography was explained, the methods of gaining research partners discussed, and key tips for completing a PhD delivered. Training research in the construction and mining industries was explored, while in contrast we were presented with piloted proposals for gaining feedback for the governance of performing arts training and performance.

Speakers included Llandis Barratt-Pugh (ECU), Natalie Jacques (Central), Zhang Yan (Tianjin University, China), Athol Barrett (ECU), Malcolm Riddock (ECU), Maggi Phillips (ECU), Aine Whelan (ECU), Sandra Cotton (Polytechnic West) and Priscilla Shorne (WCIT).

4. *Charles Darwin University event*

Convenor Alicia Boyle reported that the Social Partnerships in Lifelong Learning Research Centre (SPiLL) and the Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) hosted a successful NT *OctoberVET*. Twenty participants attended in Darwin and six participants gathered via video-conference in Alice Springs.

There were a diverse range of presenters from across CDU and Dr Roslyn Cameron from the University of Central Queensland was a keynote presenter. The day commenced with three presentations on international students and global student mobility by Professor Peter Kell, Head of School of Education, Lorraine Sushames, Acting NT Manager Community Services, Health and

Literacy Division, and Dr Marilyn Kell, School of Academic Language and Learning, all from CDU. The presentations discussed global student mobility in the Asia Pacific, training programs in Timor for soldiers and academic cultures and international students which emerged from contributions made by the presenters to an edited book entitled in the *Global Students Mobility Asia Pacific: Migration, Mobility, Security and the Wellbeing of International Students*.

5. University of Ballarat event

This event was held at the historic University of Ballarat 'School of Mines' campus. Convenor Erica Smith reported that a number of UB staff attended, including TAFE teachers, HE teachers, the equity officer, and staff from the Aboriginal Education Unit, as well as people from external RTOs and organisations for young people. Erica said that the event obviously sparked a great deal of interest among attendees, and offered the following comments from the evaluations: "Excellent for international perspective", "Excellent local case studies" and "Totally unexpected in terms of research insight".

Speakers included Sue Webb (Monash University), Annette Foley (UB) and Erica Smith (UB).

6. Deakin University event

This unique OctoberVET event employed a video conferencing network that connects Deakin University with a number of Victorian regional TAFE institutions under a program called 'Deakin at Your Doorstep'. The format of the event was a structured conversation, taking recent reports and initiatives in relation to the VET workforces as points of departure. Convenor Lauri Grace guided the discussion around issues raised in reports including: *The new deal: Workforce development for Service Industries VET Practitioners*, *The quality of teaching in VET*, the Productivity Commission's *Study of the VET Workforce*, IBSA's *Pathways for VET Educators* as well as the new TAE Training Package. According to Lauri, The conversation was wide ranging and addressed many questions and issues that arise in response to these reports.

Steven Hodge, Deakin University

Research and VET News

A Fair Deal: Apprentices and their employers in NSW - Integrated research report, November 2011

A NSW apprenticeships report was launched recently by the NSW Minister for Education. The report was commissioned in late 2010 by the NSW Board of Vocational Education and Training (BVET).

The BVET research is distinguished from most other research on apprentices in the following ways:

- The research used a market research approach to understand how employers and apprentices think and feel about apprenticeships from the ground up.

The study involved detailed telephone interviews with 1200 apprentices and 500 employers throughout NSW, making it one of the largest such studies undertaken.

- The study identified the importance of a 'fair deal' in underpinning successful apprenticeships in both its qualitative and quantitative phases. The current generation of apprentices understand the 'deal' they are making in taking on an apprenticeship, which is a trade-off between low wages and the opportunity to learn real and valuable skills. Many apprentices are willing to trade short term costs for long term benefits. But the deal must be fair. The report outlines the key elements of a fair deal.
- The study also found that in exploring the apprentice and employer 'market', it was possible to classify employers and apprentices into segments which share key characteristics in common and which differ from other segments. Apprentices fell into four different groups, from the most keen and committed to those who are in the wrong place. Employers fell into three distinguishable groups, from those who do all the right things to those who struggle to work effectively with today's apprentices.

The report is guiding new initiatives in NSW to improve apprenticeship completions. The integrated research report can be found at www.bvet.nsw.gov.au.

Dr Kathy Esson, Executive Officer and Senior Manager, BVET (NSW)

Canadian Apprenticeship Journal (CAJ) Seeking Articles for an International Issue

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum - Forum Canadien sur l'Apprentissage (CAF-FCA) is inviting international and national stakeholders to submit articles on apprenticeship to an issue of the Canadian Apprenticeship Journal. To see past issues of the Journal go to <http://www.caj-jca.ca/index.php/caj-jca>.

Established in 2000, CAF-FCA is a non-profit, multi-partite organisation that plays a major role in apprenticeship and labour market research in Canada. It brings together key players in apprenticeship to influence pan-Canadian apprenticeship strategies and promote apprenticeship as an effective model for training and education. To learn more about the CAF-FCA go to our website at www.caf-fca.org.

International Information-Sharing:

In a global economy, information-sharing is increasingly important as economies become more integrated and labour markets become international in nature. In an effort to learn about different systems, approaches and programs, CAF-FCA will produce a special issue of the Journal. In this issue, it is anticipated that readers will gain insights into the realities of apprenticeship training in a number of geographic and economic contexts.

While it is acknowledged that countries and sectors are unique and a 'one-size solution' is inappropriate, there is an interest among stakeholders in identifying common challenges, establishing a dialogue and sharing information about ongoing skills development initiatives. The issue will provide a unique knowledge-exchange opportunity for apprenticeship stakeholders.

Themes:

Some themes of interest for this issue are:

- Strategies to address unemployment and skills shortages through apprenticeship training
- Barriers to apprenticeship training
- Effective international apprenticeship partnerships/programs
- An overview of specific apprenticeship systems
- The challenges in establishing an apprenticeship program.

CAF-FCA is particularly interested in articles from low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). Countries in the regions of Central America and the Caribbean, Africa, the Middle East and Asia are included in this definition. LMIC authors and/or Canadian organisations working with LMIC partners are welcome to submit articles in addition to other international stakeholders.

Outcomes:

- Provide mutually-beneficial learning opportunities to inform and influence apprenticeship strategies
- Support evidence-based decision-making and apprenticeship policy development
- Enhance apprenticeship training systems around the world, creating access to a highly-skilled global workforce in the skilled trades

Deadline for Submissions: January 31st, 2012

Erica Smith, University of Ballarat

NCVER PhD top-up Scholarships closing soon!

NCVER is offering several PhD top-up scholarships to candidates beginning their post-graduate degrees in 2012, valued at \$5000 per year for three years. The aim of these top-ups is to attract high quality students from disciplines such as economics and the social sciences to undertake research in fields relevant to NCVER's remit.

We invite applications from students who expect to obtain a primary scholarship, such as an Australian Postgraduate Award (APA) or equivalent, and whose PhD research aligns with the national research priorities for tertiary education and training.

Applications close on 20th December, 2011.

For further information or to apply visit the [NCVER website](#). Alternatively, you can contact Dr Tabatha Griffin, Senior Research Officer, NCVER on 08 8230 8431 if you have any questions.

A MINUTE WITH Steven Hodge



Steven is an 'early career researcher' and lecturer in adult, vocational and applied learning at Deakin University. He started his working life as a secondary teacher before moving into the world of vocational education and training. On the way he worked in private and public training organisations in program design, training and management positions.

I first got interested in VET research after commencing a *Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace Training* in 2002. I came to this qualification (ably run by the Onkaparinga Institute of TAFE in Adelaide's south) after formal study in psychology, education and philosophy. I was struck by powerful messages about the role of vocational

education in our society and the distinctive approaches to curriculum and pedagogy that were embedded in the program. The questioning inspired by my experience in the Certificate IV subtly connected with my enduring curiosity about the meaning of work and the way our identities are entwined with the expertise and relationships we develop in the workplace. I am convinced that VET and work are rich fields of inquiry and an exciting focus for the 'big questions' about life and the mind.

Two people who inspired me most to conduct research were Peter Willis, Senior Lecturer in Adult Education at the University of South Australia and Professor Roger Harris from the same institution. Peter and I discovered that we shared an interest in philosophy during a chance encounter in 2005, and he suggested that I might combine my interest in big questions with the focus of my work – I was an RTO manager at the time – through post-graduate research. I didn't pursue this suggestion at first but eventually identified questions related to my work that were robust enough to sustain the years of exploration involved in a research project. I met Roger soon after making the decision to commit to post graduate research. He kindly agreed to supervise my project, which thrilled me because I knew Roger was one of the 'founding fathers' of competency-based training in Australia. Over time I have been inspired by his commitment to research and deeply generous attitude toward new and developing researchers such as myself.

The areas of VET research that interest me most are occupational knowledge and the relationship of workers and learners to it. These areas of interest embrace the structure of vocational expertise, the way it is represented in VET curriculum, the ways workers and learners engage with it, and the way occupational knowledge and personal identity interact.

Research methodologies I use are determined by the questions to be addressed by the research. When I was looking at deep personal change experienced by learners in VET, I used quantitative approaches to identify levels of personal change taking place in a sample of programs, but then used qualitative approaches (grounded theory and narrative methods) to explore the meanings of change within selected programs. I have been favouring qualitative approaches, but I think this is a reflection of the kinds of questions I have been asking.

The most interesting piece of VET research I have conducted to date remains my PhD project which looked at deep personal change in VET programs. What was interesting about that was learning that some students experienced fundamental shifts in the way they looked at work and how these shifts related to the mindsets possessed by expert practitioners in the vocational area the students were about to enter. It was very interesting to examine competent performance in terms of mindsets and worldviews, and to compare this understanding of competence with the way competence is articulated in competency standards.

Currently I am working with my colleague Lauri Grace on a small project that is applying the lens of workplace learning theory to the experiences of new graduate teachers. The practices of graduate teachers have not traditionally been considered as part of the scope of VET research, but any pre-service teacher course is a form of vocational education, and any school is a workplace, so we feel that we are conducting VET research. The project promises to throw light both on workplace learning and the question of how new teachers apply their learning to practice.

Each edition of AVETRA News will feature a special interview with a VET researcher. If you are interested in being featured or you know someone who might – please get in touch with either Sarojni Choy or Phil Loveder.

Conferences and other Events

National Apprenticeship Service England's Third Apprenticeships Seminar - Excellence in Apprenticeships: an International Perspective' 8 February, 2012, London, England

The 'Excellence in Apprenticeships' day is an opportunity to learn from other countries' experience, regardless as to whether they have a long history in Apprenticeships or are just starting to develop and implement their programs. Special speakers at this seminar will be Dr Ursula Scharnhorst, SFIVET, Dr Phillip Grollmann, University of Bremen and Richard Marsh, National Apprenticeship Service. Enquiries to: ingrid.fischer@apprenticeships.gov.uk

Reinvigorating a Quality Apprenticeship and Traineeship System – Boosting attraction through improved pathways, design and delivery, 28-29 February, 2011, Novotel on Collins Hotel, Melbourne

However, in responding to the immediate pressures of the economy and preparing for longer term opportunities, the sector is faced with significant

challenge. Practitioners are currently tasked with improving the effectiveness of pathways, progression models and methods of delivery. Such factors have a marked impact on attraction and retention rates.

In the context of the federal government's response to A Shared Responsibility – Apprenticeships for the 21st Century, this conference will provide insight on the future direction of sector reform.

This conference will address:

- How to strengthen school linkages and other pathways
- Methods for accurately measuring practical demonstration of skills via effective assessment models
- Building a quality accreditation system by overcoming system fragmentation
- Strategies for designing flexible and robust course structure.

15th Annual AVETRA Conference 'The value and voice of VET research – for individuals, industry community and the nation'
Rydges Hotel, Capital Hill, Canberra, 12-13 April, 2012



The conference in 2012 will be held in Canberra around the themes of:

- Economic and industry impacts of VET research
- Social and community impacts of VET research
- VET research and its relationship to policy formulation
- Impact of VET research on learners
- The place and role of new researchers
- The 'voice' of VET research – Whose and who listens?
- Comparative and historical perspectives in VET research

Abstract submissions close 19th December, 2012. More information is available at <http://www.avetra.org.au/annual-conference>.

3rd World UNESCO Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in 14-16 May, 2012 in Shanghai, PRC

China is planning the third World Congress on TVET for April, 2012. The previous congresses were in Melbourne, Australia and Seoul, Korea. More details available at: <http://www.unevoc.unesco.org/archev.php?type=Events>

The Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE) 31st Annual conference, Wilfred Laurier University/University of Waterloo, Ontario, Canada 28 -30 May, 2012

A Call for Papers for the 2012 CASAE Conference, to be held in conjunction with CSSE and CSSHE at the Universities of Wilfred Laurier and Waterloo in Waterloo, Ontario, Canada, has been called. More information at: www.casae-aceea.ca/

2012 RC33 Eighth International Conference on Social Science Methodology, 9-13 July, 2012

The RC33 Eighth International Social Science Methodology will be held in Sydney, Australia. The dates for the conference are 9 - 13 July, 2012. Details at <http://www.acspri.org.au/conference2012>



Adelaide, 11-13 July, 2012 Call for papers

Co-hosted in 2012 with TAFE SA, the 21st staging of NCVER's popular annual conference will be an opportunity to celebrate, collaborate and connect; and as it's their big anniversary, they plan to add some 'frills'.

Eminent international and national keynote speakers include Dr David Finegold, Senior Vice President for Lifelong Learning and Strategic Growth Initiatives at Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey.

The conference program will be staged at TAFE SA's Adelaide City Campus and Adelaide College of the Arts on Light Square in the heart of the Adelaide CBD. Special conference events will be held at other locations around Adelaide. Stay tuned for further details.

A call for papers is now open, with practitioners and researchers, especially early career VET researchers or those new to the VET sector, invited to share their research and knowledge in a range of ways. As well as standard presentations and the pre-conference professional development workshops, this will include a new stream for refereed papers, where successful applicants will submit a paper for peer-review and have it considered for publishing in a book of conference proceedings. Abstracts are due 10th February, 2012 so don't delay as session places are limited!

Further details at: www.nofrills.ncver.edu.au

Recent Publications

Australian employers' adoption of traineeships by Erica Smith, Paul Comyn, Ros Brennan Kemmis, and Andy Smith. *Journal of vocational education and training*. Vol. 63, No. 3, 2011, pp. 363-375.

Traineeships are apprenticeship-like training arrangements that were initiated in Australia in 1985. They were designed to introduce apprenticeship training to a broader range of industries, occupations and individuals; they are

available in occupations outside the traditional trades and crafts. Many companies use them on a large scale, some recruiting their entire shop floor workforce as trainees. This article uses findings from a national project on traineeships in six industry areas to examine the ways in which employers adopt them and the factors which affect their take-up across industries and enterprises.

Vocational education: purposes, traditions and prospects by Stephen Billett. Dordrecht, Netherlands: Springer, 2011. xv, 266 p.

In this book, the author discusses what constitutes vocational education as well as its key purposes, objects, formation and practices. It details the scope and diversity of the sector, its key objectives (i.e. vocations and occupations), its formation and development as an education sector, and the scope of its purposes and considerations in the curriculum. The chapters are as follows: Vocational education: a field and sector of education; Positioning vocational education; Vocations; Occupations; Development of vocational education systems and fields; Purposes of vocational education; Curriculum and vocational education; The provision of vocational education; and Vocational education in prospect.

We are always keen to highlight research being done by our members. If you would like to have a piece of research featured – please get in touch with either Sarojni Choy or Phil Loveder.

About AVETRA

AVETRA is the peak professional association for VET researchers. Its ability to be a sustainable and viable association depends on its membership. Members are urged to continue their membership and to encourage their colleagues to join AVETRA. AVETRA services include:

- An annual VET international research conference
- Two editions of *International Journal of Training Research per annum*
- The quarterly AVETRA e-newsletter with the latest news in the VET sector as well as VET research.
- The new *Research Today* publication twice a year.
- OctoberVET workshops organised by AVETRA members in centres as widely spread as Perth, Darwin, Townsville, Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide.
- The AVETRA website with VET research links and information
- Awards for VET researchers including the joint award with TAFE Directors Australia, the Berwyn Clayton Award, The Ray Barker Award, and the AVETRA Best paper Award.

HELP AVETRA help VET research and join now if you are not a member. Full **\$160** (GST inclusive) and Student memberships **\$80.00** including GST are available.

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