

MONASH University



Scholarship as emergent labour

Higher education teachers in TAFE and the making of scholarship

Fleur Goulding

Professor Terri Seddon

# Introduction and context

- **TAFE to VET to Tertiary**
- **Blurring boundaries**
- **Emergence of mixed-sector TAFE institutions**
  - Senior-secondary
  - VET
  - HE
- **How might this affect the work of teachers?**

# HE in VET: lessons from the literature

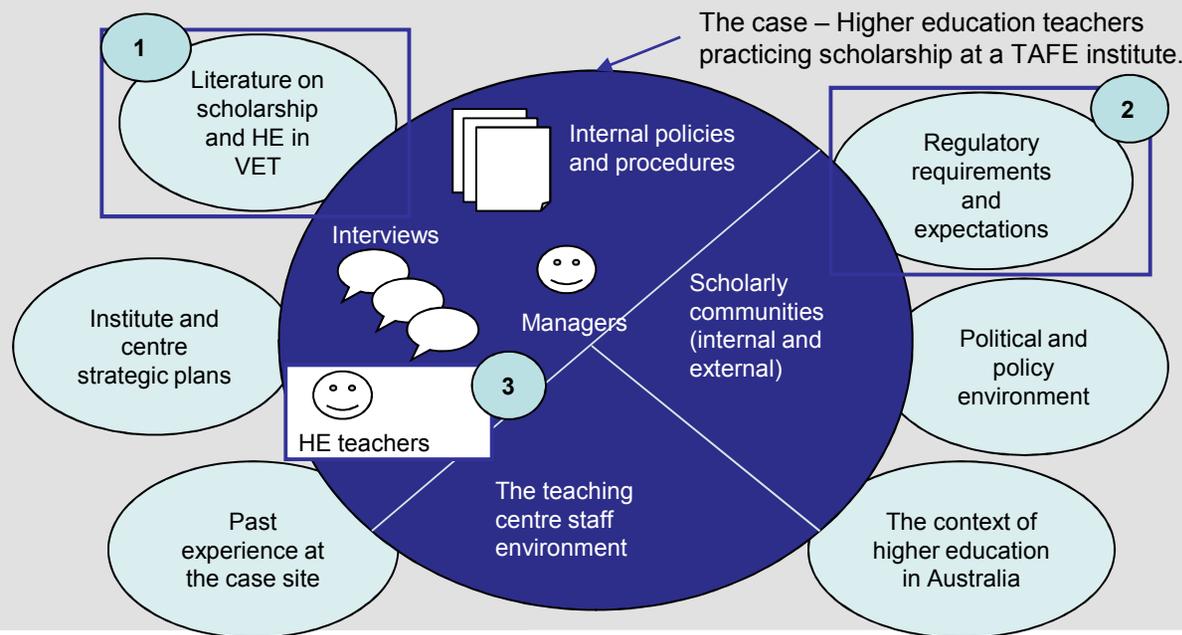
- **Hybrid organisations**
- **Fragmented teacher identities**
  - Vocational background and professional values
  - Strongly rooted in teaching, with weaker disciplinary identification
  - Sectoral bifurcation
- **Teaching staff confront epistemological, pedagogical, industrial and institutional tensions**
- **Scholarship is particularly problematic**
  - Anti-academic culture
  - Incongruent values
  - Time
  - Lack of support and management understanding



# Methodology

- **What is distinctive about scholarship in TAFE?**

- What is the 'official' definition?
- How do teachers define it? What influences this?
- How do they enact these notions?
- What are the dissonances? How do they negotiate this work?



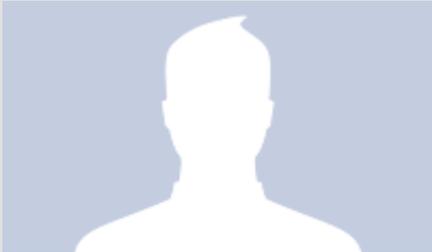
# Defining the 'official' position

- **Scholarship is:**

- ascribed a central position in HE
- conceptualised within HE as cultural, socially constructed and disciplinary
- characterised within VET providers on established norms and traditions
- enabled in VET providers through common understandings and supportive HR practices and policies



# David, Andrew and Sarah



David is the head of higher education within a teaching centre. He provides academic leadership and teaches first and third year. PhD qualified in a field of the performing arts and has held lecturer positions in a range of universities and taught in schools.



Andrew is a performing artist and teaches predominately in HE programs. Previously lecturer and Chair of a university teaching department. Qualified to Masters level, but places great emphasis on his industry experience.



Sarah teaches across VET and HE programs. Previously worked in a science research environment. PhD and post-graduate education qualifications. First experience teaching in an educational institution.



# Merged identities

- **Merging of connections between the discipline, practice of the profession, knowledge of industry and work in this context and teaching and learning.**



*To teach in higher education you must have some industry behind you. You must be up to date with what's happening in industry and have industry contacts for your area.*



*Musicians tend to be more purist I think, engaged with the discipline. Most of us would see ourselves as composers who teach, musicians who teach .... not as teachers. Whereas in other fields you might find people saying 'I'm actually an economics teacher and occasionally I publish an article.*



*I feel I've got so much experience, basically I'm giving them [students] on a plate what I wish I'd been given at their age ... I feel that's an important thing that I have, the currency, and I've sort of worked out a lot of stuff.*



# Defining scholarship: a fusion of orientations

- **Scholarship is maintaining currency in teachers' professional field or discipline and remaining connected to the profession**



*I just see it as an extension, a way that I can keep up to date in my field, a way that I can still be known in the field.*

- **Scholarship informs teaching and should serve the applied focus of the programs**



*It's about what our institutes are in to, which is diversity and connection with industry ... because this is an applied degree, teachers have to be able to do what they talk about.*

**Scholarship supports professional learning**



*I think all the good teachers say they learn like their students and good students with good teachers, they learn together.*

**Scholarly activities driven by professional biographies**



# Exercising agency

- **Restrictive workloads**



*Realistically if you push for development, for marking, for teaching, for all those other things we do, what's going to come down the end of the list, it's going to be scholarship. It's just one of those things, there's not enough time to do everything.*

- **Managerial cultures exacerbate the tensions**



*If I never wrote another a piece of music again in my life, nobody here would give a rat's arse. If I don't get a report in, I'll get raked over the coals. The priorities are totally wrong.*



*Work here is productive if its in front of a computer.*

- **However, scholarship is occurring and distinctive orientations are developing**
- **Social constructions largely occurs outside the institute**



# Forming hybrid cultures

- Evidence of adaptation, resistance and filtering of expectations
- Disciplinary traditions make it difficult to frame institute-wide policies in a useful way
- Opportunities for institute's to involve emerging academic communities
- Call for more recognition of the capacity for HE staff to shape their direction and practices



*I think scholarship has to develop from the ground up not the top down. It has to stem from what happens in the centres*



*I think the people that make the real decisions need to get back down to the grass roots a little bit and listen and talk and find out what actually goes on.*



*I think the institute tries to make a culture, but perhaps it needs to come down more to the degree level to make their own scholarship or research culture.*



# Points of emerging interest

- **HE teachers in TAFE have the capability and commitment to contribute to the scholarship within the discipline and teaching and learning, but they lack the capacity and support to do so**
- **Existing paradigms are being challenged**
- **Questions over who supports, manages and evaluates this work are becoming contested**
- **Policy makers and regulators need ways to frame and support scholarship in VET providers**
- **The practice and defence of scholarship by HE teachers in TAFE flags a new problematic for future enquiry**



# Acknowledgements and references

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