

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



September 2011

AVETRA News

From the President

Greetings to all AVETRA members!



We emerge from the first half of a very busy year with our conference by now embedded memory, three major national reports on VET being digested by policy makers, and the budget changes beginning to boost VET activity. There is no doubt that the rest of the year will see VET maintain a high visibility.

We have a volatile economy, where major projects demand mass skills in distant corners of this great land of ours and yet there are major manufacturing closures leaving many workers redundant in other areas. The skills shortage remains a topic, but is being increasingly translated into a debate about where skills are needed in terms of location and industry.

We have to recognise that less than 12% of our workforce is now involved in making things. This current skills debate is therefore also about the changing balance between sectors of our economy in both the medium and long term. Coupled to this, there will be on-going argument about skilled migrant both in terms of meeting immediate job needs or displacing local workers, depending on our political perspectives.

Bubbling underneath will be the continued federal-state wars about funding and control, moving the sector increasingly toward a more national system, with much posturing and screaming! Perhaps importantly for us, though not so newsworthy, will be the reshaping taking place in the national governance of the VET system as the new bodies of acronyms take shape as real organisations and people, and begin to direct the quality and initiatives that will shape VET as a partner in the tertiary education system during this decade.

What does this mean for us as researchers? As always it means that the detail we learned from past studies is lost as the world of VET practice moves on to new ventures. However, it is a good time to reflect and distil what was learned from those studies that can be used to guide practice in another decade and with different shaping forces. In addition, it means we will have to be nimble and fleet footed as researchers, with more of an eye to the changing structures around us. As we all know, long projects often uncover critical relations of practice but may also produce results just when those initiatives are being wound up and displaced.

I would suggest that research projects need to be designed as always around the dilemmas of practice and knowledge debates, but also with an eye on our current changing structural and political environment. Sometimes our outcomes may be serendipity and hit at the right time and the right place.

I think it is at least in our power to plan our ventures so that we are linking our local field work to areas of policy debate that may be enduring and be sustained so that our research might make a future contribution.



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

AVETRA Member News



October is just around the corner and so is the season of OctoberVET! This is the name given to a series of events in local communities designed to showcase VET research and stimulate thinking about VET. OctoberVET events can be seminars, interactive workshops or informal conversations which focus on recent and topical VET issues and/or projects.

OctoberVET broadens the activities of AVETRA beyond its annual conference in one location, to provide State and Territory-based forums for a wide range of community participants. VET researchers and practitioners in each community organise the particular location, timing, focus and specific activities for their event. For more information, go to <http://www.aveutra.org.au> and select the OctoberVET pages.

Convenors have been busy liaising with their local VET communities, identifying themes with local relevance, and attending to organisation. So far we have details of seven events to share with you. Details of other events being planned for Canberra, Adelaide, Hobart and Melbourne will be circulated when they become available.

There is still time to put on an OctoberVET event in your area!

Get in touch with the National OctoberVET Coordinator, Steven Hodge (steven.hodge@deakin.edu.au or (03) 5227 1489, if you have any ideas or questions about running an OctoberVET event.

Details of confirmed events:

Theme & Location	Date & Times	For more information contact
Views On VET: New Realities, New Perspectives Sunshine Coast TAFE Mooloolaba Campus, 34 Lady Musgrave Drive Mountain Creek	4 October 8.00m-4.00pm	Tracy Singh tracey.singh@det.qld.gov.au
Skills for Prosperity: The challenges ahead Charles Sturt University Wine & Food Centre, Wagga Wagga Campus	19 October 10.30am-2.30pm	Wendy DeLuca wdeluca@csu.edu.au
Skills for whose prosperity? Critical agendas for research in workplace learning University of Technology, Sydney	28 October Times to be confirmed	Keiko Yasukawa keiko.yasukawa@uts.edu.au
Current VET Research in WA: A Review by VET Researchers West Coast TAFE, Joondalup	3 November 12.30pm-4.00pm	Llandis Barrett-Pugh l.barratt_pugh@ecu.edu.au Priscilla Shorne priscilla.shorne@wcit.wa.edu.au
The VET Profession: Beyond 2011 Deakin University, Geelong	4 November Times to be confirmed	Lauri Grace lauri.grace@deakin.edu.au
VET Research Methodologies and International Students and VET Charles Darwin University Main Lecture Theatre, Building Blue, 5.1.01	11 November 8.30am-3.15pm	Alicia Boyle alicia.boyle@cdu.edu.au
VET and Social Inclusion University of Ballarat TBA	11 November 9.15am-1.00pm	Erica Smith e.smith@ballarat.edu.au

Reviewing Processes for the 2012 AVETRA Conference

The Conference Committee and a number of members of the AVETRA Executive have been working on making the guidelines for the submission of abstracts for the Conference, and the subsequent reviewing of papers, a more transparent and clear process for all involved. We have approached this task by collecting samples from other research organisations and from other publications, and by selecting those guidelines and criteria that have particular relevance for AVETRA.

The review process is a contested one as the professional integrity and expertise of the reviewer needs to be balanced against the need for transparency and accountability. This is particularly the case if you are the person (or persons) who are submitting a paper for peer review. Information and helpful feedback on your work is critical. It is also the case

that AVETRA is committed to supporting the work of new researchers in the field. In this case peer review needs to be a supportive and encouraging experience where feedback is provided in constructive and capacity building ways.

We have identified the critical components that go to make an acceptable paper for the Conference. We have separated these so that the essential criteria are explicit for authors. These include: a clear and focussed introduction, a conceptual framework that is relevant and coherent, a research design and methodological framework that is clear and justified, data analysis that is systematic and logical, a discussion that relates to all the preceding criteria, and a conclusion that is clear and focussed. The paper should make a contribution to the body of knowledge about VET and the usual protocols relating to spelling, grammar and referencing apply.

When the work is completed it will be available for all authors on the AVETRA web site in preparation for the submission of abstracts. We are hopeful that this work will encourage more researchers to contribute their work to the Conference by making the abstract and paper review processes clearer and less daunting for everyone. It is also the case that AVETRA Executive members are available to provide support if this is needed.

The Conference in 2012 will be held in Canberra and we are hoping for a great turn out of new and experienced researchers who can all benefit from the exchange of ideas and research results. See you there!

Roslin Brennan-Kemmis

AVETRA's Online Membership Portal

We are pleased to announce that AVETRA members can now pay their subscriptions online via credit card on the AVETRA website!

AVETRA has developed a new 'members area' of the website where you will be able to update your subscription details and pay online via credit card for future subscriptions.

In addition, the latest AVETRA publications such as 'ANews' and 'Research Today' can also be viewed online exclusively by members only in the members section.

If you are interested, go to <http://www.aveutra.org.au/amember/> to access the member's only section. You would have received your log-in and password from the AVETRA Secretariat earlier this month, but if you are having any problems logging in please don't hesitate to contact them on the details below.

Please sign-up a member today and encourage them to Join AVETRA by applying online at <http://aveutra.org.au/membership/how-to-join>.

Doug Wiles

Vietnam fellows attend AVETRA Conference



The University of Newcastle, School of Education and their partner in Vietnam, Can Tho University were successful in receiving funds from AusAID to bring eight Fellows from Vietnam to Australia this year. The Fellows are from the School of Education at Can Tho as well as Dong Thap University, and Dong Thap Technical Vocational High School in Vietnam.

The Australian Leadership Awards (ALA) Fellowships aim to develop leadership, address priority regional development issues, and build partnerships and

linkages between Australian organisations and partner organisations in developing countries.

The Fellows' focus is on reform of vocational education and training in the Mekong Delta Region of Vietnam. They also wanted to look at particular development issues such as quality of vocational education delivery, teacher support and strengthening the linkage between technical vocational educational institutes and industries, businesses and the community in their region.

Attending the AVETRA conference, held in Melbourne this year was a great start to the Fellowship. The conference provided such a broad landscape of VET in Australia and was definitely a springboard for developing ideas and meeting colleagues from VET organisations in Australia. A special welcome for international delegates from the President of AVETRA was very well received. Many other Australian organisations welcomed the Fellows through their doors during their three week stay and shared their knowledge and experience. We are most grateful and proud of the VET community in Australia for their generosity.

The partnership will continue as the Fellows have recently taken up membership of AVETRA and look forward to an ongoing relationship with all their Australian colleagues, including Ruth Wallace, the current Vice President of AVETRA, who will be visiting Vietnam later this year to collaborate with the Fellows in looking at a range of areas including innovative and sustainable VET program delivery.

Photo above: AVETRA conference dinner: from L to R: Dr De De V. Nguyen (Vice Rector, Dong Thap University), Ms Thao Ngo (Can Tho University), Dr Barry McKnight (Conjoint Fellow, School of Education, University of Newcastle), Ms Diem Huynh (Can Tho University), Dr Alicia Boyle (AVETRA Executive), Dr Ruth Wallace (AVETRA Executive)

Donna Hensley, School of Education, University of Newcastle

Research and VET News

VET teacher-training in Australia and its links to research

This article provides a little information about the VET teacher-training effort in Australian universities and how it intersects with VET research. Around a third of Australian universities provide VET teacher-training courses, better equipping VET practitioners to undertake their complex and demanding work.

Why is teacher-training of interest or importance to a research organisation? There are several reasons.

Universities can very rarely afford to employ people to research only; academics also teach on courses. Thus the VET research effort from universities is undertaken mainly by academics who also teach on VET teacher-training courses, mostly in Faculties of Education, with a smaller number in Business schools. In school-teaching, every practitioner in the public system is required to undertake a degree, and so there are very large numbers of students in universities, large bodies of academics in that area and hence a great number of potential researchers. In VET teaching, there is currently no formal requirement for a degree to practice, and so the numbers of students and hence of VET academics are small. It is important for AVETRA to nurture this small population of academics and to do what it can to grow it.

Teacher-training at universities is also a way of growing the population of practitioner-researchers; with a university degree or post-graduate qualification behind them, practitioners are much better equipped to understand the nuances of the debates in VET and to undertake research. In their studies, whether face-to-face or on-line, practitioners debate among themselves, and inform each other and their lecturers.

Finally, VET teacher-training is a prime way of disseminating the large and high-quality body of Australian and international VET research to current and future practitioners. It's arguably the most important method of dissemination, and one that is often overlooked in debates about research impact.

The universities delivering VET teacher-training have now gathered into a working group of the Australian Council of Deans of Education. This group has been active during 2011 and is holding a national workshop in September, part of which involves a stakeholder forum where VET and industry will be telling us what they would like to see in university VET teacher-training courses.

For further information about the initiative or about VET teacher-training courses at universities throughout Australia, please contact Erica Smith on (03) 5327 9665 or e.smith@ballarat.edu.au

Erica Smith

Excellence and impact: nominate top VET researcher for award

Nominations are still open for the 2012 Vocational Education and Training (VET) Researcher of the Year Award.

Sponsored by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER), the award aims to recognise a VET researcher's significant contribution to policy or practice in the national training sector.

Dr Tom Karmel, Managing Director, NCVER said the award aims to promote VET research.

"We shouldn't underestimate the importance of good research, nor its impact. From governments to providers, from teachers to students, there is a need for research that improves our understanding of education and training and its links with the broader economy and our society", said Dr Karmel.

"I invite nominations for researchers who have made an outstanding contribution in this area".

Nominations for the award close Friday 30 September 2011.

The 2012 award winner will be announced in December 2011 and presented with a cash prize of \$5000 to support their research career. The winner will also be invited to deliver a paper as a keynote address at next year's 21st National VET Research Conference.

Copies of the award guidelines are available from:

www.ncver.edu.au/research/opportunities.html

Phil Loveder

A MINUTE WITH Hugh Guthrie



Hugh is a Principal Research Consultant at NCVER. He has been with NCVER for nearly 25 years now, having joined the organisation in 1987 from the Education Unit at RMIT University. He has 30 years experience as a researcher in the VET sector and was one of the founding members of AVETRA. He is about to take up a six-month position as a Research Fellow working in Berwyn Clayton's centre at Victoria University.

I first got interested in VET research in the early 1980s when I moved from Flinders University to RMIT. Funnily enough I applied for a job at the TAFE National Centre for Research and Development, NCVER's predecessor, but was told I did not know enough about vocational education. WELL! Then I discovered this wonderful thing called TAFE on moving to RMIT, and worked on a range of research and evaluation projects as well as consultancies. Most were concerned with research which underpinned the development of teaching programs and curricula. It was fascinating.

Two people who inspired me most to conduct research were Norm Henry, the Director of the Education Unit at RMIT and Peter Thomson, the deputy director at the TAFE National Centre. Both were inspirational and it was Peter in particular who eventually had me head hunted to the National Centre. There, and over the years, I have had the privilege of working on a diversity of research projects related to the myriad of issues confronting the VET sector and the many who depend on it. This has been a rewarding experience because at NCVER you need to master breadth, not so much depth. That has a value. And I have met and worked with so many interesting people along the way.

The areas of VET research that interest me most are the VET workforce, its work and professional development as well as VET program design and the associated teaching, learning and assessment processes. More recently, I have got more involved in international education issues.

Research methodologies I use are generally qualitative, but I enjoy working with others to look at the richer picture mixing the methods can bring. Working at NCVER has helped me value the data that NCVER and other organisations hold, and how that can be mixed, matched and used. What I enjoy most are methodologies that help you take the pulse and judge the health of policy and practice. But that is the evaluator in me coming out!

The most interesting piece of VET research I have conducted is a hard call, but I think it would have to be the work on initial teacher training that has just been published. It has wound up being so timely, and it has been heartening to see the interest in it from its earliest days. It has also made me realise that we have still only just scratched the surface of how VET's teachers and trainers are recruited and developed. It also took me back to some work I was involved with in the early 1990s when the TAFE National Centre conducted a national review of TAFE teacher preparation and development.

Currently I am working with Berwyn to look at the feasibility of establishing a national VET professional body that was proposed in Leesa Wheelahan and Gavin Moodie's report on VET teacher quality, and the forms such a body might take.

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

WorldSkills London 2011, 19 September – 9 October, 2011.

The world's largest international skills Competition is in London.

Around 150,000 visitors are expected to attend the Competition, which takes place from 5-8 October at ExCeL London. Visitors will be able to see 1,000 talented young people from across the globe battle it out to be the world's best in 46 different skills competitions – ranging from mobile robotics, computer-aided design and engineering to landscape gardening.

This huge international event will provide a unique, amazing and inspiring experience. As well as seeing skills in action, visitors will be able to 'Have a Go' at different jobs and careers; get expert careers information, advice and guidance; and visit the 'Make it Happen' interactive exhibition provided by top employers, training providers and career organisations.

In the lead up to the event, the WorldSkills London 2011 'Have a Go' campaign aims to provide one million opportunities for people across the UK to try a new skill. Have a Go is a fun, interactive way of getting people involved in skills, culminating in a three-week skills festival from 19 September to 9 October.

Find out more about WorldSkills London 2011 by visiting the following website"
<http://www.worldskillslondon2011.com>

AUSTAFE 2011 Conference, 12 – 14 October 2011, Novotel Canberra, ACT.

The '20-20 Vision' conference will explore what the future holds for the VET and Tertiary sectors in Australia. A range of International and National speakers will address the impact of future changes. Further details at: <http://www.austafe.edu.au/news/20-20-vision-2011-austafe-national-conference-canberra-12-14th-october-2011/0ed9d701-0148-4867-9875-660164f2b833>

Australasian Association for Institutional Research (AAIR) Forum "Let the sunshine in", 9-11 November, 2011, Sea World Resort, Gold Coast.

This year's forum will focus on engaging and challenging perceptions about what is and what will be as institutions continue to move through these interesting times. The

Forum will also include the AAIR Special Interest Groups to provide focus and support for their members. **More details at:** <http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/aaair2011/index.php>

Australian Training Marketing Association conference (ATMA), 9-10 October, 2011, William Angliss Conference Centre, Melbourne

Explore and discover ideas to adapt, respond and thrive in the highly competitive Vocational Education and Training (VET) market. ATMA Survival of the Fittest provides the opportunity to learn from best practice marketing and business development activities to best position VET Providers in the current climate. Further details at: <http://www.atmaltd.com.au/conference/2011>

3rd Annual Vocational Education Summit, 21 - 22 November 2011 Rendezvous Hotel Melbourne

The summit will discuss how the VET sector can retain its identity within multi sector arrangements, highlight case studies on successful engagement with industry, address the role of foundation skills in VET to ensure transferable skills and provide insights into the right VET models to ensure workforce needs are met. Details are available at: <http://www.iir.com.au/conferences/education/vocational-education-summit>

7th Research Work and Learning Conference, Shanghai, China Normal University, Shanghai, PRC, 4-7 December, 2011

The goal of the conference is to facilitate communication between scholars and practitioners in the field of researching work and learning and its relevant areas across the globe. This conference will contribute significantly to the relevant academic knowledge production, the development of graduate education, and the professionalization of the field. More information about this conference is available at: <http://www.rwlecnu.org>

Society for Research into Higher Education (SRHE), Positive futures for higher education; connections, communities and criticality, 7-9 December, 2011 Celtic Manor Hotel, Newport Wales U.K. and New Researchers' conference 6-7 December, 2011

The 2011 SRHE Annual Research Conference will be held on 7- 9 December 2011 and, by popular request from previous delegates, is returning to the Celtic Manor Resort near Newport in South Wales. Celtic Manor, set in 1400 acres of parkland in the stunning Welsh USK Valley, is one of the finest conference venues in Europe offering state of the art conference facilities, accommodation for all conference delegates and extensive and exclusive spaces for delegates to network. The conference will be preceded by a newer researchers' conference. More details at: <http://www.srhe.ac.uk/conference2011>

3rd World UNESCO Congress on Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) in April 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 as they become available.

2012 RC33 Eighth International Conference on Social Science Methodology

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>

Recent Publications

Saito, M and Capelle, Frank van, 2011, Monitoring the quality of education: exploration of concept, methodology, and the link between research and policy. Bradford, England: Emerald Group Publishing.

The main aim of this chapter is to argue that a sound conceptualization and methodology for measuring the quality of education is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition for establishing a link between research and policy to improve the quality of education. The following elements have been provided to support this argument: (1) a literature review of the different concepts and methods of measuring the quality of education that are in place internationally, as well as their importance; (2) a UNESCO desk review of 35 developing countries to compare the way educational quality is featured and monitored in National Education Sector Plans (NESP); and (3) case studies of two developing countries focusing on the implementation of research to measure the quality of education, its impact, and the link between research and policy. It was found that the quality of education is recognized as an important factor in most NESP, but it has not been defined, measured, or interpreted in a consistent way. Furthermore, while sophisticated and innovative methodologies have already been developed to measure the quality of education, the processes of linking research results with policy still seem to be at a developmental stage. This is a challenge not only for researchers and policy makers, but also for development partners to ensure that (i) policy and planning become more firmly grounded in objectively verifiable scientific evidence and (ii) through its impact on policy and planning, research leads to improvements in the quality of education.

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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