



From trade teacher to critically reflective practitioner:

The relationship between theory and occupational identity formation in TAFE teachers

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What we looked at

How do you get from “tradie” to “teacher”?



We examined:

- How their past and trade experience informed their teaching (meta theory)
- How their understanding of learning theory was developed through Diploma VET Practice (pedagogical theory)
- How the trade teachers embed theory into their practice (theory in practice)



Methodology

Small focus group and follow up interviews.

Teachers from

- building
- automotive
- Engineering
- hospitality



Meta theory

All were from apprenticeship model trades.

All viewed themselves, first as trades people, then as teachers.

“I am a chef who is, at the moment teaching in TAFE...If I’m talking to another chef, I would not tell them I was teaching because they might think I am a home eco teacher or something”



Views on teachers

“I didn’t think much of teachers from the word go. Don’t even like thinking of myself as a teacher. I’d prefer to call myself a worn-out tradesman or something”

“My wife is the bread winner, she’s the professional”



“They have become professional teachers – focussing on the teaching elements – they’re not looking at everything that’s changing. We need to stay updated and current. We’ve got a lot of people who aren’t interested ... they just want to be teachers.”



The tension of identities

“We do two jobs. We go out and we work in a trade for 20 or 30 years, but then we come here and we’re also a teacher as well”

There existed a complex meta theory in opposition of the language of the academy.

Ghosts of identity past, present and future.

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Engaging with pedagogy

“Why do we use that word when we can just say teaching? Can’t we just call it teaching?”

“I see my mentor ... he will understand all those sorts of things and he can translate it to the way I can learn. He’ll dumb it down I suppose”

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Communities of practice

Diploma cohort as a community of practice

They take theory back to their departments, pull it apart within their individual communities of practice, to reflect, contextualise and embed practice

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Identity transformation

Intended to be about theory into practice, our study revealed that it was essentially about identity transformation through reflection in community.

From tradie to teacher to critically reflective practitioner.



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