

Aligning Participants, Policy and Pedagogy: Traction and Tensions in VET Research

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How to improve competency completion rate in VET?

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How to improve competency completion rate?

- While the recent financial crisis has perplexed the minds of the world governments the low level of completion rates has occupied the minds of VET educators and policy makers.
- While as per AQTF 2007, Quality Indicators, i. e., employer satisfaction, learner engagement and competency completion rate underpin an evidence-based and outcomes-focused approach to quality assurance in Australian VET, the above question remains to be answered.
- This paper argues that the answer to above question lies in the Kangan report of 1974.

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Shift of Emphasis

- The Kangan report (1974) envisages a major shift of emphasis and abandons the narrow view that technical colleges not only pursue the needs of industry but rather adopt a broader perspective to meet the needs of people as individuals
- This paper aims to explore the needs of the learners in VET, that when met, would assist to boost competency completion rate

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Budget and contestability

- In spite of VET budget that continues to decline from 8.8% in 2007/8 to 8.4% in 2011/12, in the total education budget,
- The ideological commitment to competition and contestability in the training market is on the increase.
- According to Budget papers the institutes delivering quality and most relevant training to employers and industry should not be excluded from competing for government funding (Australian Government, 2008)
- In this way, competition in a more contestable training market has been upheld by Government

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What are the factors contributing to Non-completion?

Based on the available literature, some of the main reasons influencing non-completion can be summarized as follows:

- Wrong choice of course
- unpleasant working conditions
- poor quality training
- lack of support
- low wages
- Poor preparation
- Lack of readiness
- Lack of commitment

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The Questions?

- The questions that remain to be answered are:
- Firstly, why under the influence of these factors some students would still complete their courses and,
- Secondly, whether high non-completion rates have any correlation with the above factors?

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Findings

- Non-completion has potential correlation to wage structures (Smith Family report, 2006)
- Although this correlation is true, however increasing wages can go part way to improve completion rates and require further search for answers (Snell and Hart, 2008)
- Non-completers and completers have provided more or less identical and similar responses (Snell and Hart 2008).
- It is necessary to dig deeper for some answers which might be implicit in the differences of these two cohorts.

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Snapshot of those in Training produced a significant finding

- Snell and Hart (2008) provided a snapshot of those in-training who were likely to complete. These students possessed a set of excellent motivating factors that prevent them from withdrawal
- Such as, desire to remain employed, the desire to obtain a certificate to secure employment believing that the training would help them to secure future employment.
- This finding is significant and suggests that the desire and beliefs gave this cohort the required attitudes towards completion of their studies

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It can be concluded that:

- It can be concluded that the factors influencing non-completion are lack of motivating factors, desires and beliefs that supports the attitudes for success and achievements.

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HLR asserts that the following Characteristics move far beyond Vocational knowledge:

- **Personal discipline;**
- **Responsibility;**
- **Willingness to take risks;**
- **Loyalty;**
- **Team spirit;**
- **Curiosity;**
- **Learning continuously; and**
- **Management of motivation, emotion and desire**
- **move far beyond vocational knowledge as traditionally understood” (Chappell et al, 2003:9).**
- **These types of attributes are part and parcel of emotional intelligence (EI) (Goleman, 1996)**

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EI, Academic Achievement and Attributes-focused approach

- **Emotional Intelligence (Goleman, 1996) is claimed to be positively related to academic achievement, occupational success and satisfaction (Mathews et al, 2004),**
- **This supports the argument for a learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused approach in vocational education throughout TAFE / VET policy reforms.**

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Important attributes contributing to learners success

- As it was referred to earlier, the desire to be successful (Snell and Hart, 2008, Chappell et al, 2003) and individual's motivation (Uren, 2001) are important attributes contributing to learners' success for completion.
- The fact that motivational factors are important has been further confirmed in occupational settings where a bewildering array of emotional and social competencies have been claimed to be crucial for success

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Completion and Training are closely inter-related

- Another study in the UK (Higgs, 2004) on correlation between EI elements and performance in the call centres found that conscientiousness, emotional resilience, motivation and interpersonal sensitivity attitudes were the most frequently mentioned attributes for recruitment.
- Given that attributes-focused is an important dimension of training, this paper argues that the completion rates and training are closely inter-related.

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How to plan and achieve the higher completion rates

- Kangan emphasized that it is important to develop learners as individuals
- This was taken by High Level Review to emphasize a learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused approach for VET
- This paper argues that the VET system urgently requires that an inventory of the required attributes that are necessary for an attribute-focused approach be prepared and included in the qualifications similar to employability skills as the new order in vocational education requires the integration of all three constituents of competence, i.e., knowledge, skills and attributes.

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Attribute Focused Learning needs to be adopted

- As Chappell et al (2003) observe, these changes in education and training have been labeled by some researchers, for example, (Ball 1994; Grubb 1996; Symes & McIntyre 2000) the 'New Vocationalism (NV)'. High Level Review (Chappell et al., 2003) has clearly asserted that in the new paradigm (NV) learning has taken the focus of learner centered, work centered and attribute focused.
- In other words, attributes have been given a prime position at the same level of the learner-centeredness and work-centeredness.
- There have been references to attributes, attitudes and dispositions in the VET literature. How to differentiate between them is explained next.

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Skill, Attribute, Attitude and disposition

- a *skill* is the ability to do something well, usually gained through experience and training;
- an *attribute* is a quality, property, or characteristic of somebody or something;
- an *attitude* is a way of thinking or behaving, and
- a *disposition* is a person's usual mood or temperament or an inclination or tendency to act in a particular way.

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Employers are looking for a 'good fit'

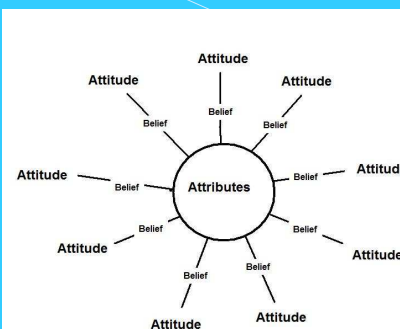
- Both the employee and the employer are likely to be most satisfied when a worker's skills, attributes and dispositions are a 'good fit' (Allen Consulting Group, 2006:12) for that job and that workplace.
- (Corsini and Auerbach, 1996), the attributes are connected to attitudes by beliefs.

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Figure 1 – Relationship of attributes, beliefs and attitudes



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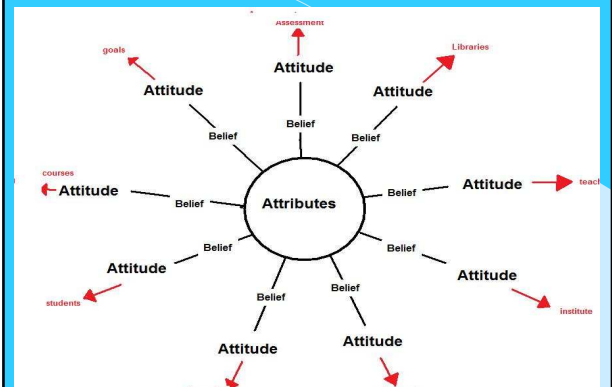
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Attributes are what we are

- While attributes are what we are,
- the beliefs are what give the attitudes their direction, i.e., the dispositions.
- The dispositions are illustrated as arrows, in Figure 2,

Figure 2 –attitudes and dispositions towards others and things



Ownership of attributes

- Learners need to own their attributes as the foundation in this model
- Then, they are able to demonstrate the right balance of attitudes towards a great number of entities, such as their studies, their goals, their teachers, other individuals and things in their lives.

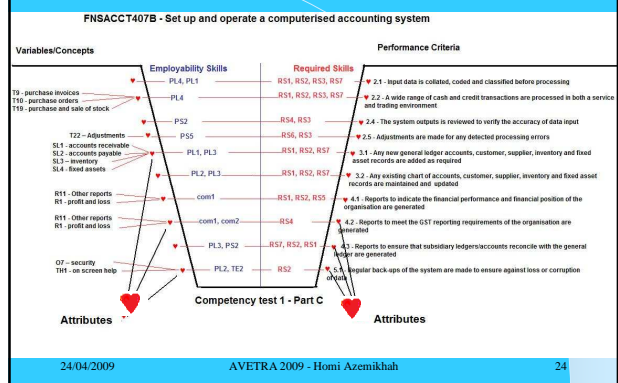
Learning becomes attribute-focused

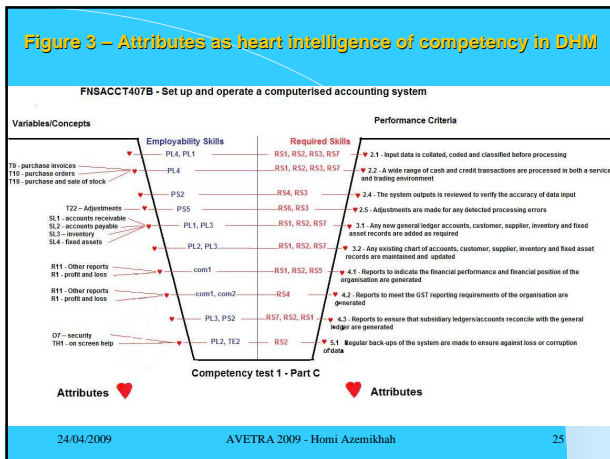
- Learning becomes attribute-focused when, in addition to learner-centered and work-centered dimensions, the learning also takes the attribute-focused dimension.
- For example, while in Double Heuristic Method (DHM), proposed by Azemikhah (2005b), skills are the bridge that integrates the knowledge to performance, attributes can be clearly illustrated in the model as the hearts joining skills to performance criteria as well as to variables (Figure 3).

Double Heuristic Method (DHM)

- DHM is a two-step (double heuristics) model that has been developed, using a 'W' diagram as an extension of a 'V' diagram proposed by Gowin & Alvarez (2005). DHM is a knowledge-integration device. Its purpose is to construct knowledge in a holistic manner. The integration process involves all the constituents of competence (propositional knowledge and dispositions) and their relationship to performance (procedural knowledge). In other words, DHM aims to integrate propositional knowledge, procedural knowledge as well as the dispositions.

Figure 3 – Attributes as heart intelligence of competency in DHM





Intelligence

- The attributes that play the role of heart intelligence in the competency development process are illustrated as heart in the above diagram.
- The heart intelligence in this context is used as equivalent to emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1996).
- Chappell et al (2003) assert that a contemporary VET pedagogy is one characterised as being more learner-centred, work-centred and attribute-focused and further that
- “the pedagogical processes chosen have the greatest influence on whether particular attributes are achieved”

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Human attributes are far beyond vocational knowledge (Chappell et al, 2003)

- It is the confluence of attributes of problem solving, communication, teamwork and
- Continuous learning, Curiosity, motivation, risk taking brings a richness to learning in the VET sector (Chappell et al, 2003:4).
- Personal discipline; responsibility; willingness to take risks; loyalty; team spirit; curiosity; learning continuously; and the management of motivation, emotion and desire are vital for learners success

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In attribute-focused learning, the individual qualities are enriched by:

- Developing appropriate attributes that collectively are called in this research as ‘the heart intelligence of competency development’.
- By developing the appropriate attributes the learners’ attitudes will change and keep them motivated during the course of their study to completion.

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Attributes and attitudes to be self-tested

- Hager and Gillis (1995:65) have commented that “excluding attitudes and values that are specified with the performance criteria undermine validity”
- Both the observation and self-report are recommended as the most appropriate approaches for the measurement and assessment of attitudes and attributes

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Conclusion and Recommendations

- Attributes are the heart intelligence of Competency development
- Without developing the heart intelligence of competency, i. e. , the attributes, by the learners, not only will the completion rates continue to decline, but also
- Productivity of the graduates on the job after the completion of studies will be poor
- Recommendations to policy makers:**
- An inventory of the required attributes that are necessary for an attribute-focused approach be prepared and included in the qualifications similar to employability skills
- An ‘Attributes Office’ whose main task is to increase completion rates by promoting learners’ attributes be established in each of the TAFE Institutes across Australia
- Each TAFE Institute to be required to take the necessary steps to nurture appropriate attributes among their learners.

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**Question
Time**

**Thank YOU for
Listening, any
questions??**

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The graphic features a blue background with a white curved shape on the right side. It contains the text 'Question Time' in large red letters at the top, and 'Thank YOU for Listening, any questions??' in red below it. There are three icons: a purple question mark on a stick, a colorful cube with question marks, and a yellow question mark on a stick. At the bottom, there is small text: '24.04.2009 AVETRA 2009 - Homi Azemikhah 31'.