**Views of VET teachers, managers and students about VET teacher qualifications**

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**Abstract**

This paper reports on some initial research into what students, teachers and managers in training providers think about qualifications for vocational education and training (VET) teachers and trainers. In 2011, a Productivity Commission research report on the VET workforce identified ‘some clear deficiencies [that] should be addressed’, but rejected a change to required qualifications because of lack of research evidence, at that time, that higher-level qualifications would make a difference.

This paper reports on preliminary observations from a major Australian Research Council funded project that set out to investigate this matter. The project has several stages, and this paper, by two of the projects’ four researchers, examines early data from four of eight case studies. The case study sites were based in two states and comprised two TAFE institutes, a not-for-profit college, and a for-profit private VET provider. In the case studies, senior managers, teachers and trainers in different discipline areas, and learners, were interviewed to elicit their views on whether or how teachers’ pedagogical and industry qualifications mattered in the quality of teaching and in teachers’ contributions to the institution. The paper explains the different participants’ views and the reasons they gave for their views. The project as a whole includes several other data sources.

**Introduction**

The Australian VET sector is currently struggling with bad publicity about unscrupulous Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) targeting vulnerable learners to access government funding (e.g. Brody & Temple, 2015) and through long-term and deep-seated concerns about the quality of assessment (e.g. Department of Education and Training, 2016; Halliday-Wynes & Misko, 2013). There has, however, been little focus on how VET teachers could address these and other quality problems, and specifically whether the current qualification regime for teachers is adequate to equip them to navigate the complexities of VET in the 21st century.

A research report on the VET workforce conducted by the Productivity Commission (2011) discussed VET teacher qualifications, but no conclusions were reached. The Commission noted the lack of extant research evidence about the relationship between teachers’ qualifications and the quality of VET teaching, and quality in VET more broadly. The research project on which this paper draws, was therefore undertaken, to examine whether such a relationship exists. The research was funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage and entitled ‘Would more highly-qualified teachers and trainers help to address quality problems in the Australian vocational education and training system?’ There were five industry partners: TAFE Queensland, the Australian Council for Private Education and Training, Federation Training, the VET Development Centre, and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research. The project examined teachers’ discipline/industry qualifications as well as VET teaching qualifications, therefore looking not only at expertise in teaching, but also the depth of disciplinary knowledge and more generally, at education levels.

The paper presents preliminary findings from four of eight case studies, in two States, conducted in late 2015. Interviews and focus groups were undertaken, and the viewpoints of teachers, managers and students are reported in this paper.

**Literature review and background**

The VET teaching workforce is diverse. As well as being distributed across full-time/part-time/casual employment roles, VET teachers work in institutional training providers, in industry, or in other settings, and may train as only part of their job. There are also VET teachers in secondary schools, although they were outside the scope of the project as they are governed by schooling systems’ qualification regimes. This diversity has been used as an argument to avoid raising the qualification requirements for VET teachers (e.g. by the Productivity Commission, 2011), rather than a reason to examine appropriate qualification levels for different roles. The demands placed on teachers in the past 20 years by the introduction of competency-based curriculum models (Smith & Keating, 2003), increased marketisation and accompanying regulation of the system, the growth in intermediary bodies, and an increasingly diverse student body, have all increased the complexity of VET teachers’ work (Productivity Commission, 2011; Wheelahan and Moodie, 2011), to the extent that VET is now arguably the most complex of the education sectors. VET teachers are also expected to address additional concerns that arise from time to time, for example about literacy levels among Australians (COAG Reform Council, 2013).

Australian VET teachers are currently required to have only a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (known as TAA or TAE, after the parent Training Package) as their pedagogical qualification, and a relevant discipline or industry qualification, which could be as low as Certificate II level (National Skills Standards Council, 2013), as well as relevant industry experience and currency. In other countries (e.g. Germany), in contrast, VET teachers and trainers are required to have degrees or Masters’ qualifications in VET teaching. Worryingly, it is also widely recognised that the Certificate IV in TAA is generally poorly delivered or narrow in its focus (e.g. Darwin, 2013; Simons *et al*, 2006); significantly, the VET regulatory body, ASQA, has needed to introduce extra ‘hurdles’ for training providers wishing to deliver the Certificate IV in TAA. These have included, for example, the requirement to submit examples of assessment tools when applying to add the qualification to their scope of registration, which are not required for other qualifications. A new VET-sector Diploma of VET is being offered, but concerns have already been voiced about the quality of its delivery (for example, it is commonly delivered on-line).

Until five to 15 years ago (varying by State), TAFE systems required full-time VET teachers to undertake a degree (or graduate diploma if holding a disciplinary degree) in VET teaching (AWPA, 2013), usually acquired part-time after appointment, and some still reward teachers who acquire such qualifications. Within the VET workforce there is, thus, a range of pedagogical qualification levels, with a ‘legacy’ of better-qualified teachers, as well as newer teachers who voluntarily undertake higher-level qualifications.

A service-industry study by Smith *et al.* (2009) showed that three-quarters of all RTOs, including TAFE, had over 50% of their staff qualified pedagogically to Certificate IV level only. There is also variation in disciplinary qualifications, typically varying from Certificate III in trade areas to degree level or above in other areas such as business. The existing variations made the study possible, because, unlike other education sectors, the workforce shows variations that can be studied.

Government reports (Skills Australia, 2011; UK Commission for Employment & Skills, 2010) argue that VET teachers are central to quality improvement in VET; e.g. that ‘lifting the quality of VET outcomes goes beyond issues of compliance to the skills of VET practitioners’ (Skills Australia, 2011:5). But how far do teachers’ qualifications affect these outcomes? There is almost no available research in VET, and Australian school-education offers few clues, since all school-teachers are required to have a degree. In the US, however, where levels of teacher qualifications vary, teaching quality and outcomes for students have been shown to be higher for teachers with degrees (Darling-Hammond *et al.,* 2005). The focus of the project is on the quality of teaching and assessment, but it also sets out to identify other aspects of quality in the VET system that may be improved with a more highly-qualified and professionalised workforce (e.g. suitable candidates for senior positions; improved business processes). As Harris *et al.* (2005) highlight, VET teachers are integral to broader reform agendas in VET. Some research has been conducted in the UK where the value of further education teacher education qualifications delivered in their Further Education sector has been compared with those delivered in the higher education sector (e.g. Bathmaker & Avis 2005; Lucas & Unwin 2009; Simmons & Walker 2013). They have found the higher education delivered courses to be more intellectually rigorous.

**Method**

The larger study of which the case studies reported in this paper is a part, is a multi-phased project. In the first phase of the project, the research team interviewed key VET stakeholders, and teachers and student groups, on their respective characterisation of what makes a good VET teacher (for preliminary findings, see Yasukawa, 2015, and Smith, 2015). The insights gained from this phase, together with a nationally validated set of proposed VET teacher standards, developed by the Queensland College of Teachers, informed the next stage of the research, which was the development of a national survey of VET teachers, that will be administered in May 2016. Towards the end of 2015, case studies were carried out in in eight RTOs (four TAFE Institutes and four private RTOs) across four states. This paper reports on the findings from four of these sites. The final phases of the study will involve further data collection about professional development, and a Delphi process with 60 participants in VET policy and VET practice. Data collection is expected to be complete by the end of 2016.

At each case study site, individual or focus group interviews were arranged over a period of up to two days, with central managers including representatives from human resources and teaching quality; disciplinary heads (e.g. faculty directors, head teachers); teachers and students. As far as possible, arrangements were made to interview teachers and students in different types of industry groups (traditional trades, non-trade ‘professional’ areas such as nursing and non-trade non-professional areas such as ‘beauty’). It was expected that views about qualifications might vary among such groupings. Higher education courses offered by the sites were not included in the scope of the research. Depending on the size of the training provider, there were between 10 and 30 participants in each case study.

The four sites are briefly described. Metro TAFE South was a large TAFE institute located in a capital city, delivering to over 60,000 students and employing over 2,500 teachers. Its scope included courses from pre-certificate level statements of attainment to Advanced Diploma qualifications in the traditional trades and in non-trade areas. Metro TAFE South also delivered higher education courses, although these were not included in this study.

Community College Local (CCL) was a not-for-profit network of colleges operating in seven suburbs in a capital city. At the time of the study, its enrolment in VET qualifications had decreased (to around 2500) and the areas in which it delivered full qualifications were in Business Administration, Training and Education (Cert IV TAE) and Community Services. CCL employed 65 teaching staff including 12 full-time and 8 part-time permanent.

Metro TAFE North was a large TAFE provider operating on two main campuses and several smaller centres, offering a range of qualifications pitched mainly at higher levels and semi-professional and professional work. The campus of Metro TAFE North that was visited did not offer what were described as the ‘dirty’ traditional trades, but did offer cookery and hairdressing. There were over 34,000 domestic students and 2,600 international students. The TAFE employed 140 permanent full-time teachers, 45 permanent part-timers, 280 temporary teachers and 370 casual teaching staff. Nursing and early childhood were major programs, and here was a large population of culturally linguistic and diverse students.

Human Services College was a small, niche, family-run RTO offering courses in early childhood, aged care and community work. It had 1600 students of whom 120 were international, and 15 teachers (referred to as ‘trainers’). Human Services College offered programs as well as study tours overseas. Its main campus was in a city centre, and most students attending face-to-face were international students. There were also work-based trainees around the State, and some programs were delivered by partners. Teachers worked with pre-prepared learning materials and assessment tasks. The College had recently won a major national award for its international operations.

Interviews were sought with the following at each site:

* A central senior line manager, and a human resource and/or learning and development manager.
* In each of three areas/departments, a departmental head, two teachers (one full-timer and one part-timer), a focus group of 4-6 students (must be 18 years or over) and a group of 4-6 teachers.

It was expected that non-TAFE RTOs might not all have the three areas/departments. As expected, it was not always possible to access the exact respondent type sought, and for the four case studies reported in this paper, the following were achieved (Tables 1a-1d):

**Table 1: Research participants (Total n=77)**

**1a. Metro TAFE South interviewees (n=30)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Central** | **Job Title** |
| Senior line manager | 1 Associate Director, Student Learning & Facilities |
| Human resources manager | 1 Director, People & Culture |
| Learning and development manager | 1 Associate Director, Workforce Development |
| **Departmental** |
|  | **Trade area** | **Non-trade prof.** | **Non-trade other** |
| Name of department/discipline area | Engineering | Finance and IT | Service Industries |
| Department head/education manager | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Full-time teacher | 1  | 1  |  |
| Part-time/ casual teacher |  | 2 |  |
| Focus group of teachers | 1 x 2 |  | 1 x 4 |
| Focus group of students | 1 x 6 | 1 x 1 | 1 x 7 |

**1b. Metro TAFE North interviewees (n=23)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Central** | **Job Title** |
| Senior line manager | Executive Director Educational and Commercial |
| Human resource manager | - |
| Learning and development manager | Principal Advisor Educator Capability; Manager Product Lifecycle |
| **Departmental** |
|  | **Trade area** | **Non-trade prof.** | **Non-trade other** |
| Name of department/discipline area | Cookery | Nursing | Beauty Therapy |
| Department head/education manager | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| Full-time teacher | 2 | 2 | 2 |
| Focus group of students | 1 x 3 | 1 x 4 | 1 x 4 |

**1c. Community College Local interviewees (n=10)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Central** | **Job Title** |
| Senior line manager | RTO manager |
| Human resource manager | HR manager |
| Learning and development manager | - |
| **Departmental** |
|  | **Trade area** | **Non-trade prof.** | **Non-trade other** |
| Name of department/discipline area | - | Business | Aged Care |
| Department head/education manager | - | - | - |
| Full-time teacher | - | 1  | 1  |
| Focus group of students | - | 1 x 4 | 1 x 2 |

**1d. Human Services College interviewees (n=14)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Central** | **Job Title** |
| Senior line manager | Head of School (Academic Operations); Operations Manager |
| Human resource manager | Co-owner  |
| **Departmental** |
|  | **Trade area** | **Non-trade prof.** | **Non-trade other** |
| Name of department/discipline area | - | Early Childhood | Aged Care |
| Full-time teacher | - | - | 1 |
| Part-time/casual teacher | - | - | 1 |
| Focus group of teachers | - | 1 x 2 |  |
| Focus group of students | - | 1 x 2 | 1 x 5 |

A detailed interview protocol was developed, which sought differentiated information from each type of interviewee, and a pre-visit questionnaire was developed to try to gather details and student numbers, teacher numbers and institutional policies about teachers’ qualifications. Managers at institutional and discipline level were asked about matters such as delivery modes, student characteristics and so on. Teacher and student interviews focused more on matters of teaching and assessment delivery. All respondents were asked about teachers’ qualifications, how they affected teaching and learning, and what respondents thought they should be. All interviews and focus groups were recorded, with permission, and transcribed. Interviews and focus groups took between 30 minutes and one hour, with most being longer rather than shorter.

Initial data analysis involved the relevant researchers writing up each case study according to a pre-determined template. The data in this paper are taken from these case studies. A major limitation of the method is that workplace-based students were not accessed (although teachers operating in this mode were included in the achieved sample). This matter will need to be addressed as the project progresses. Although this paper discusses only four of the case studies, the total of 77 participants which includes teachers and managers from diverse industry/discipline areas, as well as senior managers with an overview of their RTOs, adds to the trustworthiness of the data.

**Findings**

A great deal of extremely interesting data were gathered from the four detailed case studies, but due to space limitations, the paper covers only the issue of people’s views about teachers’ qualifications.These are presented case by case below, and then analysed in the final section of the paper.

*Metro TAFE South*

Senior managers: Only a small proportion of Metro TAFE South’s teaching workforce (including the casual teachers) were reported by senior managers to hold degree qualifications, senior managers felt that those with higher level qualifications in VET teaching had, in one person’s words, ‘a greater appreciation of pedagogy and approaches to learning’ and also a greater appreciation of quality and compliance matters. The Certificate IV was not adequate because, as one manager said, ‘Because if you analyse the Cert IV TAA there's not much about teaching. There's one unit and it's a level III unit, “giving instructions”’. Another manager felt that higher-level qualifications in discipline areas were important for the delivery of courses at higher AQF levels.

Departmental heads: The faculty directors all held higher education degrees both in teaching and in their disciplinary areas. One strongly expressed the value he saw in pedagogically more highly qualified teachers who were more ‘able to understand the concepts of how to structure content differently for each medium of delivery whereas someone with the [Cert IV] TAE has very limited knowledge’. He added that degree qualified teachers were also more adept at negotiating organisational changes. The two other faculty directors were less vehement but still preferred teachers to have degrees in teaching. One said that teachers were modelling lifelong learning through continuing their learning. Another saw the benefits of higher teaching qualifications as two-fold: the first in ‘developing a culture of teaching improvement’ in their sections, and secondly, in developing a more questioning approach to learning and reading about education. One noted that some of his teachers were qualified at doctoral level in their subject area but this did not necessarily make them better teachers.

Teachers: Most of the teachers held university level teaching qualifications, mostly in VET but two in school-teaching. It should be noted that Metro TAFE South was in New South Wales, the State which was the last to abolish (in 2008) the requirement for all full-time TAFE teachers to enrol in degree-level VET teaching qualifications. The teachers who held a university teaching qualification said they benefited from the following: deeper insights into how learners might be experiencing the learning, learning a range of different teaching strategies that were necessary to meet the needs of diverse learner groups, and developing connections between theory and practice. One of the school-teaching-qualified teachers noted the utility of the Cert IV TAE in orienting her to the VET sector.

The two teachers who did not have a university teaching qualification did not express a view that a higher education qualification was necessary for quality teaching in VET. One referred to industry qualifications being more valuable, and the other to skills and dispositions which he felt were transferable from other jobs.

Students: Students from engineering trades courses and from a service industries Diploma course were interviewed. None of the students had precise knowledge of their teachers’ qualifications, but they all assumed they were qualified in their industry and were highly experienced in their respective industries. None of the engineering trades students felt that their teachers, who they said were excellent, should need a degree in their discipline or in teaching. This was also the initial view of many of the service industries Diploma students, but during the interview when it surfaced that school teachers needed a university teaching degree, one of the students said: ‘I’d say with the rise in prices to actually study, that teachers should have a degree … why would I waste my money on a teacher that doesn’t actually know how to teach?’. A few of her colleagues started to agree.

*Community College Local*

Managers: Neither of the managers believed that teachers holding higher level qualifications guaranteed better performance. The RTO manager said that if he were to encourage further learning among his VET teachers, he would suggest pursuing the improvement of industry currency, professional development (in VET issues including teaching), and then higher qualifications in that order. However, he reflected on the differences between CCL’s English language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) teachers who were required by the programs and the curriculum to hold specialist postgraduate teaching qualifications, and VET who did not hold higher education teaching qualifications. He noticed a great confidence to exercise professional agency and judgment among the LLN teachers than among the VET teachers. He added that the LLN teachers worked as a community of practice, collaborating on pedagogical strategies and problem solving which he has not seen the VET teachers do. The HR manager was clearer in her support for higher level qualifications for teachers. She thought there would be a significant difference in the teachers’ ‘sheer teaching ability and their motivation for discipline to pursue excellence’ relating this to the degree of critical thinking required in degree courses. She said: ‘It's probably the absence of the qualifications that would make me, in the recruitment process, probe more their thinking ability’.

Teachers (who were both also lead trainers): Among the two lead trainers/ teachers one had a degree qualification related to her discipline area (business), while the other teacher’s highest qualifications in her vocational discipline was a Cert IV. Their highest pedagogical qualifications were the Dip VET and the Cert IV in TAE, respectively. Neither felt that a higher level qualification would lead to better quality VET teaching, although one felt that teachers teaching in higher level courses could benefit from more knowledge about the content they were delivering. They were both dismissive of the value of university delivered teaching qualifications, but for different reasons. For one teacher, it was the experienced, credible and passionate aged care worker who would make the best teacher. The other teacher had a resistance to learning about VET in the higher education sector: ‘I don’t know if a university is the right place to teach a VET teacher’, and suggested that going to higher education to be qualified in VET was a reflection of a lack of commitment in their own sector. However, she conceded that ‘so long as the focus … is on VET [and] teaching in a normal [VET] classroom]’, a VET teaching course offered in the higher education sector did not have to be problematic.

Students: Students at CCL did not know what qualifications were held by their teachers. All the students who were interviewed were studying towards a Certificate III qualification. The two students interviewed from the Community Services course were extremely satisfied with the teaching in their course, and neither felt that their teachers having higher level qualifications could in anyway enhance their learning experience. Interestingly, both held university qualifications themselves – one in a specialist engineering field, and the other in school teaching. In the Business course, among the four students interviewed, there was a mixture in their levels of satisfaction with their learning experience. However, none of the students felt that good or poor teaching practices came from the qualification levels of their teachers. They believed that the currency and depth of industry skills and experience were the determining factors of the quality of teaching.

*Metro TAFE North*

The summary below relates only to central senior managers and to staff/students within the Cookery area, as the full case study data have not yet been analysed.

Managers: There was a strong preference among senior managers for teachers to have degree qualifications in VET teaching. This was concretised in an offer to teachers to take up HECS-free places in a choice of three relevant qualifications with a partnering university. The Institute had a published pathway for teachers that showed progression from Certificate IV TAE through to Master’s. The most senior manager interviewed had studied as a TAFE teacher when qualifications from a local university were mandatory and said that people could still remember which cohort they had belonged to. This manager said that the senior team knew that with degree-qualified teachers they could assume ‘superior knowledge, comprehension, analysis, evaluation of the subject matter’. In examining student evaluations he had identified that students were most satisfied, on the whole, with teachers whom he knew to have higher level qualifications in VET teaching. Managers said that when recruiting or promoting staff, qualifications were an important factor; and that staff with degrees were less resistance to audits and compliance. The quality manager mentioned that teachers without degrees were unable to write assessment tasks and therefore the Institute was having to centralise all tools; and these teachers were only able to write learning materials with the aid of ‘ghost writers’.

Department head: When recruiting staff without degrees, this interviewee strongly advocated that they gained degrees in VET teaching quickly. He said that he told them they were recruited for their industry expertise but that he told them ‘you now have to put on your educational hat as well’. He said that his encouragement was paying off: ‘I’ve signed off five approvals alone in the cookery team, which has got 18.8 full-time equivalent people, to start their degree’.

He felt that undertaking a degree brought teachers up to speed much more quickly than learning on the job did, in matters such as the increasing diversity of the student cohort. He considered university study much more useful than professional development, because the former required people to apply what they learned and identify what the benefits would be to students: ‘it solidifies your learning’.

Teachers: One teacher was from Germany where he had trained as a chef and as a ‘master’ which was the qualification that enabled him to train apprentices in the workplace. He was currently considering enrolling in the VET teaching degree program offered by his employer. He said that his Certificate IV

was just the piece of paper I need to do my job...There’s nothing that you can really apply. There’s a few templates for lesson plans but that’s all you got.

The other teacher had undertaken a degree in adult learning while working as a training manager in industry. He said he did this because

I deeply did want to get into the education [field], I could see that as a future pathway. And also I knew that I had no idea what was going on in the – in front of the students and stuff like that. You know, I had no idea about human development, language, literacy and numeracy, curriculum development and so on and so forth.

He said that his degree helped him with ‘declarative knowledge. You need to know why you’re doing something’. While industry knowledge was very important, he thought that

It’s equally important to have educators who have a deep understanding from the academic point of view as well, how people learn, how to structure your lessons, human development and so on and so forth equivalent to the degree.

Students: The students were all from overseas; three already had degrees, one in hospitality and two in unrelated fields. They valued teachers’ industry knowledge more highly (all 10 out 10) than teaching skills and knowledge (7 to 8 out of 10). However they valued teachers’ ability to explain concepts to them, to answer their questions, and to set clear assessment tasks. They did not consider that these sorts of skills and abilities necessarily needed a degree program to acquire them. They would prefer, rather, their teachers to have degrees in ‘culinary arts’.

*Human Services College*

Managers: The senior managers interviewed said that industry qualifications and experience were ‘mission critical’, rather than higher level qualifications in teaching, and staff were encouraged to undertake further ‘lateral’ VET-sector qualifications enabling them to teach across more programs offered by the college. It was said that the College preferred to develop people from within to work in more senior positions rather than recruiting more highly qualified people. However a lack of academic leadership had been identified leading to the recruitment of a senior manager, who was one of those interviewed.

Teachers: The early childhood teachers both taught in the workplace-delivery mode, working with individual students or small groups. They had Diploma level qualifications in early childhood and had both managed childcare centres. They both valued the Certificate IV TAE as it taught them about teaching adults rather than teaching young children which was their previous area of expertise. They did not want to study further in VET teaching, feeling they were well enough qualified already. The aged care teachers, both from overseas, were degree qualified, one in nursing and one in an unrelated field (veterinary science) The former also had a Masters of Education as she had been a nurse educator in her home country. They had both found useful aspects to their Certificate IV TAE, in teaching students as people with individual needs, and in assessment respectively. As one teacher already had a Master’s in Education she did not see herself studying further in pedagogy, while the other teacher would prefer to undertake a degree in nursing above a degree in VET teaching. Both felt that nursing degrees assisted in the delivery of some units from the aged care qualifications.

Students: All of the students were international and had either Diplomas or degrees before commencing their current courses. They valued their teachers’ industry skills and knowledge but also valued good teaching. The aged care students thought that the former was slightly more important than the latter; but one of the two early childhood students thought that teaching skills were more important. She said:

Even if you didn’t have the experience working in that industry, you can find it or you can bring someone to talk about it or maybe programming, going into the centre and just explain your knowledge, and you have all the visuals around. I think - teaching, you have more options to get it.

The latter student noted that to teach VET in her home country (Spain), a degree was required. Two of the aged care students thought their teachers should have teaching degrees. One said, “We may feel secure when we know that our trainer has the highest qualification.”

**Discussion and conclusions**

In general, managers in the two TAFE Institutes were in favour of higher level qualifications in VET teaching for their staff, citing more sophisticated approaches to pedagogy and also to compliance matters and general organisational contribution. Another pointed to the lack of generic skills (such as writing) in teachers without degrees. These attitudes extended to the departmental heads too. One of the latter noted that university study required one to put one’s learning about theory into practice, as opposed to professional development which could be forgotten on return to work. The private RTOs tended to favour industry qualifications and experience above all else, although in one RTO a manager noted that his degree qualified teachers were more adept at solving pedagogical problems than the non-qualified teachers, and in the other, it was acknowledged that academic leadership had been lacking.

Those teachers who held university qualifications in VET teaching could also point to what they had gained from their qualifications (confining, on the whole, their responses to pedagogical matters), while those who did not, were resistant to gaining qualifications, citing, as did the managers in the private RTOs, the importance of industry qualifications as a reason. One respondent believed that VET teachers should not be studying in universities. Those who had a teaching degree in schooling or early childhood or from overseas, found the Cert IV useful in what it taught them about the Australian VET system.

On the whole students were not aware of what qualifications their teachers were required to have, or did have, although during discussion it became clear that they thought there were certain qualities that their teachers ought to have, and did not always. Hence as one student put it, a degree would indicate that the teacher was high quality, and as another put it, justified the financial investment involved in studying. However here was a feeling that teachers should focus on industry/disciplinary qualifications rather than teaching qualifications.

The research confirmed that VET teachers with VET teaching degrees and also their managers believe that higher-education studies in VET teaching gave additional resources for teachers, including greater ability to cope with pedagogical challenges and to plan learning experiences for diverse student groups, as well as other advantages for the organisation. The case studies confirm the findings of the English studies cited earlier in the paper. The managerial responses in the TAFE institutes showed that well-qualified teachers were more likely to progress within their organisations.

A preliminary conclusion could be that the TAFE sites valued higher-level qualifications, particularly in VET teaching, more than the private RTOs. However the situation is more complex than that, with the discipline areas involved, and the nature of the students (particularly with international students) also seeming to have some effect. At this stage of the project these factors remain to be fully analysed, and they will be when more data from the other four case studies is available. The case study data will be augmented by data from the other phases at the conclusion of this major national project.

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