

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

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The project

The project

- ARC Linkage Project: *Would more highly qualified teachers & trainers help to address quality problems in the Australian VET system?*
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Stage 1 phase 3

- 8 case studies (4 TAFEs, 4 non-TAFEs): RTO managers, department heads, teachers & students interviews on views on *whether or how teachers' pedagogical and industry qualifications mattered in the quality of teaching and in teachers' contributions to the institution*

This paper

- 4 out of the 8 case study sites: *views about VET teacher qualifications*

Project organisations

- Universities: Federation University, UTS, University of South Australia
- Partner Organisations: VET Development Centre, ACPET, TAFE Queensland, Federation Training, NCVET.
- Note: The project looks at industry/discipline qualifications as well as teaching qualifications.

Research sites & participants

Case study sites	Senior managers	Department heads	Teachers	Students
Metro TAFE South	3	3	10	14
Metro TAFE North	3	3	6	11
Community College Local	2	-	2	6
Human Services College	3	-	4	7
TOTAL (77)	11	6	22	38

Senior managers' views

- Teachers with higher level VET teaching qualifications have 'a greater appreciation of pedagogy and approaches to learning' and also a greater appreciation of quality and compliance matters (Metro TAFE South);
- The Certificate IV was not adequate '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, ... (Metro TAFE South);
- Highly qualified teachers in LLN stood out in their confidence to exercise professional agency and to take initiative in collegial professional learning (Community College Local);
- There would be a significant difference in the teachers' 'sheer teaching ability and their motivation for discipline to pursue excellence' relating to the degree of critical thinking required in degree courses. 'It's probably the absence of the qualifications that would make me, in the recruitment process, probe more their thinking ability'. (Community College Local)

Senior managers' views

- Strong support for teachers to have degrees; a HECS-free partnership had been set up with an interstate university: 'superior knowledge, comprehension, analysis, evaluation' were seen as the results of a university qualification. Teachers without degrees had to have 'ghost writers' to produce learning materials. Degrees were part of a pathway including PD (Metro TAFE North).
- Industry qualifications and experience were 'mission critical'. Staff expanded their qualifications horizontally rather than vertically because then they could teach in more areas (Human Services College).

Department heads' views

- Highly qualified teachers 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' and degree qualified teachers were also more adept at negotiating organisational changes (Metro TAFE South).
- Benefits of teachers being highly qualified: 'developing a culture of teaching improvement' in their sections, and ...developing a more questioning approach to learning and reading about education' (Metro TAFE South).

Department head views

- The department manager (hospitality) told all teachers at their interviews that he expected them all to get degrees as quickly as possible. ‘You now have to put your educational hat on.’ Staff were engaging with this. He felt his own university studies were much more practical than PD activities he had attended. (Metro TAFE North).

Teachers' views

- VET teaching degree gave them 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 (degree qualified teacher, Metro TAFE South).
- Industry qualifications were more valuable (non-degree qualified teacher, Metro TAFE South).
- Degree qualifications in VET teaching would not lead to better teaching; what matters is industry experience (non-degree qualified teacher, Community College Local).
- 'I don't know if a university is the right place to teach a VET teacher': going to higher education to be qualified in VET was a reflection of a lack of commitment in their own sector (teacher with degree in discipline, Community College Local).

Teachers' views

- Two cookery teachers were very much in favour of qualifications. One had previously trained in industry and one was from Germany. The Cert IV 'was just the piece of paper I need to do my job' 'Educators (need to) have a deep understanding from the academic point of view as well' (Metro TAFE North).
- Early childhood teachers were resistant to higher level qualifications while aged care teachers were more receptive, having (overseas) masters in education and nursing respectively (Human Services College).

Students' views

- Most students assumed teachers were qualified in their industry area and highly experienced (Metro TAFE Sydney).
- '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?' (Metro TAFE South).
- It's the industry qualification and experience that makes the good VET teacher (Community College Local).

Students' views

- Students at providers below were all from overseas.
- Cookery: Would prefer teachers to have degrees in culinary arts before teaching. But expected teachers to have advanced teaching skills (Metro TAFE North).
- Early childhood and aged care students: Valued both teaching and industry skills and qualifications. 'We may feel secure when we know that our trainer has the highest qualification' (Human Services College).

Preliminary findings

Managers generally saw multiple benefits for teachers having higher level qualifications.

Teachers were divided:

- Teachers with teaching degrees saw benefits

- Teachers without teaching degrees did not see the need for higher qualifications

Students were often unaware of their teachers' qualifications, and (with a few exceptions) were more interested in their teachers' industry qualifications and experience.

Too early to draw any conclusions about TAFE versus private RTOs.

Implications

- For this project: the findings have provided us with guidance about factors to explore in subsequent stages e.g. a national VET teacher survey and a Delphi process with senior practitioner and policy streams, to explore implications of the findings.
- For immediate use: the findings have enabled us to provide evidence-based inputs into the recent consultations of the Training and Assessment Working Group.

Further information?

- Project web page

<http://federation.edu.au/research-vet-quality>

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