



Kira Clarke
 President, AVETRA

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Diversity and access are key to VET research as a public good

At the 2023 AVETRA conference in April, held in Naarm/Melbourne, it was so exciting to see and hear from a breadth of emerging and established researchers. AVETRA was particularly thrilled to celebrate a diversity of research voices across the 2 and a half days – voices from within the systemic architecture of the system and from frontline delivery of training, voices from the cutting edge of collaborative and place-based partnerships in and with industry and community, from ISSI fellows who bring insights from overseas systems, and voices from the full spectrum of emerging, established and senior researchers of VET, skills and training.

In shaping the 2023 conference, our hope for the conference theme was that it would offer a pivot point – to reflect, take stock and ideate. As we have seen countless times before, after crisis, the fabric of our social and economic structures is called in to question. Through the conference we wanted to create an opportunity for our research community to bring to light their insights and findings about how, why and when our VET systems are, can and will change in response to wider social, economic, cultural and environmental shifts.

What stood out to me amongst the various presentations at the AVETRA conference was the deep critical lens inherent within the research designs of so many of the research papers. These critical lenses were being deployed to challenge practice norms, to question policy assumptions and to rattle our collective understanding about the direction and utility of the Australia VET system as a whole. I left the conference grateful for the breadth and depth of research voices who had shared their knowledge and buoyed by the opportunity for projects and research of all scales and specialisations to be showcased and celebrated.

At the recent NCVER No Frills conference in Melbourne, NCVER Managing Director Simon Walker delivered opening remarks that spoke to the importance of making VET research accessible “as a public good”. In an era where we have the gift of systemic VET participation, skill shortage projections and labour market demand data at our fingertips, it can feel like we are sufficiently surrounded by the VET research we need to imagine and prosecute needed innovation and change. Attending both the AVETRA and NCVER conferences this year has consolidated for me the critical importance of accessibility of research findings that can foster open exchange that informs policy and practice. This is particularly important at a time of transformational change in the Australian skills system when the eye of government is on the evidence needed to determine policy direction and impact.

Research Today is one avenue through which AVETRA is committed to promoting visibility of and access to the latest in emerging research ideas and knowledge. We are proud to be playing a role growing the diversity and accessibility of new ideas and new forms of research in VET, training and adult education. ■

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ISSUE 31: AUGUST 2023

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ISSN 1441 3183 3

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FROM THE EDITORS



Andrew Williamson,
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Welcome to the first edition of AVETRA's *Research Today* magazine for 2023.

Reflecting on the six papers contained in this edition, I am struck by the diversity of people and work within our AVETRA community. This was also on show during the 2023 AVETRA conference held in Melbourne in April. The conference was a terrific showcase of scholarly and applied research of, for

and from within vocational education. Included in this edition of *Research Today* is the opening address from the conference, delivered by Dr Karen Jackson. It's a powerful piece which leverages Dr Jackson's significant, ongoing research into positionality.

Also in this edition are several complementary papers that explore aspects of vocational education delivery and the teachers who deliver it. The reflections and research draw from contrasting methodologies and perspectives yet seek to identify opportunities for improvements in our professional practice.

We hope that you enjoy this edition of *Research Today*. ■



Paul Boys,
Editor,
Research Today

Living and working in the Gippsland region of Victoria, our collective efforts have been focused on how our local secondary schools, TAFE's, industry and community groups can collaborate in support of the transition to clean and renewable energy production. This work has reminded me of the critical role that VET practitioners play in supporting education from Secondary

school through to Degree qualifications, with a view to growing and building a better future for young people and adults in our communities.

Research is an important component to help share these experiences and *Research Today* is a wonderful asset for the sector to strengthen collaboration and to acknowledge best practice across our communities.

If you are interested in learning more about how you can get involved in the AVETRA research community, get in contact with us and we would be happy to support you in taking the next step to share your experiences in a supported and collaborative environment. ■

AVETRA'S OCTOBERVET 2023 – CALL FOR EVENTS IS NOW OPEN!

AVETRA is calling for proposals from people who wish to run an OctoberVET event in their area in 2023.

OctoberVET is a season of local presentations or discussions coordinated by AVETRA. The goal is to showcase, disseminate and debate VET research.



OctoberVET events can be large or small, formal or informal. They can be about showcasing VET research (underway or completed). They can be conversations around research that should be done in the VET sector. They can focus on how to apply VET research. An OctoberVET event can be any or all these things!

OctoberVET events can be hosted as webinars or traditional face-to-face gatherings.

For more information and to register your OctoberVET 2023 event, see avetra.org.au/OctoberVET

Welcome Speech – AVETRA Conference 2023

Karen Jackson

I'd like to start by Acknowledging the Traditional Owners of Country of where we're meeting, the Wurundjeri Woiwurrung of the Kulin Nation. I pay my respect to their Ancestors and Elders, I thank them for sharing their deep knowledge and Country with us. I also Acknowledge the Boonwurrung Peoples of the Kulin who contest this Country as their Traditional lands.

I Acknowledge my Ancestors and Elders the Yorta Yorta, Dja Dja Wurrung Peoples. My Great Great Grandmother was Kitty Atkinson born near Moira Lakes Barmah Forest. My Great Great Grandfather was Finimore Jackson born near Mount Hope, Pyramid Hill, near Bendigo. I am the Executive Director of the Moondani Balluk Indigenous Academic Unit at Victoria University; Co-Chair of the Kolling wada-ngal Aboriginal Corporation located within the Wunggurrwil Dhurrung Centre in Wyndham Vale; Deputy Chair Western Metropolitan Regional Aboriginal Justice Advisory Committee and the Aboriginal member of the Western Region Metropolitan Partnership.

I was asked to speak today by two work colleagues, one who is now an Emeritus Professor, but both who I have worked closely with or who have helped me engage in project work. I thank them for the opportunity. We agreed on a very broad range of topics that I realised could not be covered this evening.

I decided then to talk about my positionality and how it links me to the historical people of the west of Melbourne, briefly on my standpoint that speaks to my Indigeneity and my research interests that are in place-making in urban contexts and its impact on empowerment, self-determination and decoloniality.

My early relationships in the Aboriginal community of Melbourne were located in what I term "Aboriginal Fitzroy" where I was introduced to many Aunties and community members all of whom invited me into these urban spaces. Fitzroy was a place then of vibrant Aboriginal community activity, where Aboriginal community-controlled organisations and Aboriginal activists were located. I hold many good memories of learning, sharing and collaboration from this place.

The welcoming I received in Aboriginal Fitzroy also tested my own understanding of Aboriginal identity, how I felt on identifying myself as "Koori" and how I felt about community accepting me as being "Koori". I have walked on Country, I have cried and been hurt deeply by whiteness and colonial structures that misrepresent and oppress Aboriginal people, but I have travelled this journey over many years now and arrived a more self-aware and stronger Aboriginal person.

My positionality and research wish is to reach into my partnerships and relational spaces with Aboriginal people who live in the west of Melbourne. I do this so we can together grow identities and connections, to share cultural practice and to help community to feel safe in identifying in any environment, to discontinue being marginalised and dehumanised.

Once I jumped into my research, I have realised that an Indigenous standpoint is important in any of my work because it appreciates and actions my embodied connection to my Yorta Yorta Woka (Country), to all living things, to my Ancestors & Elders, my sovereignty and Indigeneity.

Working forwards from this standpoint is the importance for me of an Indigenous methodology so that Aboriginal voices and Aboriginal community are always front and centre of any research projects. This also included the imperative that participation of Aboriginal community is enabled

through relationships that are equal, with the researchers and amongst Aboriginal people, and are maintained through open communication and sharing.

As an Aboriginal researcher researching Aboriginal community, I sit with Tuhawai

Smith's knowledge in that "the activity of research is transformed. Questions are framed differently, priorities are ranked differently, problems are defined differently, and people participate on different terms". My deep understanding and relationality with Aboriginal community and Aboriginal place influences my ways of knowing Aboriginal community, of being in Aboriginal community and ways of doing Aboriginal place and cultural safety.

My Year 1 Thesis research was about the Wunggurrwil Dhurrung Centre in Wyndham Vale and is informed by decolonising and Indigenous theory and Indigenous methodology to collect stories, memories and feelings from Aboriginal people who live in the west of Melbourne to shift the notion that Aboriginal people don't exist or have been extinguished from urban Australia. I am still astounded by the number of people who move to Victoria and say that they can't see any Aboriginal people here.

When Fredericks writes to the perception that urban Aboriginal people are not real, that they have lost their traditional culture (Fredericks 2013, p. 5) and others see the colonisers thinking that Aboriginal people move to urban spaces because they wish to assimilate (Wilson, K & Peters 2016, p. 398), I don't see this for the Aboriginal community in the west of Melbourne. Particularly those who are linked to Aboriginal cultural programs and have relationships with other Aboriginal community.

“ I have walked on Country, I have cried and been hurt deeply by whiteness and colonial structures that misrepresent and oppress Aboriginal people.

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What I do see and know is that Aboriginal people's lives are very complicated. I know that our lives hold trauma and grief and sometimes we feel lost to any connection to community, and this has an impact on how some Aboriginal community members then interact with others. The places and spaces that we are creating work towards giving Aboriginal people a sense of belonging, socially and emotionally. My place-making research is concerned with understanding the impact of gathering on Aboriginal community in the west of Melbourne, to outline the complexity of this Aboriginal community, its relations, and relationships in urban settings so that in Indigenising and creating spaces and processes self-determination and decolonisation can be enabled.

My research work with Aboriginal community and my work within VU in creating culturally safe spaces is also linked to Indigenising place with landscape & language. The Wunggurwil Dhurrung Centre and the new Moondani Balluk Centre are places that connect to the maintenance of stories of Country – or in cultural terms the maintenance of Songlines of Country as a crucial act of respect for Ancestors who have an enduring presence in the landscape and in Aboriginal lives. Important too is the connection of Country through local traditional plants within landscape design that recreates a specific Aboriginal environment that is relevant to place. Having a space that's open and accessible and that enables Aboriginal people to feel connected to Country and landscape will give safety to those in the community who feel vulnerable. As a participant in my research so eloquently said:

"...but for me, and I've been doing a little work around vulnerability lately because I keep getting burnt in the Aboriginal space. For me, I've never been burned by the land. It's always been a culturally safe space where I could sit in my most vulnerable state of identity and be absolutely safe."

Another piece of my collaborative research is with Dr Paola Balla, Rowena Price and Prof Chris Sonn. As a group we have seen that there are many Aboriginal families with unknown language group identity and connection to Country with many a part of, or descendants of the Stolen Generations. In this context, Aboriginal people have expressed a need for culturally safe spaces, a desire to understand the impact of dispossession and dispersal on their identity and community connection and for opportunities to renew connection with culture, Country, and kinship.

In our study on place-making by Aboriginal people, we reported stories of the effects of dispossession including policies and practices of child removal, and how this

continues in the lives of people in the present. Envisioning policies and practices that meet the needs of Aboriginal people on the ground is a vital role of research and action that can advance goals of decolonisation, empowerment and promote individual and community wellbeing. While there are diverse pathways to achieve these goals, one area has involved the creation of culturally safe spaces in which people can deepen their knowledge of culture, history, and community, unpack systems of oppression, and create, renew, and reclaim cultural practices that are central to decolonisation and healing.

The concept of cultural safety originated in Aotearoa in response to the health inequity experienced by Maori people. Williams explains the term as referring to:

"...an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge, or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge, and experience of learning, living, and working together with dignity and truly listening".

Cultural safety is expressed in various policy frameworks in the Australian context, particularly in relation to mainstream service delivery but also within Aboriginal communities as an Aboriginal culturally informed tool "to ensure that Aboriginal community environments are

also culturally safe and promote the strengthening of culture". Cultural safety involves "working to enhance rather than diminish individual and collective cultural identities, and empower and promote individual, family and community wellbeing", and "is crucial in enhancing individual and collective empowerment and more effective and meaningful pathways to Aboriginal self-determination".

In Yarning with Aboriginal people and Traditional Owners involved in community activities and community places I have heard their stories on how they imagine the future to be. This is a future that looks bright and exciting for themselves, their families, and the community in the west of Melbourne. It comes from a strengths-based framework. Their stories and excitement are based in the recasting and reclaiming of cultural practices and knowledge that can be, and are, being passed through to the current generations and will be handed down to future generations. In this Aboriginal self-determining community-controlled model, historical people are always in the process of negotiation and cultural renewal centred in Traditional Owner cultural lenses that help Country to open itself to them to enable the embodiment of cultural place making. These things lead to wonderful reconnections by Aboriginal community to see their strong identity and cultural liberation.

My challenge for VET is in the dreaming for Aboriginal people's place, connection and belonging in your systems

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through the creation & maintenance of decolonised spaces for Blak community & students. This should be your starting point from which to grow culturally safe places within your institutions so that Aboriginal people feel welcomed, see cultural safety and relevance in place, where their belonging is not challenged, where they feel socially and emotionally safe, and they won't feel colonised – and importantly so they can engage with you.

The second challenge is to grow your own research practice with Aboriginal people and communities 'ethically'. This means as a starting point, creating and maintaining relationships in your local Aboriginal community and using their positionality and relationality as equal research partners to improve your research outcomes, to recognise their deep knowledge, and undertake participatory action research that has an impact in and with Aboriginal people.

Thanks. ■

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Considerations for online delivery opportunities within Australian VET

Dr Deniese Cox & Dr Steven Hodge

Continued discussion around quality delivery of vocational education within online environments is important. While online delivery is not new for the sector (Griffin & Mihelic, 2019) many RTOs did experience a rapid transition to online provision during the pandemic (Hume & Griffin, 2021). As active researchers in this space, we've observed that many RTOs and educators are now seeking to move past surviving and toward thriving online. These projects have made us ask how to decide which units of competency, or parts of units of competency, can be taken online without compromising quality of delivery. In this article, we share some ideas about criteria that may help to analyse competencies with this goal in mind.

Much of what you'll read here was developed as part of a recent ASQA project including survey, report, and case studies (ASQA, 2023). With their permission, we're able to share some pertinent elements of that work, including a new conceptualisation of online delivery considerations. We frame this up with insights gleaned from various research projects conducted by each of the authors engaging with public and private providers over the past four years.

We stress at the outset that we can find no algorithm or fail-safe criteria for determining what qualifications or units of competency can or cannot be delivered online. A principle of the VET system is that industry sets the standards (reflected in units of competency) and providers develop strategies that enable their learners to develop and then demonstrate performance and knowledge that satisfy those standards (Hodge & Guthrie, 2019). Another principle is that VET is a competency-based system which

is focused on outcomes, not inputs, and therefore providers have latitude to deliver training and assessment (at least in theory). Additionally, the claimed benefit of marketisation in VET is that innovation is encouraged rather than conformity to a single model of curriculum and teaching (Hodge & Guthrie, 2019). This means that different enactments of online learning and assessment will occur across the sector, and no one-size-fits-all model should be idealised.

However, there is no doubt that there are challenges to taking vocational education online. It stands to reason that hands-on units and qualifications would be difficult or impossible to deliver in a virtual way. Indeed, we have observed a belief among providers that certain units cannot be facilitated online. However, those same units are being successfully facilitated online by other providers. This indicates differing beliefs and knowledges about how to realise or leverage the potential of online delivery opportunities. This observation aligns with previous research which found the beliefs of VET educators about what teaching strategies are or are not important in online delivery was more influential on practice than the availability of online tools (Cox, 2020). That research also found that limitations of trainer knowledge of ways of enacting, and strategies to effectively deliver, online education was a notable, yet not surprising, influence on practice.

During our work for the ASQA project we also found that VET provider decisions around what can and cannot be delivered online are often informed by the requirements expressly documented in, or interpreted from, units of competency (as well as training packages and companion volume implementation guides). Identified constraints in

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those documents relate to the practice or demonstration of a competency which requires the learner to physically embody specific social situations, workplaces, or specialised equipment, resources, and environments. It is this physical embodiment which precludes those elements from being learned or assessed online. However, we propose that physical embodiment is not the only consideration in the decision to opt for online delivery. Based on our experience and observations working and researching in this space, we propose that there are primary and secondary considerations to navigate when conceptualising online VET delivery.

Let's start with three primary considerations (Figure 1) which we suggest represent how a qualification, unit of competency, or even an individual knowledge or performance criterion, can be conceptualised for online delivery.

The first consideration is how best to develop learner understanding of the skill or knowledge being learned. Examples of content that can be utilised to develop learner understanding include reading information, hearing explanations, watching video or live stream demonstrations, seeing examples, reviewing scenarios, and considering applications – all of which can be readily enacted online.

The second consideration is what opportunities or need is there for the learning to be experienced by the learner. Example experiential opportunities that can be facilitated online include realistic simulations, role plays, active reflections, dilemma wrangling, problem-solving, and inquiry-led strategies.

The third and final primary consideration is whether the element requires any physical embodiment (as described above). That is, during learning and assessment, does the learner need to physically occupy a space which features specialised equipment, resources, environments, or hands-on interaction with specific people or items?

Primary considerations

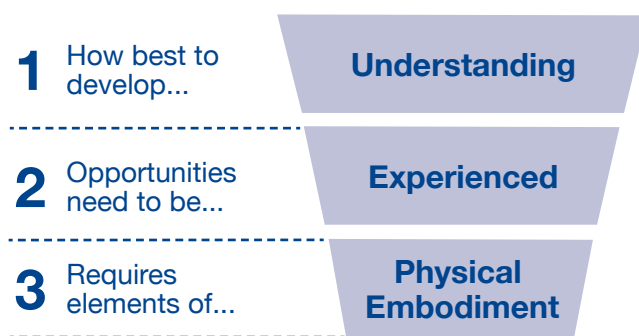


Figure 1 – Primary considerations for online delivery opportunities within vocational education

These three primary considerations are often navigated sequentially because *understanding* underpins and prepares learners for *experienced* learning interventions, which in turn prepares learners for *physically embodied* learning opportunities. It is important to note that many units do not require any element of physical embodiment.

Importantly not all qualifications, units, or criteria require all three considerations, but we propose that they do all require the first consideration – understanding, and many benefit from the second consideration, experience.

Once those primary considerations have been navigated, providers tend to move onto the six secondary considerations (Figure 2) which are navigated for the learning design of a qualification, unit, or criterion, and for each element of learning content or teaching intervention being enacted.

First of these is the **educator role**. Vocational practice has been found to reside on a spectrum from imparting information at one end to active facilitation at the other and can incorporate differing combinations (Cox, 2020).

Along a spectrum from imparting information to facilitation	Educator role	Learner role	Along a spectrum from passive recipient to active participant
Formats and types of learning content and interventions	Nature of content	With whom	Individual learner or collaborative learner group
Online and/or on campus and/or at a workplace (real or realistic)	Where	When	Experienced synchronously and/or asynchronously

Figure 2 – Secondary considerations for online delivery opportunities within vocational education

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The second consideration is the **learner role**. It too sits along a spectrum, this time from passive recipient (e.g. watching a learning content video, or reading a textbook) to active participant (e.g. engaging in a role play activity, or practicing a skill).

The third consideration is the **nature of the learning content or intervention**. This means considering in what format the learning is intended to be created, presented, and engaged with. The nature of content includes the purposeful selection and application of tools and resources.

The fourth consideration is **with whom** is the learner learning. That is, is the intention for the learner learning individually (even if within a class) or are they learning as part of an intentional collaborative group.

The fifth of six considerations is **where** is the learning occurring. Is the intention for the learner to experience this learning online and/or on campus and/or at a real or realistic workplace.

Finally, **when** is the learning occurring - synchronously or asynchronously. Synchronicity is not about when the teaching is delivered, but is about when the learning is experienced. Consider here whether the intention is for the learner to experience the learning in real-time, synchronously with the educator and other learners; or is the intention to experience the learning at a time of their choosing, asynchronously from the educator and other learners.

There is no single way of navigating through these six considerations, which may be enacted at macro and/or micro levels of learning design.

Critically, these considerations do not reflect a yes-or-no decision regarding online delivery of the qualification, unit, or part of a unit in question. Rather, the result can be none, some, or all of that component being delivered online. This is an essential understanding because it removes the cannot decision and instils a *how-much?* approach.

A further consideration lies in clustering elements by delivery method compatibility. Clustering of units for delivery and assessment (Clayton et al., 2015) is an established practice that is described in many companion volumes (e.g. SkillsIQ, 2020). Here, rather than units being delivered as discreet learning experiences where students wholly complete, for example, four units before moving to the next four units, some providers we spoke to during our research reported clustering and stretching units. This means that providers adopt an approach where they merge similar and complementary learnings from different units for concurrent online learning (clustering) and allow some elements to remain incomplete until those physically embodied components can be properly completed (stretching).

The concept of stretching means that incomplete units do not stall overall progress. Rather, for example, all of the training and assessment elements that require physical embodiment are held over for complementary enactment, while non-embodied types of learning and assessment continue online.

It is unclear at this time whether clustering practices have expanded because providers are innovating or because as they increase their level of online delivery their practice lends itself to clustering and stretching. Either way, clustering and stretching can offer even greater possibilities for online delivery, and constraints encountered due to requirements for physical embodiment can perhaps be more efficiently facilitated.

Early feedback from providers regarding the primary and secondary considerations we have identified for considering online delivery of qualifications, units, and criteria is positive. We look forward to additional feedback as more providers use this conceptualisation to guide how they analyse competencies to decide what can be delivered online. Importantly though, even if guided by these identified considerations, because of differences in available resources and educators, each provider will continue to uniquely perceive what they can or cannot teach and assess online. ■

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A comparison of learning styles and success in classroom, work-based and online learning

Ann Murray
MHC Training

An investigation of the learning styles of Vocational Education and Training (VET) students in Australia was undertaken and the results are presented here.

The first phase of the research sought to determine which learning style tool to use. This was an important part of the investigation, as there are at least 70 different learning style tools that have been developed. The test chosen was the visual, aural, read/write and kinaesthetic (VARK) test developed by Fleming (2012). The participants were given the tool to determine their learning styles. Next, the participants were interviewed over four to twelve months to further understand how they were managing their studies. Finally, an analysis of the work they produced for their qualification was undertaken. This was done to determine if they were able to cope with their studies and how the training was presented to them.

There are three different modes that VET students can study in Australia. These are face-to-face in a classroom, work-based or online options. These are not necessarily separate; for example, a person studying an apprenticeship will spend time learning on the job in the workplace but may also go to a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and spend time learning in the classroom. Nonetheless, these three delivery modes each have their own advantages and disadvantages.

For VET students, having a choice of learning modes makes training more accessible. In some cases, students find that the type of learning mode they have chosen is inappropriate, and they find it difficult to complete their training or just do not finish the training at all.

The three different modes of studying are varied, and so it may be that they suit people who learn in certain ways (i.e., they have different learning styles). To determine if this is the case, the aim of this research is to discover whether the mode of study (i.e., classroom, work-based or online) aligns with a particular learning style. If such alignments exist, it is envisaged that course developers and trainers can make changes to courses and how to teach them, with the aim of increasing completions and helping students gain a better understanding of their learning. The results of the research can be used to help students better understand their own learning styles and use this information to decide the best way to study and ultimately be successful in their training.

“ The results of the research can be used to help students better understand their own learning styles and use this information to decide the best way to study and ultimately be successful in their training.

The world of learning styles is confusing. There is a range of different thoughts, ideas, theories and terms. In their review of learning styles, Coffield et al. (2004) identified 71 different learning style theories showing the disconnection in the field. Sadler-Smith (1996) argues that there does not appear to be a common underlying framework for learning styles and, as a result, the research looks contradictory and confusing.

Smith and Dalton (2005, p.6) explain the differences between learning styles, learning preferences and learning strategies as follows: a learning style is 'a distinctive and habitual manner of acquiring knowledge, skills or attitudes through study or experience', and a learning preference is 'the favouring of one particular mode of teaching over another'.

While the literature agrees that learning styles are important, it is also worth noting from the beginning that learning styles are not the only issue with learning and, as Smith and Dalton (2005) argue a person's learning style is not the only characteristic that a learner will have. Learners will have other things in their lives competing with their learning, wellbeing, aspirations and motivations.

For this research the VARK assessment tool was used. Developed by Fleming (2012). It uses learning style preferences such as: visual, aural, reading and kinaesthetic. This learning style assessment tool was chosen because it uses terms that are familiar to the VET sector and the wider population. VARK

does not place people into one type of learning style but instead recognises that people can have more than one preferred way to learn. It is the simplicity of the VARK system that makes it so appealing and the ability of the students to make decisions on how they will study once they understand how they prefer to learn.

The project was a multi-case case study with eight participants. Three were studying in the classroom, two were studying in the workplace and three were studying online. The students in this research are all studying from a Certificate III to a diploma level course. The reason these levels of certification were chosen as part of the research is because 55% of students who enrol in a VET course enrol in either a Certificate III or higher level course (NCVER, 2007). This assisted in the applicability of the research beyond the study sample to the wider study population.

The eight participants were all assessed to determine their learning style. The participants were then interviewed once per month for between four and twelve months. Some students were at the beginning of their studies when they

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elected to become part of the research while others were nearly at the end. The students were also asked to keep a journal of their study experience and finally there was an examination of the participants work. The trainers of each student were interviewed once, as were the employers of the students who were studying in the workplace.

The interviews were important to gain a perspective on what the students found worked for them in their study journey and what did not. There are many things other than the student's learning style that may affect how successful they are in their studies. Written notes were kept of the interviews that were conducted.

After researching how people learn in the classroom, workplace and online, the conclusion was as follows:

- Students who were studying in the classroom should be successful if the trainer was aware of their learning style and taught them to enhance that learning style.
- Students who were studying in the workplace would be most successful if their dominant learning style was kinaesthetic.
- Students who were learning online would be most successful if their dominant learning style was reading/writing. This is because most online learning materials are in written form.

It was found that only four of the eight students were studying in a manner that suited their VARK learning style. Out of these four students, three of them were successful in their studies, and the success of the fourth student is unknown due to her course being ongoing. However, she was on track to finishing successfully. Of the other four students who were not studying in a way that would suit their learning style, one was successful, one was successful in one course but not the other, and two did not finish their studies.

Table 1: Student success in their studies

Student	Predominant VARK learning style	Method of study	Did they successfully complete the course?	Does the study method match their learning style?
Abbey	RVAK	Classroom	Yes	Yes
Tiffany	KRVA	Classroom	Unknown	Yes
Donald	Visual	Classroom	Yes	No
Robert	Kinaesthetic	Online	Yes/No	No
Katrina	RKAV	Online	No	No
Julie	KVAR	Online	No	No
Nora	KRA	Workplace	Yes	Yes
Skye	Reading	Workplace	Yes	Yes

It would appear from the case study that if a student knows what their learning style is and chooses to study in a way that suits that learning style, then they should be successful in their studies. However, there are many other variables that come into play. A student could choose the correct way to study but still fail due to other factors.

The importance of timely feedback to the student was found to be imperative. Two of the students who were unsuccessful in their studies stated that they felt they were unsuccessful because they did not receive feedback from their trainer in a timely fashion. While it must be remembered that these two students were also studying in a way that was not suited to their learning style, they also did not fail because they could not complete the work; they simply dropped out due to feeling unsupported. The third student who was unsuccessful in their studies was doing well until a change of trainer made them feel unsupported.

All of the students who were studying in a classroom situation said that they chose to do so to have instant feedback from a face-to-face trainer, showing that the students understood the importance of feedback even if some trainers did not provide this feedback.

Motivation is another problem for all adult students. These students have many other factors occurring in their busy lives, and often, their studies fall to the bottom of the list. Feedback and easy access to the trainer can help keep the student motivated and therefore encourage them to successfully complete their studies. The only students who stated that they felt isolated in their studies were the students who were unsuccessful.

It is important that students understand their own learning style preferences. In this way, they can choose the most appropriate way for them to study to increase their chances of success. However, students must have easy and ready access to trainers, and they must feel supported by people in and out of the training organisation. This will help to keep

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their motivation up and give them the ability to continue due to the feedback provided.

Finally, course design is important. It is crucial that regardless of whether the course is in a classroom, in the workplace or online that the course design caters for all four learning styles. Sarasin (2006) states that teaching needs to be done in a holistic way. This means covering all four learning styles throughout the lesson and course. This can be done whether the person is studying in the classroom, in the workplace or online. Hill, Hill and Perlitz (2011) explain that good course design is not only about understanding the students learning style but also the purpose of the training program and what the student already knows. Understanding the student as a whole person is vital.

Any course should include learning that is meaningful. Learning should be an active process. Adults are not passive learners and need to be kept actively engaged. The course should include multiple uses of the senses, and the most important aspects should be presented first and last. This is because research shows that people tend to remember what they learn at the beginning of a session and at the end. Finally, the course should provide practice of the theory. A well-designed course with a supportive trainer will help any student be successful in their studies regardless of their learning style or the mode of study. ■

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Investigating the Initial Teacher Education of VET upper secondary school teachers in Finland and Norway

Karen O'Reilly-Briggs
Box Hill Institute Academic Course Manager,
Victoria University Adjunct Fellow, and
International Specialised Skills Institute Fellow.

Introduction

Today in Australia there is a shortage of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programs for industry experts to transition into the Vocational Education and Training (VET) secondary school teaching profession, and a chronic shortage of VET secondary teachers to resource the nation's VET in Schools programs. Australia needs solutions to produce a supply of VET secondary teachers to teach VET school programs. This study was conducted as an applied research investigation to learn how Norway and Finland—two countries with well-established ITE programs for VET secondary teachers—produce a supply of VET school teachers so that Australia might learn from their example. The study was conducted as an International Specialised Skills Institute Fellowship, sponsored by the Victorian Skills Authority.

This article contains extracts from *The initial teacher education of vocational education and training upper secondary teachers in Norway and Finland—lessons for Australia* (O'Reilly-Briggs, 2023) report.

Aims of the research

The aim of the study was to gain an understanding of how Norway and Finland offer ITE programs to VET secondary pre-service teachers so that Australia might benefit from this knowledge. It further aimed to:

- Identify ways to remove barriers for Australian tradespeople and other vocationally qualified professionals wanting to enter the VET secondary teaching profession;
- Create viable pathways for tradespeople and other industry experienced professionals to attain a full VET secondary teaching qualification; and
- Elevate the status, standing and quality of VET in Australia.

Data collection methods

This study collected data via semi-structured interviews, field notes, photos and artefacts. It used a pragmatic constructivist-interpretivist multi-method approach and thematic analysis. The travel component of the study involved visiting a secondary school and a University of Applied Science in Finland, and a University in Norway.

The Fellow conducted interviews with academics and lecturers responsible for the ITE of VET pre-service teachers in these countries to learn how they went about producing VET upper secondary school teachers. It further interviewed VET secondary teachers in a Finnish upper secondary school to learn how VET is offered to students in schools and also learn about the VET teachers' experiences of transitioning from industry and into the VET teaching profession.

Key findings

- Norway and Finland offer bespoke university-level ITE programs for industry experienced trades and craftspeople to produce a sustainable supply of qualified VET teachers to teach vocational programs in upper secondary schools.
- VET upper secondary teachers in Norway and Finland receive the same pay, conditions, professional opportunities and social status as general school teachers.
- Both Norway and Finland are social democracies. Public education is free in both countries, and financial incentives and supports are available for adults returning to study.
- VET is respected and socially esteemed in Norway and Finland.
- Approximately 50-51 percent of all upper secondary school students in Norway and Finland choose to study VET in their senior years of schooling.
- VET upper secondary teachers in Norway and Finland are well-educated and trusted professionals;
- Norway and Finland value education and the principle of lifelong learning. Their education systems are designed around the principle of 'no dead ends'.
- Both Finland and Norway have Universities of Applied Science (formerly polytechnics) that operate in parallel to other Universities. Tertiary students can pathway vertically or traverse between the two types of Universities—from school through to doctorate.
- Respect for the VET teaching profession is important, and countries need skilled and pedagogically qualified VET teachers to prepare school students for their working futures.

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Discussion

VET upper secondary school teachers are highly-respected professionals in Norway and Finland, and VET teaching is a prestigious vocation in both countries. The levels of trust, respect and professionalism offered VET teachers ensures that VET teaching remains a highly desirable profession. While Norway accepts all candidates who meet the entry criteria into their VET ITE programs, Finland receives many more applications to VET ITE than they can accommodate each year. While the Australian VET sector struggles with its image and status as well as severe teacher shortages, it is worth considering how elevating levels of trust, respect and professionalism of the VET teaching profession in Australia should result in enhancing the sustainability of the VET teaching profession. The study proposed that Australia would benefit by implementing bespoke VET ITE programs as well as education policy and practices like those in Finland and Norway to help generate a supply of VET school teachers and make VET teaching a prestigious profession to enter.

Conclusion

As Australia emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, there is an increased focus on VET and its role in economic recovery. However, VET teacher shortages are undermining national efforts to meet industry labour needs. The pandemic has reinvigorated interest in the VET sector and highlighted the important role VET plays in Australian society. In response to VET teacher shortages and a shortage of ITE VET programs to produce VET school teachers, the Fellow set out to understand how two Nordic countries with esteemed ITE VET programs are able to produce a sustainable supply of VET teachers to resource their VET school programs so that Australia could learn from best-practice. Both Norway and Finland have established flexible and well-organised ITE programs informed by contemporary methodologies to upskill industry experts to become high-quality VET school teachers. These programs have been cleverly designed to cater for the variety of circumstances that mid-career industry professionals encounter, and offer financial support as well as paid employment opportunities in schools to ease their transition into the VET teaching profession. Consequently, these nations are able to produce considerable numbers of high-quality industry experienced and pedagogically prepared VET teachers to resource their VET school programs, and Australia would do well to learn from their example. ■

Key recommendations of the report:

- Australia should introduce a model of VET ITE inspired by Finnish and Norwegian course models designed to upskill industry experts to become high-quality VET secondary school teachers with equal status, pay, conditions and opportunities as general secondary school teachers.
- Offer financial support to vocationally qualified mid-career industry professionals wanting to study a VET ITE so they are supported during their transition to the VET secondary teaching profession.
- Adopt a 'no dead ends' education policy to ensure that all vocationally qualified industry experts, including those without a bachelor level qualification (e.g., tradespeople, technicians, artisans) can still pursue higher levels of learning and engage in lifelong learning.

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Careers in everyday industries: Findings from research fieldwork in retail and hospitality

Erica Smith and Andy Smith, Federation University, Victor Callan and Richard Robinson, University of Queensland, and Darryn Snell, RMIT University

This paper reports on the empirical fieldwork undertaken for the research project 'Careers in Everyday Industries', whose initial findings were reported in the October 2021 edition of 'Research Today' (Smith, Robinson & Snell, 2021). The project was funded by the National Careers Institute.

The original impetus of the research was to uncover the available careers in these industries – the industries most available to young people and mature people alike in Australia. We knew that the undervaluing of these industries led to the exclusion of these major industries from career thinking for many people. While much careers focus is on young school leavers, career guidance is also important for older people, who would benefit from more information about available careers as they seek to change jobs or re-enter the workforce (Beddie et al, 2005; Callan et al, 2020).

We believed that with a better understanding of available careers, people of all ages could be better advised; and workers already in the industries would experience higher self-esteem and would be able to advance their careers.

More information about the project can be seen at <https://federation.edu.au/research-everyday-careers>

In our first [Research Today paper](#)¹ we reported the results of our analysis of available data sets (ABS Census data, the 'LSAY' [Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth] data set, and VET enrolment data from the NCVET). We found that both industries, and particularly retail, were underserved by the VET system, and that the ABS Census data showed that one-quarter of retail workers and nearly one-fifth of hospitality workers were in management roles. In this second paper, we report on the empirical research fieldwork undertaken for the project, explain the meta-analysis method we undertook to draw together the findings for the whole project, and report the policy recommendations.

Research method

A reference group for the project was established consisting of key industry and careers stakeholders. A 'critical friends' group of relevant academic experts was also set up, to comment on key documents and on the final report. In addition, an international comparative phase was undertaken in Germany and Switzerland, with government departments and academics. There were 264 participants altogether (Table 1 below).

Table 1: participants in 'Careers in Everyday Industries' project

	Respondent types	Numbers of people
Industry stakeholder interviews	Retail, hospitality, career associations, Skills Service Organisations	15
Company case studies – each head office staff and two sites	7 companies	74
Academic experts in the industry areas	4 groups	17
Career practitioner survey	National survey	54
'General public' survey	Staff at two dual-sector universities	59
Recent school leaver groups	First-year students at 3 universities	8
Tertiary student focus groups	Students at 3 universities	19
International comparison	VET experts and officials in Switzerland and Germany	6
Project reference group members	8 (six members – two left their positions and were replaced)	8
Critical friends group members		4
Total		264

1 <https://www.aveetra.org.au/resources/Documents/Research%20Today/Research%20Today%20Oct%202021%20AVETRA.pdf>

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The five main fieldwork phases are described below.

1. Stakeholder interviews

A series of interviews was undertaken with 15 stakeholders drawn from major bodies, including trade unions and employer associations in the retail and hospitality sectors; careers associations; and the then Skills Service Organisation, SkillsIQ. Career snapshots for each of the stakeholders were produced as initial illustrations of where jobs in retail and hospitality could lead. These initial interviews also helped to frame the ensuing fieldwork.

2. Surveys of career practitioners and the general public

Two surveys were administered in 2022: of career practitioners in schools and other organisations, and of the general public (staff at Federation University and Victoria University, both dual-sector universities, were used as a proxy). 54 career practitioners responded to the career practitioner survey and 59 staff members to the general public survey. We had received extensive assistance and feedback from career practitioner associations in developing the career practitioner survey. The questioning areas for career practitioners and the general public were similar, as far as was appropriate.

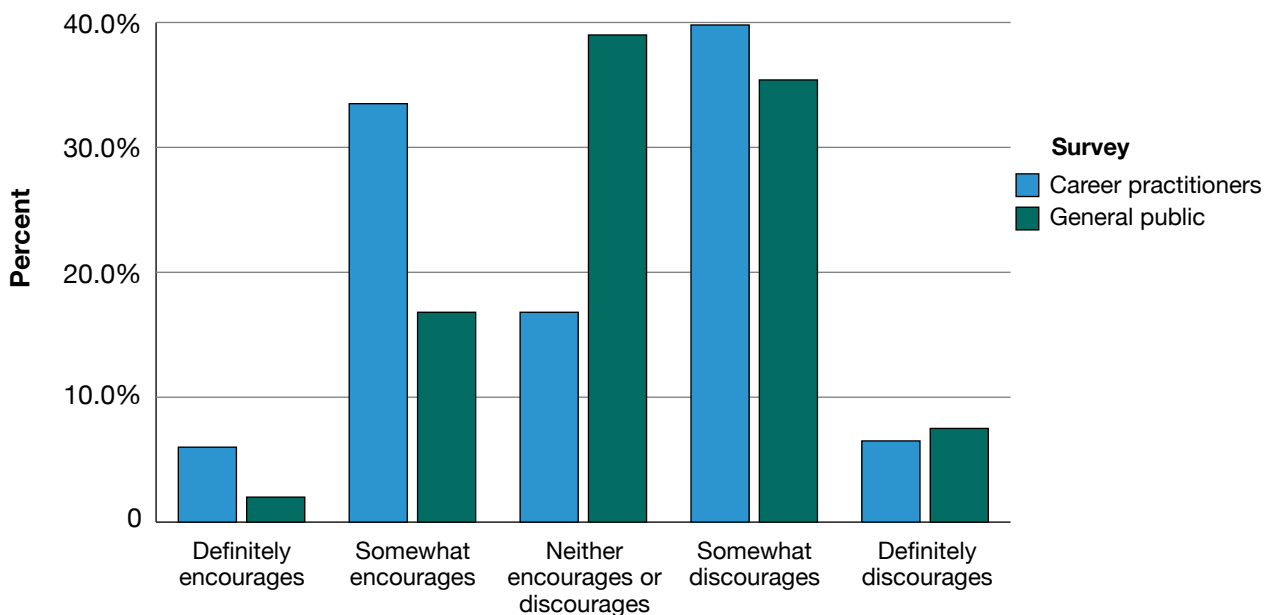
We asked about people’s knowledge about, and perceptions of, each industry and their views about career opportunities and training. We found that over 70% of both groups had worked in retail and only slightly fewer in hospitality. Yet their knowledge of the industries was not extensive; for example over half underestimated the salary

of managers in the industries. Less than 20% rated the industries as having good career prospects. Many detailed responses, which are still being analysed, were obtained to the qualitative questions in the two surveys.

As well as analysing the findings by a range of variables we also compared responses of career practitioners and the ‘general public’. Figure 1 below shows one example of such a comparison, in this instance showing that career practitioners are more likely than the general public to think that part-time working in retail and hospitality as a student encourages young people to think about a career in the industries.

3. Company case studies

Seven company case studies were carried out; three in retail, three in hospitality and one in fast food (quick service restaurants). In each company, interviews were carried out with a small number of headquarters senior staff and a mix of management and non-management staff at two operational locations. The case studies showed the breadth and depth of career opportunities that are available in both industries. Staff were often fast-tracked at an early age into senior and responsible roles. Companies tended to recruit for cultural fit into their organisations rather than on the basis of prior experience or qualifications. Poor public perceptions about the desirability of the industries for long-term careers often led to recruitment difficulties. For each case study, we also extracted three ‘career snapshots’: for a head office senior manager, a manager at an operational site, and an established non-management worker at an operational site.



Do you think that part-time working in retail and hospitality while at school and/or university encourages or discourages young people from imagining long-term careers in those industries?

Figure 1

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4. Young people focus groups and interviews

The aim of these focus groups was to gather data on young people's perceptions of career opportunities in the retail and hospitality industries and how these perceptions are acquired. Two sets of groups and interviews were carried out: recent school leavers (as schools were not allowing access for research), and business students enrolled in higher education and TAFE business courses. Business students were chosen on the basis that these students were less likely to be committed to specific occupations (as opposed to, for example, nursing or teaching) students and therefore may be more open to considering careers in retail and hospitality. Both cohorts shared somewhat negative perceptions of these industries even though many had direct experiences of employment. There was evidence that parents, community and media were reinforcers of these views in their roles as key influencers. In particular, the young people were unable to articulate the depth and breadth of career opportunities retail and hospitality afforded, most defaulting to the frontline roles they had experience of as archetypal jobs. However, many appreciated the experiences and skills developed from working in the industries.

5. Academic expert focus groups

Two focus group were held with academics researching and teaching in the hospitality area and two interviews (one focus group and one single interview) with three academics in the retail area. It emerged that specialist degrees in retail management were no longer offered. In hospitality, all of the academics had industry experience and brought this experience into their teaching. Their students were seen be very vocationally focused, aiming firstly at a full-time job and then at a management career.

Meta-analysis

As with other major research projects, the amount of data generated was immense. But we were determined to distil it as rapidly and accurately as possible, since our aim, as well as writing a report, was to produce advice documents for use in policy and practice by five target groups: Career seekers; Career practitioners; Family, community and other career influencers; Retail and hospitality businesses; and policy makers.

'At a glance' documents

Each advice document was 3-4 pages long, and included a background section, a 'key messages' section listing the main project findings, and a section suggesting future actions for the target group (A 'What next?' section). We called these advice documents 'At a glance' documents after those produced by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER).

The key messages for the documents were summarised under six headings:

- A. Occupational opportunities in the industries
- B. Career paths
- C. Qualifications
- D. What companies are doing
- E. What career practitioners and other career influencers think
- F. What the general public thinks

Since the research team consisted of five researchers in differing discipline areas and with working experience across the main industry areas covered, we devised a method which allowed each to contribute individually to documents which were then finalised collectively. For the key messages, each researcher contributed a separate set of 6-8 dot points under each of the above headings, based on their own interpretations of the project's findings and significance. These points were then consolidated for discussion and distilled into a final set of dot points for each heading. One example follows (Box 1).

Box 1: About the industries: Career paths (Section B)

- Many senior executives in retail and hospitality, and also in other industries and sectors, started out in entry-level roles and worked their way up well-defined career paths into highly desirable and well-remunerated positions.
- Large companies in retail and hospitality offer significant geographical mobility and variety within Australia, and many offer international experience and career paths.
- They offer extensive staff development programs at all levels. It is not necessary to have a qualification to enter the industries.
- There are specialist and supervisory paths in operational sites, and roles in regional and head offices. Some companies offer assistance to employees to purchase franchises. The range of career paths in retail and hospitality is not well-understood by most people outside the industries.
- Many people enter the retail and hospitality workforces as young people, but do not stay to create a career. This high labour turnover can be a significant career advantage for those that do stay, opening up promotion roles.
- There are a large number of management and senior roles in both industries. For example, ABS census data show that 20% of all retail workers are retail managers.
- The ease with which young people gain jobs in retail and hospitality can create a negative impression, as the jobs in these industries are seen as something a person does until they find a "proper job".

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Policy recommendations

We then followed a similar method to produce a list of suggested actions for each of the five target groups, to bring about meaningful change. Box 2 shows the list we produced for policy makers.

'At a glance' documents were produced for each of the five target groups, adapting the content and language as appropriate. These documents will be further customised for implementation, in consultation with people from the relevant industries and the careers industry, with the support of members of the project's reference group, and will also be posted on the project web site. The current drafts are available from Erica Smith, the project leader.

Box 2: What next for policy makers?

Policy makers must consider the following ideas and actions to support and guide the future growth of both industries as among our major employers in Australia:

1. **Policy makers must work more closely with the retail and hospitality industries** to improve public perceptions about the industries and market the industries more effectively for employment prospects. A taskforce should be formed with retail and hospitality leaders, and leaders in careers practice, to find better ways to highlight careers in these industries to career practitioners and others in schools and the tertiary sector.
2. **Public perceptions continue to be negatively influenced by persistent cultural and structural issues in both industries.** In particular, perceptions of the long-term and often prestigious careers in these industries are poorly understood by many people who consider the waiter and shop assistant as archetypal industry roles. These must be consciously countered.
3. **Governments must support appropriate actions taken by the industries** to recover from the closures and major job losses during the COVID 19 pandemic.
4. **Policy makers should consider highlighting the benefits of working in the retail and hospitality sectors**, such as long-term career paths and rewards via websites and in careers literature. The 'Australian Jobs' publication is particularly deficient, with an impoverished representation of the industries. These industries should not have to counter reinforcement of negative stereotypes provided by government publications.
5. In pronouncements and publicity about jobs and training. **Governments should use depictions of, and stories from, retail and hospitality.** These industries are rarely featured. Stories could highlight technological innovation and also people interactions
6. **Policy makers in the jobs, skills and training fields need to inform themselves about the industries;** most have little knowledge, or only memories of working in the industries as young people.
7. **There is a need for review of the formal training and education arrangements (VET & higher education) for these industries.** Currently the industries are under-serviced by qualifications.
8. **Commonwealth and state governments should restore appropriate funding for retail and hospitality qualifications**, so that training providers can resume offering these qualifications, including more jobs from the industries in 'free VET' course lists and consider new apprenticeship arrangements in the industries.
9. **Classifications on ANZSCO need improving** to better recognise job roles within these industries.
10. **Steps are required by Government to support these industries to develop better workforce strategies.** There is a need for more promotion, and greater enforcement, of good employment practices in these industries to ensure that Award and Enterprise Agreement conditions are upheld. Robust action would help to combat public distrust.

Conclusion

An important conclusion was that there was work to be done by all of the target groups: not just policy makers, but also retail and hospitality employers, career practitioners and career influencers (including families), in order to improve understanding of careers in these two key industries. Employers need to consider ways to improve the attractiveness of the industry, and many examples were identified the research. The ultimate beneficiaries will be career seekers, who will be more attuned to available careers, and to how, and in what types of companies, to pursue them.

A methodological outcome of the project was our meta-analysis method, which would be useful for any large-scale research project, especially those that include researchers from a range of discipline backgrounds. ■

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Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the reference group members, the project's critical friends, staff of SkillsIQ, and research assistants Adrian Marshall, Maria Golubovskaya and Tyler Riordan.

Teacher or Technician?

Bruce D. Watson

DEd (Melb), MEdSt (Monash),
GradDipEd (SCV), Cert IV T. & A. (Plenty),
Independent Researcher

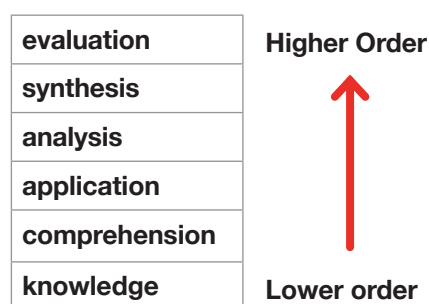
I am a teacher of the original TAFE System. By that I mean I worked in industry then spent a full year, three days a week, at a technical teachers' college studying for a Graduate Diploma in Education that included teaching methodologies and practice. It included two days a week as a supervised trainee teacher with allocated mentors and coaches and being associated with the same school and allocated classes for the whole year, registered by the Technical Schools Division of the Department of Education. I did some 35 critiqued lessons as one part of my overall assessment requirements. Such professional education and preparation is in stark contrast to the requirements of Certificate IV in Training and Assessment that I have also completed and updated through its various iterations when the Australian VET System was introduced and of which thousands of Private Registered Training Organisations became part of.

I have been prompted to write because on enquiring I have been officially notified by the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations that there was insufficient interest to form a "vocational education jobs and skills council." Teaching education *per se* is not achieved via a Cert IV in Training and Assessment but that is the level of education expertise that now appears to be commonly advising on VET System matters. I am very concerned that there is no vocational education jobs and skills council and that such matters will be an afterthought on an obscure meeting agenda, however, the problem is deeper. I don't believe the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment produces vocational teachers. There is no explicit pedagogy, andragogy or heutagogy content in the qualification. I think it has led to a deskilling of the vocational educator workforce. I have speculated how this has led to the wider skills shortage in Australia including the shortage of

appropriately qualified vocational educators. In general, 40 years of VET System has caused an intensification of a learning technician role, i.e. compliant application of instruction, that was once a professional vocational teaching role.

I love vocational teaching whether to under 18-year-old students or adults. This article is a summary about how I practically understand what vocational teaching and vocational learning is after almost a lifetime of involvement. I will leave it to readers to come their own conclusions in the main however I will not sidestep this important issue.

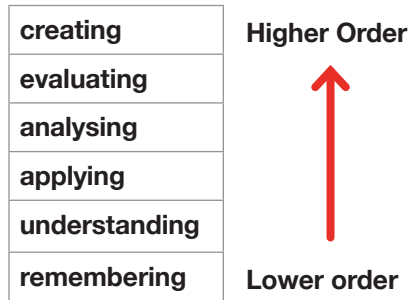
A common component of teaching courses is Bloom's Taxonomy of learning. Benjamin Bloom, in the 1950s developed a taxonomy of thinking skills and ordered them from lower to higher order being: knowledge, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, evaluation. He argued that a student had to have "knowledge" before "comprehension" could occur. And that "application" could only occur with "comprehension". And so on.



Lorin Anderson (2001), a former student of Bloom, published a revised Bloom's Taxonomy in 2001 that used lower to higher order verbs rather than nouns being: remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, creating. Each of these taxonomic elements has a few key verbs associated with it. Once again it was a linear process where, for example, "creating" could not occur without first being able to "analyse".

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With both versions of Blooms Taxonomy I always wanted to add two-way arrows between the categories and one from top to bottom or make them circular diagrams with interconnections between each element as I do not have a linear conception of the learning process. It is not the way our brains work. This probably comes from my original qualification and industry experience as a medical scientist. Our brains don't think linearly like most desk computers are programmed to. For example, learning may begin at any level and move backwards and forwards between the various levels during the process of learning as mistakes are made or when small steps forward are made and added to. Learning can start at any stage in my view of the learning process. And there in lays the need for the art and skill

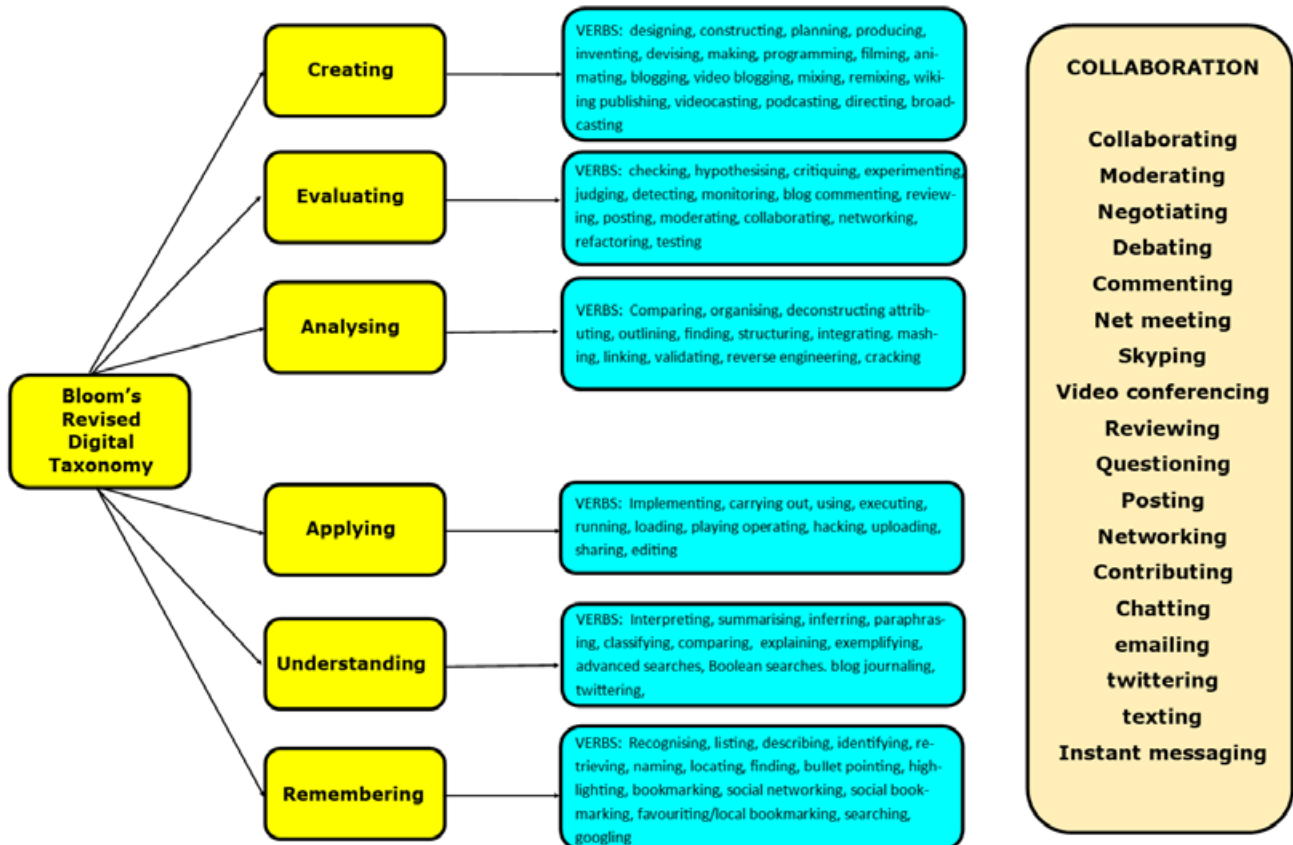
of how a vocational teacher may guide a student in their learning process.

Andrew Churches (2008) developed Bloom's Digital Taxonomy as the previous versions did not address the emergence and integration of information and communication technologies. Overall, this meant that he added more verbs to Anderson's revision of Bloom's Taxonomy such as social bookmarking, searching ("googling"), subscribing, journaling, online etiquette.

Churches diagram, that follows, provides a useful summary of how times have changed with respect to the influence of information and communication technology to learning processes.

I have long had a problem with the concept of competency that is promoted by the Australian VET System. To my mind competency is something that comes from years of experience and regular application and does not equate to being able to do a work task, say, three times for assessment purposes. In such circumstances, a trainee has demonstrated a capacity to be likely to be able to develop competency over time in circumstances where the employment the graduated trainee requires them to regularly undertake that task they have been assessed for. I believe this is an unfortunate outcome of an "industry-led VET System" that excluded vocational educationists

Bloom's Revised Digital Learning Taxonomy 2008



Bruce D. Watson 2023, reproduced after A. Churches, 2008

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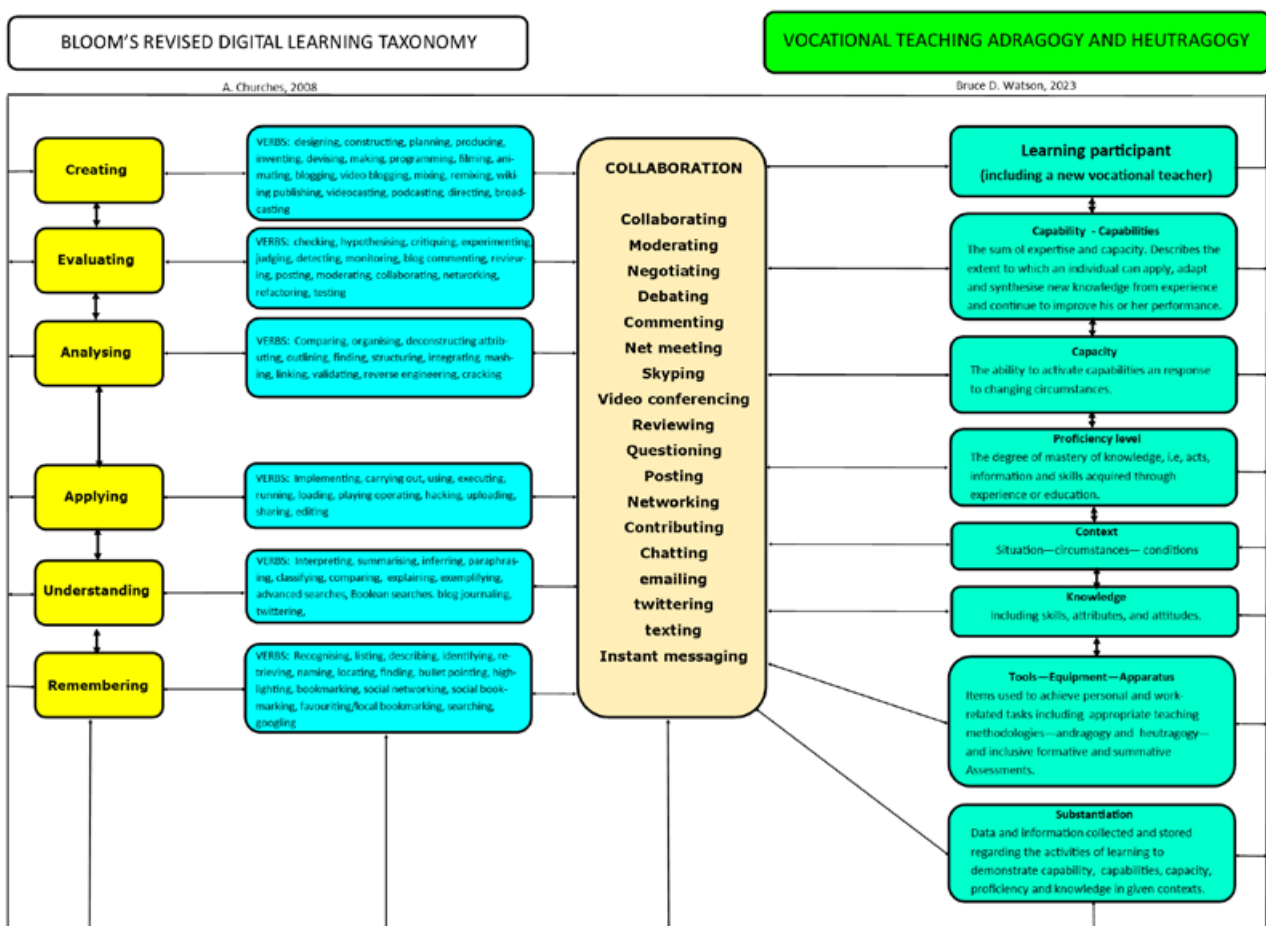
from the inception of the System 40 years ago. And to my mind, it may explain why Department of Employment and Workplace Relations found there was insufficient interest to form a “vocation education jobs and skills council.” That is worth repeating, there was no interest in the formation of a vocation education jobs and skills council in the VET System. So much of the VET System structure has been industry-led for so long that it now appears to be unattractive for vocational educationists, i.e., qualified above Certified IV in Training and Assessment, to become involved as it is now virtually fait accompli and educationist reputations would be at stake due to too many compromises having to be made.

During the 2000s I began devising a diagram that would aim to explain in summary my understanding of competency beyond the Australian VET System view. It has been through several versions and clarifications as I exercised my brain. I have shared the updates for open comment over the years and it seems to resonate with senior VET educationists (see Watson Bruce D.,2022). My model focuses on how to represent competency as a rich construction of specialist tacit and explicit knowledge. The heart of the model is to treat knowledge, not as a possession, but as a contextualised multi-dimensional capability either actual or potential. Where knowledge is defined as acts, information, and skills acquired through experience or education.

In other words, knowledge is a combination of theory, skills and experience they are not exclusive.

When I recently studied and analysed Churches Bloom’s Revised Digital Taxonomy I concluded that it was needed to update my diagram that aimed to explain competency and vocational education teaching. However, more than that, it means the combined diagram would provide a substantial summary for understanding the basis for vocational teaching practice as distinct from what I call “compliant learning technician practice”. I have presented where I have got to below. However, despite the use of double headed arrows, the linear, block-like nature of the diagram still tends to bely the way our human brain’s function, so my next task is to look at how to represent the same material but more characteristic of how human brains function. I envisage and predict a three-dimension diagram or hologram.

I believe the problem of Australian VET System vocational educator qualifications and experience has been known for 40 years i.e., since the inception of the Australian VET System. It is based on the same model of competency that I have demonstrated as being insufficient in academic level and has insufficient consideration of andragogy and heutagogy. In my opinion the Australian VET System is a self-perpetuating workforce deskilling system that previous senior, well qualified and industry experienced TAFE



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vocational educators warned would happen 40 years ago and there is evidence to support this (for example, see Smith and Yasukawa, 2017). The recent Strategic Review of Online Learning in the VET sector asserted that there is no single issue or feature that is an indicator of greater risk to quality. I think there is i.e., the qualification and experience level of entry level VET educators.

I argue that VET trainers who are only qualified to the minimum Certificate IV in Training and Assessment are prepared by the Australian VET System to be compliant learning technicians, not teachers. Calling them 'trainers' is not a compliment. ■

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