

FROM THE PRESIDENT

Research can show the way

Welcome to another edition of Research Today. The value of research that impacts on the Australian vocational and education sectors, workforce, enterprises and urban, regional and remote communities may be difficult to measure but we know it is pervasive and valuable for the nation's future. The 2011 Productivity Commission Report on the Vocational Education and Training Workforce identified the key role to be played by VET practitioners in helping to build workforce skills for economic prosperity. In so doing it also highlights areas in which research could make a significant contribution. Research can investigate what needs to be done to ensure the nation has sufficient VET trainers and assessors with key skills in priority industry areas. It can also highlight the statistical modelling techniques that can be best used to recognise and predict changing skill needs and the policy research activities that can be used to manage these needs. In addition research can help us to comprehend the educational and management practices required for continuous improvement in training provision and leadership.

The Productivity Commission also noted the importance of developing the system's capacity for integrating technology into educational practice, thus providing an environment which enables and supports VET professionals to be engaged in inquiry-based learning and continual development. The provision of sound, reliable, and trusted data to support decisions in policy and planning is also key.

VET researchers can also have a significant impact on how we understand the critical issues in economic and social development across Australia and the region, especially those that relate to demographic change, national and regional mobility of students and labour, and other forms of international migration. VET researchers can also help enterprises answer the difficult questions of policy and business, and highlight the need for community engagement and social justice questions to be addressed by ethical and empowering solutions. Shared responsibilities with different local, national and international agencies and training institutions through partnerships and joint entrepreneurial activities also enable researchers to garner the type of information that can be used to shed light on these critical issues.

AVETRA researchers are not only able to undertake research and speak to these critical issues

but their engagement in research projects and participation in a vibrant research community have the potential to extend their impact to well beyond its boundaries. Their activities can have an impact on learners, educational leaders, industry and communities.

While the discussions about research and relationship to industry continue at a policy level, AVETRA researchers continue to lead the way in demonstrating how to partner effectively with industry through training and research. The value of AVETRA researchers (no matter where they work and live) is evident in the considered evidence and analysis they provide to help different communities think deeply and make informed and difficult decisions.

“ Research can help us to comprehend the educational and management practices required for continuous improvement in training provision and leadership. ”

In this edition researchers deal with issues of VET sector responsiveness to future skills demands, the changing nature of VET practitioner work, and how best to teach VET teachers to teach. Findings are also presented on the labour market and training outcomes from the VET system, as well as from resettlement and vocational programs preparing new migrants to learn English and to move into the workforce. We also learn more about how the increasingly culturally diverse nature of resident populations in aged care facilities presents challenges for personal carers who work with them. These are issues that are current and topical in the VET sector and provide examples of how our researchers (also in partnership with researchers from other sectors) are able to speak to the critical issues of the day. ■



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Long-term outcomes of Australian Vocational Education

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The most readily available source of information about vocational education and training (VET) student outcomes in Australia comes from the Student Outcome Survey (SOS) conducted each year by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER). This survey is undertaken some six months after students complete their courses and generally shows more people are employed after completing their courses than were employed beforehand. However, to fully appreciate any benefits of training, it is imperative to know whether any immediate benefits transpire into long-term gains. Using annual data on 4,200 VET graduates from the Household Income and Labour Dynamics Australia (HILDA) from 2001 to 2014, we estimated average benefits on employment, hourly wages, earnings, work hours and occupation status up to five years following graduation.

The paper built on previous studies (Ryan 2002, Karmel and Nguyen 2006, Leigh 2008, Lee and Coelli 2010, Karmel and Fieger 2012 and Stromback 2012)

in two important ways. First, it estimated outcomes by qualification level attained relative to previously held levels – first post-school qualification and qualifications completed at lower levels, the same level and at higher levels than previously attained. Categorising qualification attainment relative to previous levels attained is important because more than half of all qualifications completed in the HILDA data are at the same or lower levels. Second, we estimate benefits using individual changes in labour market outcomes before-and-after training (called fixed effects estimation). The advantage of this approach over that used by previous studies, which rely on differences in outcomes across people who do and do not complete training, is that our results are not confounded by differences in traits, such as motivation and ability that may affect both outcomes and qualification attainment.

“ For males and females across all of the categories of qualification attainment, we find that benefits that appear in the first year after training are very stable over time. ”

Initial labour market benefits depend crucially on increasing existing credentials

For both men and women, the labour market payoffs to VET in the first year after training (relative to the year prior) are restricted to qualifications that increase existing post-school credentials (first and higher level attainments). Interestingly, we find stronger effects for women, especially for rates of full-time employment and earnings, but smaller effects for hourly wages. For women, first and higher-level qualifications are estimated to both increase rates of full-time employment by around 10 percentage points and increase earnings by 28% and 10% respectively. Only a first qualification is estimated to increase the hourly wages of women, by an estimated 3%. For men, first and higher-level qualifications are estimated to both increase rates of full-time employment by around 3 percentage points, increase hourly wages by 5% and 9% respectively and increase earnings by 11% and 9% respectively. The employment and earnings benefits to women appear stronger than for men because VET training for women

is associated less with an established employment contract (especially apprentice/trainee training). As a result, attaining a qualification is more valuable to women as a credential for

gaining employment, especially full-time employment. Accounting for difference in labour market status prior to VET is important for measuring any benefits and may explain why previous studies that rely on comparisons between women with different qualification levels find weaker benefits for females.

Evidence that students benefit from initial post-secondary and higher-level VET qualifications suggests that it is reasonable for governments to expect students to pay some of the costs of training. For same-level and lower level qualifications, this rationale is not so clear, with no clear benefits found. However, this is not an argument for government to fund the entire cost of courses completed at this level. There may be other benefits that may accrue to the individual, such as improved job satisfaction, and any change in government funding needs to be weighed-up against the change in public

benefits, such as the transfer of new technology.

Short-term benefits from VET may be indicative of long-term benefits

For males and females across all of the categories of qualification attainment, we find that benefits that appear in the first year after training are very stable over time. An implication is that there is little apparent need to extend short-term data collections such as SOS to fully capture the extent of benefits of VET. That said, estimating benefits of VET using the SOS collection is limited by a dearth of labour market history information. The importance of labour market history in measuring the benefits of VET for people who are entering the system at mature-age is demonstrated in this study by the much stronger employment effects found for women compared to men when we using fixed effects estimation. This finding highlights the need for incorporating labour market history into the SOS collection, either through expanding the survey or by linking it with administrative datasets. ■

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The full paper is available at: www.melbourneinstitute.com/downloads/working_paper_series/wp2016n35.pdf

The changing nature of work in the VET sector

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Trainers in institutional VET settings have experienced considerable changes to their work in the past two decades. These have impacted on the ways in which they understand their professional identities and their relationship with other parts of the VET sector (Chappell & Johnston, 2003; Harris, Simons & Clayton, in press).

The roles of VET trainers/practitioners have not only expanded; they have also diversified. Quality teaching and learning practices emphasise the development of self-paced, independent learners. Many trainers now ‘facilitate learning’, rather than undertaking traditional face-to-face training. They are learning managers, requiring effective communication skills, relevant and up-to-date content knowledge and the capacity to deliver and assess in a wide range of contexts (NCVER, 2004). Some VET practitioners are acting as ‘learner brokers’ to learners, enterprises and providers.

The drive towards improved efficiency has meant that many staff have had to become more multi-skilled. In turn, this has made the work more varied and more interesting and has provided more opportunity for career development. On the other hand, it has also meant that VET trainers have had to take on wider ranges of administrative and other functions for which they are not adequately trained, and are not properly recognised as part of their work. In addition to these changes, the administrative and compliance systems they use have been reported as over-designed, over-regulated and not ‘user friendly’ (NCVER, 2004). TAFE managers also report that full-time teaching staff are *‘increasingly expected to undertake administrative functions associated with maintaining and organising learning environments serviced by the comings and goings of sessional staffs and short term contract staffs’* (Chappell & Johnston 2003, p52).

These developments have created the need for experienced staff to become ‘learning environment managers’ (Chappell & Johnston, 2003).

As a consequence of shifting work roles and responsibilities public VET trainers are experiencing concerns about their work. These VET trainers feel a considerable amount of tension between their core activities of teaching and training and

the pressure to become involved in other areas such as revenue-raising activities and administrative functions. Another tension is trying balance flexibility in delivery time (how long and when the session can be held), with what the clients are able to attend or what their employers are willing to sacrifice for the employee’s learning. This is especially the case when VET training packages must comply with the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) that has its own set of requirements that adhere to a consistency of teaching and learning outcomes (NCVER, 2004).

Throughout the past decade the composition of students in the VET sector has also changed dramatically, with student populations becoming increasingly

“ Quality teaching and learning practices emphasise the development of self-paced, independent learners. ”

more diverse in terms of age, ethnicity, and cultural and religious background. The changing relationship between trainers and students has also meant that students are now seen as consumers or clients. A shift in the relationship between student and trainers and the changing and diverse nature of student cohorts has meant that trainers can sometimes find it hard to understand and meet their clients’ needs. In addition, the consequence of trainers not understanding these client needs have sometimes led to student lack of motivation to engage in learning

Research reported a decade ago by the National centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER 2004) described how the Netherlands and Australia were using network learning theory as a means for better explaining the relationship between learning and work. The report suggests that trainers have a role in creating spaces for learning. To create meaningful spaces for learning, however, requires trainers to spend time and effort in understanding the culture of the enterprises with which they work. They will need to develop and draw on practical skills and knowledge bases that are significantly different from those held by the internal workplace trainer, that is, the trainer who works ‘inside’ the enterprise. This is a practice which has been adapted in the Australian VET sector. Young & Guile (1997, p205) have indicated that, in their new roles, VET professionals

need to be able to confront a range of new demands, including:

- supporting the skill development process for an increasingly diverse population of learners
- having the ability to work simultaneously across a number of geographical locales, usually in collaboration with other professionals
- supporting the development of transferable skills (for example, key competencies), and
- developing the ability to support enterprises as well as their own organisations in becoming learning organisations.

This 1997 range of demands are still at the very forefront of VET practitioner’s role today.

The emerging demands of facilitating online learning have resulted in significant expansion in the role of VET practitioners. A study of 18 practitioners (Harris, Simons & Clayton, 2005) who were involved in online delivery found that:

- the adoption of online delivery was driving a job redesign process which was not reflected in current human resource policies within organisations
- there was a blurring of specialist functions which required practitioners to be multi-skilled and prepared to take on a range of functions, some of which were previously the province of middle management
- relationship building with the students and colleagues is a critical component of the role of an online practitioner, and
- Work conditions of participants – particularly in relation to work intensification and difficulties in achieving sustainable work/family life – are having an impact on the realisation of this newly emerging role for VET practitioners.

These changes in the role of VET practitioners are both challenging and empowering, but they may also prove to be stressful and disempowering—that is, challenging and empowering for those who choose to learn and grow, and stressful and disempowering for those who choose not to do so, or are ready to retire.

Changes in vocational work, driven by the accelerating impact of emergent technologies and globalising capitalism,

Continued on following page >

From previous page

is at the same time transforming both work design and conceptions of the contemporary worker (ANTA, 2003a). This has implications for vocational trainers; it requires them to be learning specialists in order to keep up with the impacts of technological advancement, rather than just vocational skills experts. Vocational trainers will need to be more flexible, autonomous, motivated, orientated to lifelong learning and self-regulating in order to be industry current and connected to the requirements of the VET industry (Chappell & Johnston, 2003). With the rapidly transforming nature of vocational work (Darwin, 2007) it will become extremely challenging for vocational practitioners to create learning in a context that is relevant, current and sustainable. ■

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TAFE Queensland and CSIRO Collaborate on Future Skilling Demand and Delivery in a Digital Economy

Daniel Kaden, TAFE Qld

In 2016 TAFE Queensland and CSIRO (Commonwealth, Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation) embarked on a joint research project to examine how the vocational education and training (VET) sector can best prepare itself to address future skilling needs. The research approached this from two perspectives. Firstly, it conducted an examination of current skilling demands and projections of those 'skills clusters' that would be in highest demand in the future. Secondly, it examined the changes in training approaches to delivery that would best facilitate the delivery of skills and ensure that the sector remained responsive to students during increased levels of digital capability and disruption.

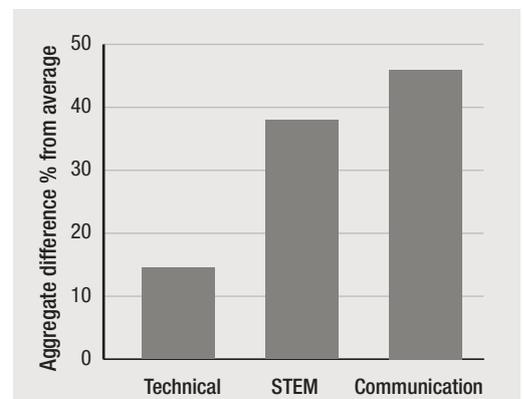
The research applied both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative research built on CSIRO's 'foresighting' and 'megatrends' methodologies by complementing this work with analysis of employment data. This data was sourced from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the Occupational Information Network (O*NET) provided by the United States Department of Labor, Employment and Training and was used to identify trends in demand for skills in the Australian economy.

To support this analysis, TAFE Queensland and CSIRO worked together to identify a series of key stakeholders to be interviewed for the project. These included VET and educational technology providers, students, employers, researchers, and government department officials. The interviews focussed on the opportunities that the future would present for the sector, both in regards to the increasing importance of having a highly skilled workforce and the role that digital technology would play in delivering those skills.

The TAFE Queensland Chief Executive Officer, Jodi Schmidt, launched the report at the National Vocational Education and Training Research Conference in Rockhampton (2016) by delivering the key note address to the conference. In this address Ms Schmidt and Dr

Claire Mason from CSIRO provided an overview of the findings from the work. These were organised around the following themes:

- **Digital disruption will drive increasing skills demand:** Digital disruption refers to the difficulties experienced in workplaces by the need to keep up with rapid changes in technologies. The demand for VET qualifications is expected to increase as this disruption requires workers to regularly re-skill and upskill. Interestingly the study revealed that VET qualifications and job vacancies are significantly and positively correlated and illustrates that the sector is critical in supporting the labour force to realign itself to emerging demand.
- **Demand for communications skills is expected to grow quicker than for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics) skills:** The research identified growth across the Communication, STEM and Technical skills clusters. Despite a strong focus on STEM skills in recent times the research found that demands for communication skills were growing at the fastest rate. The analysis drilled down further into this skills cluster and found that service orientation (actively looking for ways to help people) and negotiation (bringing others together to discuss issues and trying to reconcile differences) as the two communication skill subsets that were in highest



Comparative employment demand for STEM, Communication and Technical skills (2011-15), aggregated for skills displaying above average demand

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From previous page

demand. These skills will certainly be critical as the Australian economy shifts from a mining-based toward a service-based economy.

- **Lifelong learning will continue to increase:** Leading on from the above point, the traditional demographics of the VET market will shift as individuals will increasingly be required to undertake education and training throughout their careers to continually enhance their skill set. Employment relationships are expected to become shorter and individuals will be expected to have higher levels of flexibility to engage with learning and training throughout their work lives.
- **Training package responsiveness must be addressed:** The study found that increasing the industry-responsiveness of the sector will be vital as rapid developments in digital technology will see workforce requirements change on a more

frequent basis. The existing approach to training package development, review and change can often take a number of years and this may increasingly inhibit the sector's ability to respond to future skills demand.

- **Digital technology is expected to present opportunities for training delivery:** There is a clear role for digital technology in the future delivery of education and training. This impact will be multifaceted in the sense that educators will need to become proficient in the use of digital tools in the delivery of training. Moreover, the expanding role of digital technology in the labour market will see increasing demand for graduates with a strong foundation in the use of this technology.
- **Face-to-face teaching will remain important:** The focus of the research was on the opportunities and challenges that the digital economy would bring for skills demand and

delivery. However, the qualitative component identified a strong ongoing need for face-to-face learning. The role of the teacher will continue to be integral to the engagement and mentoring of learners, particularly in the context of lifelong learning.

This study was the first time that TAFE Queensland had partnered with CSIRO; it provides an example of the role that VET providers can increasingly play in national discourse on the sector. As was originally hoped the discussions that have been stimulated by the work have been valuable in identifying the long term direction for the sector. Additionally, this work has opened opportunities for TAFE Queensland to be involved in additional projects of this nature, including a current partnership with CSIRO examining regional workforce requirements in Queensland.

The full report is available here: tafeqld.edu.au/resources/pdf/about-us/research-papers/vet-era.pdf. ■

In transition: employment outcomes of former AMES Australia clients

Rizwana Samshad, AMES Australia

Adult Multicultural Education Services, Australia (AMES Australia) provides a comprehensive range of settlement support, English language and literacy tuition, and vocational training and employment services to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers primarily resident in Victoria; it also provides employment services in Western Sydney.

In 2015-16, AMES Australia undertook a research project titled, Transitions to Employment to examine the employment outcomes and experiences of its former education and training clients in Melbourne, Victoria. The participants in the project are clients who attended two employment focussed programs at AMES Australia in 2014-15. These programs are: (i) Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) Program¹ and (ii) Vocational Courses

(Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care). The participants were mainly newly arrived migrants and humanitarian entrants. The majority of them did not work in Australia prior to the program. A total number of 663 former AMES Australia clients were surveyed for this research; 460 SLPET clients and 203 Vocational Course clients. Data was collected through telephone interviews six months after the clients had completed the course. This client feedback helped to identify the components of programs that have been effective in securing employment. Some of the key findings about these two programs are provided below.

Outcomes from the Settlement Language Pathways to Employment and Training (SLPET) Program

The SLPET program has helped to prepare respondents for their transition to work in Australia.

- For many this transition to work is underpinned by their continuing to improve their English and self-confidence. Having access to additional support (outside of the formally-funded program) provided by AMES Australia teaching staff (including, reviewing resumes, acting as referee and circulating job opportunities) has also helped.
- Sixty-one percent of respondents were available for work six months post-program; 39% of respondents were not available for work.
- Of those who were available for work, 56% were employed. For the majority of respondents, this was their first job in Australia. The remaining 44% who were available for work were unemployed and actively looking for work.
- Of the 39% who were not available for work, more than a quarter (27%) were engaged in further study; 12% of respondents were not available to work due to family responsibilities or personal reasons.
- Respondents had been employed in a range of occupations prior to migration. However, many experienced a loss of career status in Australia where a

¹ SLPET is a sub-program of the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP). The Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) is funded by the Australian Government: Department of Education and Training. The AMEP provides up to 510 hours of English language tuition to eligible migrants and humanitarian entrants to help them learn foundation

English language and settlement skills to enable them to participate socially and economically in Australian society. The SLPET program is of 200 hours duration, in addition to the AMEP entitlement. The program includes a minimum of 120 hours English language tuition and a work placement component of 40 to 80 hours.

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From previous page

high proportion were in low-status occupations including labourers.

- Of the employed respondents, the majority (67%) worked on a casual basis (mostly regular work); relatively few were in permanent positions or self-employed.
- The use of online employment websites was the most common method used for job seeking. However, the most successful way of securing employment was to engage with personal, social and professional connections. This includes the SLEPT program that offers participants the opportunity to broaden their social and professional networks through classroom participation and workplace experience.
- Six months after the program, respondents who were looking for work were often disconnected from sources of support for job searching. Few were eligible for or connected to formal employment assistance.

Outcomes from Vocational Courses

Vocational courses (Certificate III in Individual Support and Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care) had a higher level of success compared to SLPET in facilitating entry into work.

- Eighty-two percent of respondents were available to work six months after completing the course; 67% of them

“ If new migrants are provided with sufficient English language support, Australian workplace skills and relevant industry qualifications, they can gain or choose pathways to attain employment outcomes. ”

were employed and 33% were actively looking for work. This means two in every three respondents who were available to work had a job six months after completing the course. For most respondents who were employed, this was also their first job in Australia.

- The courses were very successful in securing employment that was directly related to the areas of training. Of the employed respondents, 84% were working as Community and Personal Service Workers.
- The work placement component of the courses was a key factor in finding work; 27% of respondents who secured employment were offered a position where they completed their work placement.
- Of the employed respondents, the majority (68%) were working on a casual basis and relatively few were in permanent positions or self-employed.
- Of the part-time workers, 44% said they would like to work more hours.
- Eighteen percent of respondents were not available for work due to further study or family responsibilities and other personal reasons.

- Respondents who were looking for work required more post-program support to find employment. The major barriers for finding work were related to insufficient local experience, lack of confidence in spoken English, lack of networks and increased social isolation.

Settlement and finding employment in a new country can be challenging for many migrants, especially for those who have limited proficiency in the host country's language. Better settlement outcomes and participation of migrants in the host society can be achieved when migrants are able to secure employment. Our findings show that if new migrants are provided with sufficient English language support, Australian workplace skills and relevant industry qualifications, they can gain or choose pathways to attain employment outcomes. Positive employment and training outcomes are possible through programs like SLPET and Vocational Courses that work closely with new migrants and support them in their transition to work or further studies.

The summary reports of the SLPET Program and Vocational Courses are available on the AMES Australia website at www.ames.net.au/research-and-policy/research. The full reports will be available in April 2017. ■

Work and life in residential aged care

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This study investigates the relationships and interactions between personal carers and residents of residential aged care facilities. Its aim is to increase the knowledge base in this area to inform further developments in education and research. Information is collected via face-to-face interviews with personal carers, residents, and managers from six residential aged care facilities located in the outer suburbs of Melbourne, Australia.

As Australia's population is ageing, there are immediate and future demands in providing care for the increasingly diverse requirements of elderly people from different cultural backgrounds. In these very busy and complex residential environments the work of personal carers (who provide the majority of personal care to residents) is emotionally and physically

demanding and requires good knowledge and skills. In addition, the increased cultural diversity of residents means that there will also be an ongoing demand for personal carers from various cultural backgrounds who will be expected to provide individual, comprehensive, and appropriate care to residents.

“ As Australia's population is ageing, there are immediate and future demands in providing care for the increasingly diverse requirements of elderly people from different cultural backgrounds. ”

This study draws on narrative inquiry and grounded theory as its theoretical and methodological base. It explores the experiences of personal carers and residents, from diverse backgrounds to better understand how workers and

residents manage their relationships and interactions. In doing so the study analyses the motivations, backgrounds, beliefs, experiences, perceptions, and expectations of these workers and residents to see how these all shape the nature of their relationships and interactions. The research also considers how these experiences are shaped by cultural differences and the challenges that arise from co-existing in complex living and working environments.

The findings shed light on the everyday realities and complexities facing residents and personal carers who share living and working environments. They also point to a number of issues that require attention to foster better understanding of practice, education, and research in the field. These issues can be organized under five key themes: relocation and transition;

Continued on following page >

From previous page

reciprocity in caring; death and dying; culturally different approaches in caring; and, intercultural communication.

Relocation and transition: When older people relocate to residential aged care facilities, the transition process involved for most of them is fraught. It usually happens during the most difficult and vulnerable times of their lives when they endeavour to come to terms with life in communal environments and accept that they are no longer able to care for themselves. This transition process also has an effect on personal carers as they seek to negotiate, establish, and maintain individual relationships with residents in these busy environments. As they get to know each other and become familiar with each other's cultural practices the development of new relationships between residents and personal carers require considerable contribution from both parties.

Reciprocity in caring: The provision and receiving of personal care is intimate in nature. It is clear from the findings of this study that the reciprocal relationships established between many personal carers and residents are emotional investments which are based on mutual understandings, respect, and caring about each other. It is also clear that for both carer and resident these investments are meaningful, and rewarding. In addition, the fostering of such relationships can be considered to be an essential part of the carer role, as well as an essential part of the resident experience.

Death and dying: In many instances, residents live in these residential facilities for several years before they die and during this time form strong attachments with personal carers. For personal carers the death of residents brings grief. Their grief is often intensified when it is not acknowledged or understood by other staff in their workplaces which may be due to a lack of understanding of the strong emotional connections that are developed during personal care work.

Culturally different approaches in caring: Many facilities have residents from culturally diverse backgrounds and there is awareness among managers that it is beneficial to employ personal carers who share similar cultural characteristics. They believe that this assists in the provision of culturally appropriate care and the development of constructive caring relationships. However, the research findings also indicate that there are individual differences between personal carers and residents in regard to what is considered to be culturally appropriate care.

Inter-cultural communication: Although English is the common language spoken among personal carers in their

workplaces, there are misunderstandings that often occur between each other and their residents. This is often due to mispronunciation and difficulties in understanding the spoken English of those from different cultures.

This study places in the foreground issues that are critical for the delivery of appropriate care to residents in increasingly culturally diverse settings. It provides a platform for further discussion about the direction and priorities of aged care education, and in particular, the importance of providing ongoing professional development for personal carers to equip them for working and interacting with each other and their residents. ■

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Open access to the eThesis (which contains the recommendations) is available via the Monash University Repository: arrow.monash.edu.au/hdl/1959.1/1240499

Teacher leadership in VET-lead vocational teachers traversing the high seas of change in VET

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Training reform in Australian vocational education and training since the 1980s has been aimed at fundamentally reshaping its purpose, processes and systems, moving it towards a sector that is competitively funded to meet the expanding needs of the Australian economy as cost effectively as possible. The rise of neo-liberal thinking in economics and politics has seen a raft of policies introduced to further the cause of the free market and reduce government intervention and influence. VET has been ripe for these initiatives because it traverses the boundaries of work, industry, economics and education.

The aim of the research study was to examine the importance of teacher leadership within the context of change. The study investigated the utilisation of experienced Lead Vocational Teachers (LVTs) in TAFE Queensland, and explored the impact of the reforms on their teaching lives, teaching practices, philosophical leanings, and professional identity and values. The multi-stage, mixed methods study was undertaken from 2009-2014 in three stages. The first stage entailed four focus groups with 25 participants drawn from nine institutes. The second stage gathered data through an online survey distributed to 738 LVTs across thirteen institutes which attracted 245 respondents (33% response rate). In the final stage, eight interviews were undertaken with one

“ LVTs wanted a more strategic approach to the deployment of their skills and knowledge. ”

LVT, four LVT coordinators, two School Directors and one HR manager.

The study found that there was a values dissonance existing between teaching staff and management that needed to be addressed to enable a more cohesive organisation with a shared vision. It identified that teacher leadership occupied a troubled space that offered little opportunity for teacher progression or autonomy of action. It revealed that teacher leadership was ill-defined and largely used to fill gaps in front-line management and administration.

Despite the demands of an increasingly complex work environment requiring more educational leadership LVT educational expertise and knowledge remained untapped (especially in terms of informing educational decisions, leading educational initiatives, and building teacher capability).

The findings indicated that LVTs wanted a more strategic approach to the deployment of their skills and knowledge to make teacher leadership more accountable, achievable and effective. It concluded that the LVT role could be more effectively utilised by enabling a more fluid combination of job roles, enhancing teacher leadership skills through training and development, and forming frameworks that would encourage the use of more distributive forms of leadership. It was believed that these initiatives would do much to establish a culture of mutual trust and unity, build business and networks in the community, and improve teaching and learning capacity. ■

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Why Cert IV TAE matters

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Since the 1980s there has been considerable research into the changing role and identity of the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) teacher in Australia. However, little research has been conducted as to what these changes imply for TAFE teacher education, specifically how the curriculum for this education may need to be revised accordingly (Simons & Harris 2008; Wheelahan 2010; Clayton 2010; Guthrie 2011; Wheelahan & Moodie 2011).

This study represents a curriculum inquiry and aims to investigate how teachers in the Victorian TAFE system might best be prepared to teach. It uses a qualitative case study methodology to explore the skills and knowledge that TAFE teachers require to teach. In so doing it takes account of the perceptions of experienced teachers, neophyte teachers, and senior TAFE managers in three Melbourne metropolitan TAFEs. As part of this inquiry a key policy document, the existing mandated minimum teaching qualification, the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment TAE40110, was also examined.

A key finding to emerge from this study is that TAFE teachers are always second careerists and their employment decisions often 'ad hoc'; this is perceived to be true by employers and employees. This finding is not new, and can be found in others' research reviewed for this study (Guthrie et al. 2006; Guthrie et al. 2011; Wheelahan 2011). It is also unremarkable given the nature of TAFE teaching which requires the TAFE teacher to be an industry expert or other sector teaching expert prior to commencing their teaching role. What is remarkable

is the variable teaching preparation that participants report is required to become a TAFE teacher and the role that initial TAFE teacher education curriculum plays in the formation of different types of professional identity. This 'ad hoc' journey to employment, and teacher preparation, reflects a non-systematic route to becoming a professional TAFE teacher. The Cert IV in Training and Assessment (Cert IV) affords a technicist approach to the preparation and formation of a TAFE teacher; it aims to prepare teachers to be both an 'organisational professional' and 'work ready'. However, the development of a TAFE teaching professional requires more than a focus on organisational professionalism (Evetts 2009; Avis & Bathmaker 2009; Bathmaker 2013). It requires a balance between the practical reality of TAFE teaching and initial TAFE teacher preparation – it is this balance which will assist teachers in their journey from novice to expert.

“ The development of a TAFE teaching professional requires more than a focus on organisational professionalism. ”

In conclusion there is a need for strengthening the Cert IV by placing a greater emphasis

on pedagogy and implementing features of some conceptual models. The first model sees formal qualifications linked to opportunities for practitioners to meet to discuss their practice; this is referred to as the 'qualifications model'. The second model is one that views learning to be a teacher as inextricably linked to working with an experience mentor; this is referred to as the 'mentor model'. Both models share similar features and can be strengthened and adapted for different contexts and cohorts. Together with a reworked Cert IV, I posit that these models for teacher professional development offer a productive start to a discussion of the kind of professional identities that may serve TAFE well into the future. ■

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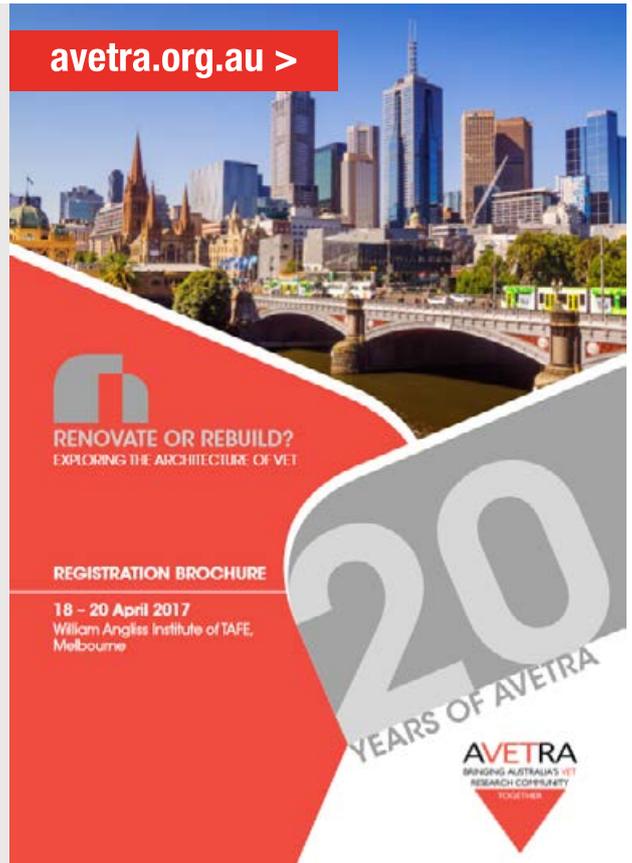
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