



Steven Hodge
 President, AVETRA

“...it is important for our sector that all forms of scholarship are recognised and results and insights are shared.”

FROM THE PRESIDENT

One of the peculiarities of vocational education and training (VET) is that a lot of research is taking place that isn't widely known. Of course, much depends on how we define 'research'. People searching for a definition often draw on Ernest Boyer's (1996) work on different kinds of 'scholarship'. He argued there's a scholarship of *discovery* (e.g. inventing a vaccine for COVID-19), of *integration* (e.g. interdisciplinary research), of *application* (e.g. research that applies knowledge to solve specific challenges) and finally a scholarship of *teaching and learning* (e.g. how to improve delivery of an online program).

People working in VET are often involved in the scholarships of *application* and *teaching and learning* to address real-world issues. However, in relation to this work, there are not the clear mechanisms and expectations of publishing that lead to sharing the insights generated. Sometimes these types of scholarship are not thought of as 'research' and are not called 'research'. Perhaps the scholarship of discovery is what many people think of as 'research', but it is important for our sector that all forms of scholarship are recognised and results and insights are shared.

AVETRA is committed to giving a voice to all researchers in the VET field regardless of the type of scholarship they pursue. AVETRA's strategy involves expanding the range of publication options for researchers, and *Research Today* reflects our commitment to sharing as much as possible of the scholarship taking place in VET. In particular, if you are out there solving problems through the scholarships of *application* and *teaching and learning*, the *Research Today* journal is interested in publishing a report on your project. If you are wondering if what you are doing would be of interest to the community of VET researchers, simply contact the *Research Today* editor, Andrew Williamson, to discuss your project. If you are solving problems in VET, it is likely that someone else can learn and benefit from your work. *Research Today* is the ideal way to share your insights. ■

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FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to the May 2021 edition of AVETRA's *Research Today* magazine.

I have been delighted at the volume and quality of contributions to this (and [the last](#)) edition of *Research Today*. The refreshed focus on sharing work from early career and VET practitioner

researchers alongside seasoned VET researchers has attracted contributions from TAFE teacher research projects, ISS Institute Fellowship reports, international research and ARC project derivatives. The range of subjects and perspectives is both riveting and inspiring.

Thank you to all those who have contributed to this edition of *Research Today* and made it such an interesting read. I look forward to your continued engagement with AVETRA, sharing your research with others and enriching yourself with theirs.

If you are likewise inspired and want to share your own research, please look out for the call for papers ahead of the next edition (October 2021), or contact me through email at andrew.williamson@holmesglen.edu.au ■

The pedagogy of innovation: collaborative challenge-based learning

Melanie Williams
William Angliss Institute

Context

The world of work is changing. Routine jobs are being overtaken by digital technology, automation and virtualisation. Training workers in higher level technical skills is no longer sufficient. Increasingly, the human contribution is most valued in unpredictable, ambiguous and uncertain situations in which employees must work together to deal with complex problems.

Higher order skills, commonly called twenty first century skills, which are required for these new environments are variously defined but typically include critical and creative thinking, communication, teamwork, digital competence and personal and social skills such as emotional intelligence, adaptability and resilience. Yet commentary on the Australian VET system suggests that these skills are not being adequately developed: see for example Commonwealth of Australia, 2017.¹

Aims

I received an International Specialist Skills Institute Fellowship to investigate international approaches to twenty first skills development. This larger ethnographic study involved ten site visits to vocational and higher education institutions in four European countries and New Zealand. However, the focus of this article is the Basque VET pedagogy of collaborative challenge-based learning they call 'ETHAZI', which was developed specifically to foster twenty first skills. The aim of this part of the study was to understand how the ETHAZI model developed twenty first century skills and to gain insight into its strengths and weaknesses through stakeholder perceptions.

Method

Data was gathered through individual and group interviews with teachers, students and managers across four sites in the Basque Country involving approximately 16 staff and six students, through observation of classroom practice, and through examination of teaching resources and purpose-built training spaces. I was also given access to a pre-published, commissioned evaluation of the model.

¹ Commonwealth of Australia. (2017). *Training product reform: what is the case for change?* <http://hdl.voced.edu.au/10707/447538>.

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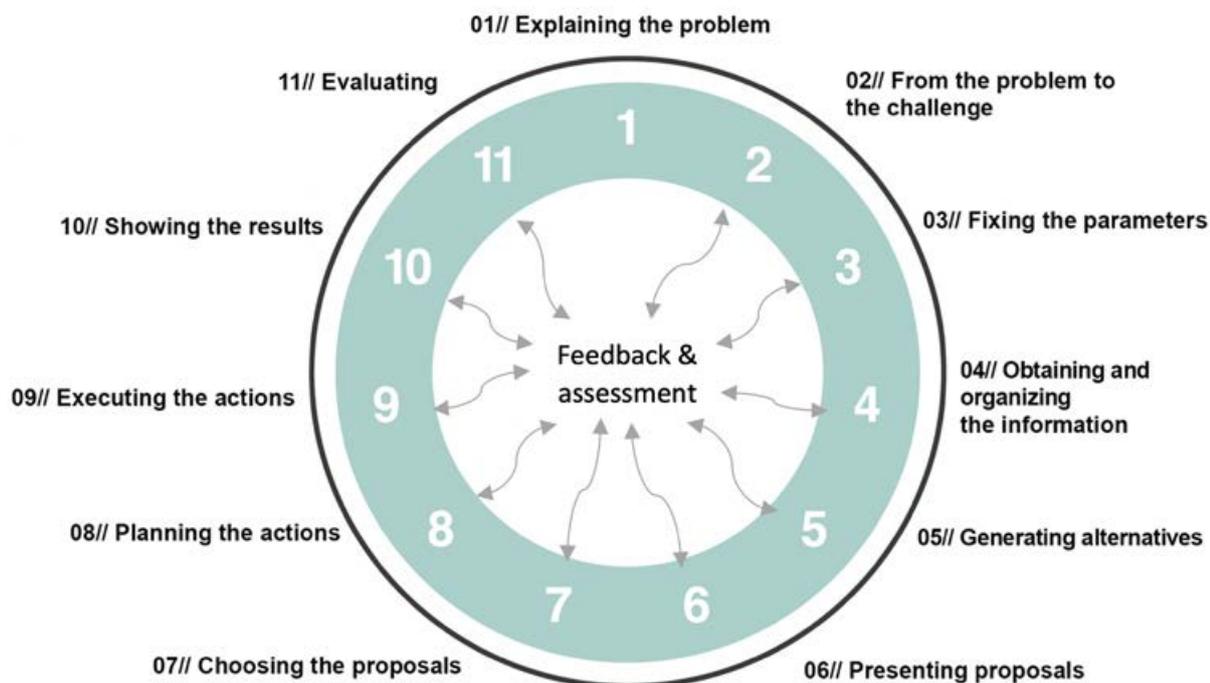


Figure 1: The ETHAZI challenge cycle

Collaborative challenge-based learning

The model has four key characteristics: it involves holistic learning, in which multiple units are reorganised into cycles of 11-step challenges that mirror real-world workplace scenarios; it is delivered by self-managing, multi-disciplinary teaching teams of three or four; feedback, assessment and evaluation are incorporated into the training cycle on a continuous basis; and learning spaces are modified to optimise flexibility and foster open, collaborative and experiential learning.

The teaching team analyses and maps the technical and twenty first century skills across the units in order to incorporate them into a series of challenges relevant to local industry that can be addressed using the equipment available in the college. The challenges are co-designed and/or verified by industry collaborators. A challenge may be a project, simulation, problem, inquiry, object analysis, case study or a mixture. A challenge must reflect as closely as possible a problematic real work situation that:

- Is relevant to those who carry the responsibility for resolving it
- Is vague or 'fuzzy', requires thought and has more than one solution
- Requires collaboration between learners
- Is based on some level of previous knowledge, produces measurable results and generates new learning

- Is sufficiently flexible to enable learners to bring personal elements to it
- Requires information gathering and interpretation.

Working in teams of three or four, learners work through the same eleven steps for each challenge:

- 1:** The context for the challenge is introduced in a way designed to motivate and attract the learners, such as a site visit to a company, video or case study.
- 2:** The challenge is explained.
- 3:** The parameters are communicated to guide the learners in what they need to know in order to resolve the challenge.
- 4:** Learners research the theoretical and practical information required for resolving the challenge. In some cases mini lectures or learning activities may be required to establish foundational knowledge or when the whole class is stuck.
- 5:** Each learner individually generates alternative ideas for how the challenge could be addressed.
- 6:** Each learner pitches their ideas to their team members and answers questions about it.
- 7:** The team negotiates and selects the one idea that they think will best address the challenge or creates a hybrid of several ideas.
- 8:** The team develops a project plan with a timeline and tasks assigned to each member.

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- 9:** The team implements the plan.
- 10:** Teams jointly present and defend their results to the whole class, responding to questions and receiving feedback from their peers.
- 11:** Teachers work with learners individually and in teams to reflect on and evaluate their learning in order to make improvements for the next challenge.

Learner teams

Teams are selected by the teachers and a team leader is assigned. The remainder of the roles and tasks are negotiated within the team. Members work on their own tasks and are responsible for communicating their learning to their teammates because all may be questioned about any aspect of the challenge at any time. When they get stuck, team members must try at least two or three times to find a solution before teachers will intervene with guidance. Every day starts with the teams reflecting on learning and progress that has occurred through the previous day's tasks and team processes before planning and diarising their agenda for the day. These are presented to the class for feedback before work commences.

Feedback and assessment

As part of designing a challenge, teaching teams must identify what evidence of learning they will collect, both individual and team based, and at what points during the challenge it will be gathered. Teachers take notes and photos as evidence of learning. Teachers meet weekly with each learner to give feedback on learning and assessment, which is primarily based on teacher observations of individual and team performance and covers both technical and twenty first century skills. In some cases, an industry person is also involved in the assessment.

Learners sign a learning contract at the beginning of each challenge. It is important for assessment purposes as learners are jointly responsible for their assessment. They gather evidence such as taking photos of the learning that they consider they have demonstrated.

Learners have the opportunity during the weekly feedback meeting to reflect on their own and the team's performance, learning and processes. Teachers and learners use a common rubric as the basis for reflection, discussion and assessment. This ongoing conversation is intended to raise learners' awareness of their own learning, with an emphasis on demonstrating evolution and continuous improvement in their skill development. The final mark for each subject comprises self, peer and teacher assessment. If a learner fails to pass the twenty first century skills component, then they fail the challenge.

Key findings

An analysis of the model shows how its various features may contribute to twenty first skills development. Table 1 shows this relationship.

Table 1: The relationship between features of ETHAZI and twenty first century skills development

ETHAZI feature	Twenty first century skills
Learning contracts	Autonomy, responsibility
'Fuzzy' challenges	Creativity, innovation, enterprise, entrepreneurship, problem solving
Generate ideas individually, then team selects one	Critical thinking, negotiation, conflict resolution
Researching potential solutions	Analysing, interpreting and organising information, digital competence
Daily planning	Organisation, time management, communication, negotiation
Presenting and defending plans and results	Communication, digital competence
Separate team roles	Teamwork, responsibility, leadership, communication, negotiation
No immediate help from teacher	Autonomy, initiative, resilience, persistence, creativity, problem solving, teamwork
Continuous reflection and feedback, peer and self-assessment	Self-awareness, metacognition, emotional intelligence, critical thinking, teamwork

The teachers, students and managers who were interviewed all enthusiastically endorsed the model. While several learners reported feeling lost at first because of not knowing how to set about solving the challenge – and frustrated over time lost searching for answers rather than going straight to the teacher for assistance – all remarked on a strong sense of satisfaction once they were able to understand and solve the problem. Learners reported being better able to absorb the knowledge and make sense of it, but they felt that it took longer than the traditional way of learning.

Teachers concurred. Noting that initial resistance, they observed that learners find reflecting on and questioning

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their own truths uncomfortable, yet the learners ultimately prefer the new method – as evidenced by the dramatic drop in absenteeism and attrition since the introduction of ETHAZI. Teachers conceded that learners acquire less detailed technical knowledge than under the traditional system but achieve a deeper understanding of the knowledge and its significance. They also asserted that employers prefer the ETHAZI method because it develops more rounded people who understand how to learn.

The commissioned evaluation of ETHAZI corroborated these views but also noted areas for improvement, particularly around better accommodating learner needs and supporting teachers.

Perhaps most significantly for us, twenty first century skills are developed entirely through the pedagogy: that is, *how* students learn rather than *what* they learn. This has important implications for the Australian VET system as it does not require waiting for training package reform. Indeed, William Angliss Institute is currently negotiating with the Basque Government for assistance in piloting the introduction of collaborative challenge-based learning. ■

The full report can be accessed here: www.issinstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/Williams-Final.pdf

Associate Professor Melanie Williams is Associate Dean (Scholarship) at William Angliss Institute, a specialist public provider of education and training in foods, hospitality, tourism and events in Melbourne.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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From *Done to* or *Done for*, to *Doing With* – from ‘PD’ to Professional Learning

Lindee Conway and Karen Dymke,
Instructional Coaches, Melbourne Polytechnic

Melbourne Polytechnic’s project for moving into shared Professional Learning for, with and from its teaching cohort: an action research outline.

Melbourne Polytechnic has established a research project to examine how Professional Learning can be most successfully established as a tool for teaching efficacy. This paper sets the scene for the project.

Let’s start with a narrative from the two researchers:

‘We have both spent a lot of time involved in professional learning. As presenters, facilitators, leaders and now as coaches. The ‘one hit wonder’ day is the established model: a group of educators, who may or may not have wanted to be there. It was a challenge, sometimes, to engage them; most times, it was successful. We all had a ‘good time.’ By balancing the day, mixing activity with theory and practice with research findings, we had a few laughs. Learnt a few things, collaborated, and if the sandwiches were good, then, great! It was an okay day. If people left taking away one idea that was a win.

‘Of course there was always the evaluations. There was mostly very kind and positive feedback, nice for our egos, but there was always at least one grumpy person who either shouldn’t have come in the first place or shouldn’t have got out of bed.

‘We began to wonder what the efficacy of this was. Was this actually effecting change? Did these days make any difference to student progress and outcomes? Our passion has always been engaging learners, but were these one-off professional development days really contributing to helping educators take their students on a successful learning journey? The answer, we realised was: well, if it does, we’re never likely to know about it.

‘We willingly joined a team at MP which seeks to change how professional teaching practice works for adult educators. We are pleased to be commencing a project to observe what we do, as we do it, to see what is achieved and to reflect on why and how it was achieved. Action research seems like the perfect methodology.’

The background

Melbourne Polytechnic offers programs in Foundation, Vocational and Higher Education. In 2019, more than 28,000 individual adult learners enrolled into about 37,000

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course enrolments. More than 1600 staff worked at MP in 2019, and about 40% of them are educators (MP, 2019).

MP's Curriculum Innovation and Teaching Excellence (CITE) team is a group of education professionals and includes the Professional Teaching Practice (PTP) team. The CITE team enacts the *Education Strategy: 2019–2023* which includes MP's educational approach to all our teaching work as: **applied, inquiry-based and integrated** (MP, 2019a). The PTP's key aim is to activate a Professional learning 'impact cycle' where adult educators identify, learn and improve their teaching practice within their own spaces.

We were employed as Instructional Coaches within the PTP team to offer educators and educational leaders a 'partnership approach' to improve practice and learner outcomes (Knight, 2007). The PTP also offers support to establish Communities of Practice (CoPs) for groups of educators to focus on any learning and teaching issue of interest to them.

MP's Professional Teaching Practice team works to this commitment:

'Research highlights the direct correlation between student learning outcomes, teacher capability and teaching quality. The greatest influence on student progression in learning is having highly expert, inspired and passionate educators and leaders working together to maximise the effect of their teaching on all students (Hattie, 2015). Dinham (2008) posits that becoming an expert educator is neither automatic nor merely the result of accumulated experience. Becoming an expert educator is a learning journey involving ongoing practice, reflection, and feedback. In other words, teacher learning is highly important (MP, 2021).'

Our research problem – a professional development model no longer fit for purpose

Adult educators need specialised skills to engage or re-engage learners who are often quite vulnerable. Many learners accessing VET classes have had less than positive previous classroom experiences. Lower skilled jobs are no longer readily available and leaving school early is not encouraged. Employment opportunities are changing (Payton & Knight, 2018) so the imperative is to build skills in essential capabilities that respond to the rapidly changing world. VET educators and practitioners are therefore required to meet an increasingly diverse array of learner needs.

Adult Education needs the best educators who know how to create a welcoming learning environment. Educators who see teaching as a relationship, who seek out and listen to learners' voices and respond flexibly. Who are willing to give up control and encourage learner agency,

“ The greatest influence on student progression in learning is having highly expert, inspired and passionate educators and leaders working together to maximise the effect of their teaching on all students.

who make learning outcomes visible and recognise the value in diversity. (EAEA, 2012). We are not there yet. This article outlines how we intend to work towards partnering with adult educators to share this vision, whilst modelling these approaches ourselves. It's a paradigm shift for us all.

Achieving this requires engagement in pedagogy – or more correctly, andragogy (Cranton, 1992); i.e. the theory and practice of adult focussed learning approaches. The development of successful VET programs requires continuous, relevant and job-embedded professional learning for educators (Zepeda, 2015).

By embedding an action research approach at the heart of this project, we seek to support our theory that professional learning, based on instructional coaching, communities of practice and a learner-centred approach will build the capability and capacity of MP's educators.

Our statement is not based on instinct alone: a synthesis of the best research evidence by researchers at the University of Auckland has shown it is valuable to have external expertise (in this case, members of the PTP), collaborating at some point with adult educators as they engage in their own learning (Timperley, et al, 2011). The research also found learning efficacy was especially heightened when prevailing discourses were challenged; that is, the '*We have always done it like this*' argument is no longer accepted as a rationale for practice.

Our Research Proposal asks – *In what ways do job-embedded impact cycles of Professional Learning make a difference?*

The research project will be based on action research principles, a method which is 'about change and about using research to solve real problems' (O'Toole & Beckett, 2013, p. 64). Action research reveals the way change can be achieved, from which theories about change and solving real and complex issues can then be developed. Action research uses cycles of identifying the current reality to learn and improve professional practice to progress towards significant goals. In this case, the goal of providing instructional coaching which:

...partners with adult educators to offer up a much more collaborative, respectful and efficient professional learning model for achieving instructional excellence. (Knight, 2018 excerpt on book cover)

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We aim to achieve the following improvements and will monitor our practice using these indicators as well. We seek to:

- increase **learner retention** in courses, reported by data.
- Increase engagement **between educators and learners**, reported by educators and learners.
- Receive more **powerful** and positive course feedback from learners to educators.
- Deepen the sense of **efficacy** and capability reported by educators.

We will conduct action research on our implementation of instructional coaching and communities of practice. As we do this we will observe ourselves as we plan, conduct, gather data and review and revise our practice, using the ideas of Timperley et al and others to inform our practice (Timperley 2007). Doing this puts us – as researchers – at the centre of our own program, working alongside educators, immersed in the impact cycle as partners in practice.

We will, therefore, make ourselves subjects of a Case Study to check if and how our approach achieves our aims. Figure 1. Represents how we see this as occurring. O'Toole and Beckett state that a case study is not strictly a method but a choice of what is studied; we are choosing to study our own actions and responses as well as listening to and working with educators (O'Toole &

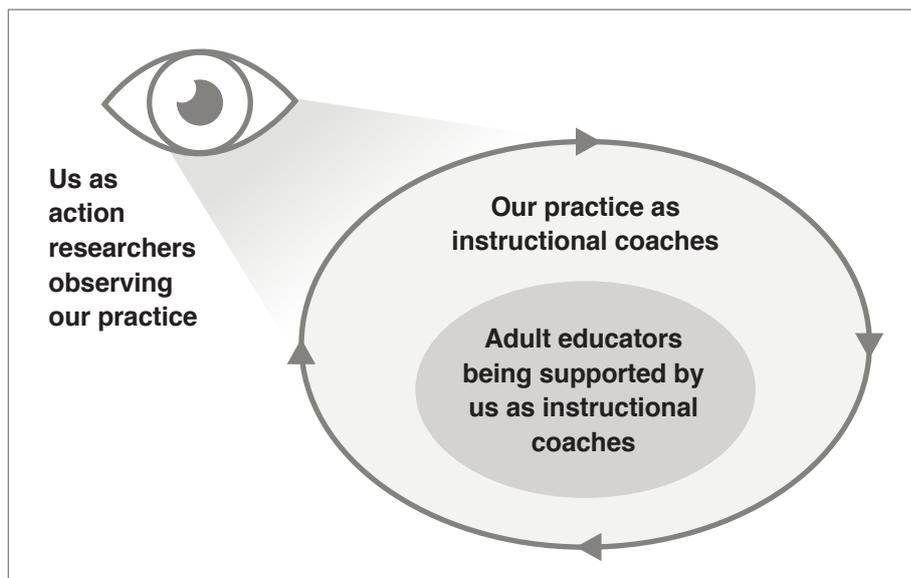


Figure 1: Diagram showing the authors' dual role of action researchers and instructional coaches

Beckett, p. 51). We propose to use reflective practitioner case study principles which Andrew Townsend describes as:

'...a basis for exploring the areas or aspects of experience which could fruitfully provide a focus of research to inform practice.' (Townsend, 2013).

We aim to inform the practice of the MP teaching team to build a high performing team. We are encouraged by O'Toole & Beckett's reassurance that:

'Action research is never wasted.' (p.63).

We plan to commence this research in 2021 and report on it in mid-2022, and we're keen! ■

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Consequential Learning: an approach to provide deep learning

Simon Bruce

Simon Bruce has been developing and refining the Consequential Learning approach over several years. There have been a number of trials of the model via learning solutions for clients in the insurance and disability services sectors. Recently, the author has been able to apply the approach to a major initiative for a significant infrastructure project. This has resulted in some valuable feedback and data to support how effective it can be in delivering core learning outcomes as well as significantly enhancing the key skills of the learners.

Essentially, the Consequential Learning approach is a constructivist approach to learning and it incorporates the key elements of social learning and collaborative learning practices, as well as blended learning. The Consequential Learning approach also works well with the flipped learning model whereby pre-learning is undertaken prior to class-based activities led by a facilitator skilled in learning pedagogy.

Consequential Learning is a powerful approach providing deep learning, rich with long-term outcomes, by combining a unique balance of content, contextualisation, conversation and consequential awareness.



Learning with real impact

The Consequential Learning approach presents both core and supplementary content along with key concepts and essential information. This content is contained within the parameters determined by the client's unique circumstances that define the scope, duration, location and timing of the Consequential Learning activity: in other words the why, what, when, who and where of the learning activity.

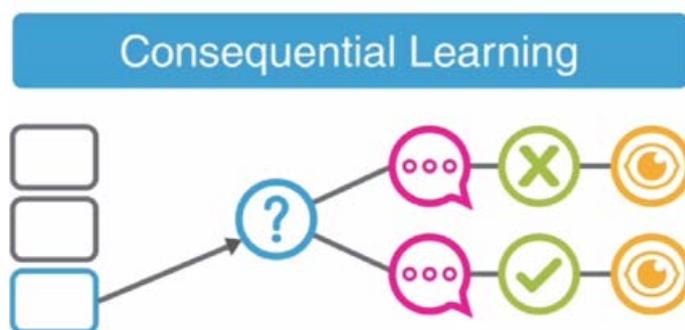
A narrative is positioned to allow this content to be contextualised. Importantly, the narrative involves the use of scenarios that reflect real life examples or situations based on information gathered to reflect the environmental, organisational and demographic elements that exist in the learning setting.

These scenarios allow the use of characters that embody core attributes to be emphasised (or highlighted) for either positive or negative effect. The characterisation allows the embellishment of real

circumstances and enables the next elements to be introduced: conversations.

Conversations are combined with reflective activity to allow participants to begin to appreciate their own perspectives and to be open to the perspectives of others.

These scenarios are then progressed to a decision point that presents a number of possible outcomes. These outcomes can range from a high complexity and extreme setting to a low complexity and moderate setting. The setting could even be set to highly contentious and be designed to provoke rich debate or create a seismic shift in attitudes and mindsets. This all depends on the following: (1) the attributes, characteristics and demographics of the learning audience; (2) the culture and dynamics of the organisational setting; and (3) the desired learning impact to be achieved.



The outcomes from the decision points present the range of consequences that come into play following the decision. The conversations move to consequential dialogue amongst the participants that then leads to informed decisions where everyone understands the impact of them taking a certain course of action, of taking no action, of speaking up in a certain way, and even of saying nothing.

A true learning experience

Consequential Learning is designed to create a true learning experience with rich discussion contextualising the topic. It moves beyond merely being a discussion about content.

The experiences, perspectives, thoughts, insights and observations from each of the participants are called on by the facilitator to help work through the decision point. The conversations that follow not only advance the knowledge of all, but they allow self-reflection and deeper insights to be acquired at an individual level.

The facilitator actively includes all viewpoints and seeks to challenge bias and assumptions in the group whilst drawing on the expertise and collective experiences.

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Once consequences (both positive and negative) are revealed, participants are able to more readily connect the content with their real-life situation and they begin to develop strategies and action plans to embed and apply the learning.

The Consequential Learning approach draws on the content and concepts known to the participants (which has been either introduced during a pre-learning phase, if used, or exposed to them in another setting, either a workplace or learning setting) and presents a structured flow of topics aligned to this content. The classroom sessions (which can be face-o-face, virtual or even hybrid) are facilitated and make use of a fully blended learning approach that utilises visual learning presentations incorporating scenario-based online modules depicting real-life activities.



An example of how this works is described below and shown in the accompanying visual:

1. A brief visual presentation is shown to the group depicting a scenario relating to the learning objectives. This presentation would use a similar narrative and characters as was used in the pre-learning activities (if used);
2. The presentation concludes with a decision point being reached;
3. A question is posed to the group by the facilitator and a decision is requested. The group discuss the scenario and then make a consensus-based decision;
4. The next step in the scenario is then revealed along with the consequence of the group's decision;
5. A further, deeper discussion is then led by the facilitator to unpack the consequences of the decision by referencing content from any pre-learning and new concepts introduced, as well as from the different perspectives and past experiences of the participants;
6. Further reflection and group discussion occurs as needed to ensure the key learning outcomes are achieved.

Participant cohorts can be grouped in numerous ways, and often the most impactful outcomes are achieved when there is maximum diversity across their experience and expertise as well as their tenure and role type.

Consequential Learning in action – Cross Yarra Partnership Case Study

Recently the author led the design, development and implementation of a major Consequential Learning program for a client responsible for delivering a significant infrastructure project. Cross Yarra Partnership (CYP) is constructing twin 9km rail tunnels and five underground stations beneath Melbourne's central business district. Due for completion in 2025, the project has a significant workforce profile that required CYP to induct and on-board employees, contractors and sub-contractors from its many project partners.

As part of this challenge, CYP sought to engage, inform and empower their entire workforce and provide exposure to the vision, values, and the scope of the project. CYP also wanted to emphasise its commitment to sustainability, to the community, to disadvantaged employees, to the environment and to social engagement.

CYP recognised the benefits of how a Consequential Learning approach applied to their specific content and situation could address these multiple aims in a stimulating and engaging environment.

Over the engagement period, 285 sessions were delivered to over 4,040 participants. All participants were required to undertake a 2-3 hour online pre-learning module. This was expanded on in the half day, facilitator-led classroom sessions where branching scenarios were presented to contextualise and interweave content from across six key areas of information.



Figure 1: Discussing a decision point in the classroom

Significantly, the participants were from all roles across the CYP workforce, which will peak at close to 6,000 over the life of the project. Classroom sessions have seen participants with 20-years construction-sector experience sitting side-by-side with internationally educated professionals as well as apprentices on their first day of work.

All participants had opportunities to draw on their experience and share their perspective on a number of challenging scenarios that were introduced by the facilitator. The groups made a decision and it was up

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to the facilitator as to how the 'correct' outcome was revealed and how the resulting conversation occurred. Importantly, no two sessions were the same,

Analysis of the quantitative evaluation data shows that 95% of participants found the program to be either *extremely effective* or *very effective* in achieving the learning outcomes. Additionally, anecdotal feedback provided by participants was overwhelmingly positive. An estimated 4,800 separate items of written feedback was captured and categorised into positive, neutral or negative. The clear results indicated that 97% of these comments were positive, and many overwhelmingly so.

Some examples of the feedback obtained includes:

- I liked that it was full of discussion and hearing other people's thoughts and experiences.
- Excellent communication. Involved us in conversation, allowing everyone to speak.
- Presenting the concepts as scenarios made them realistic and made the learning more personal.
- Conversations and debates about scenarios was interesting to get opposing views
- Great to be with different people makes the whole session more understanding and easier to see what the scenarios are like from all angles.
- Interactive and a good combination of case scenarios and actual stories from participants.
- Easy to participate and no stress about having the right or wrong answer.
- Diversity of group allowed for various scenarios and experience to be discussed.
- It was good to hear other points of view from other people on how they will approach situations.
- Interactive without being intrusive.

Consequential Learning is an excellent example of how collaborative learning and social learning can be optimised in the correct setting. The approach makes minimal (albeit subtle) use of technology and, crucially, it shifts the focus onto participant interaction and conversation. It is a powerful demonstration of constructivism and enables learners to take an active role in building their knowledge. Learners also play an integral role in building the knowledge of other participants, especially by exposing them to a range of perspectives, viewpoints and opinions. ■

Reading between the lines – adult literacy education and neuroscience

Linno Rhodes

In 2018, I undertook a research fellowship through the International Specialised Skills Institute. My fellowship investigated how educators can use the tools of neuroscience to more effectively work with adult (literacy) students who have a history of negative learning experiences in their foundational education years, and who continue to use (mal-) adaptive coping strategies learned in response to those experiences.

Carl Rogers, a psychologist who founded the concept of person-centred therapy in the mid-twentieth century, also had an interest in adult education. His ideas that learning (and healing) happen best when teachers hold students in unconditional positive regard, without judgement, and that learning is facilitated best through experience, resonated with me in my teaching practice.

My fellowship investigation into neuroscience with the purpose of using it as a lens through which to frame adult teaching and learning, concurred with Rogers' theories. Teachers who focus on establishing a positive and supportive relationship with students and who are student-centred in their approach, establish safe learning spaces where successful learning opportunities are optimal.

Most, if not all, adult students I worked with, who self-identified as having difficulties with literacy, suffered from being treated abysmally throughout their school years. They were shamed into thinking they were "dumb, stupid, unworthy, and un-teachable". In response, they developed 'coping strategies'. The purpose of coping strategies is to distract from the source of stress. We develop coping strategies when our threat system is triggered, and our threat systems are triggered when we are in danger of 'not belonging'. One of the main purposes of the brain is to keep us safe by ensuring we belong. Children, who were told in their school years that they didn't belong because of their learning difficulties or differences, developed (mal-adaptive) coping strategies to gain acceptance and approval.

We all have coping strategies – they are mechanisms we employ to help us deal with the hard stuff – some people might drink or eat too much and for others it could be nail-biting. Coping strategies are not always negative though – some positive coping strategies include becoming accomplished in your area of interest, using humour, going for a walk or practicing meditation.

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Coping strategies come in many guises – in the adult education setting, some may be difficult to recognise because they seem like they are 'behavioural issues', like always joking around or creating negative diversions or distractions. Others may be difficult to recognise because they manifest as 'successful-learning' strategies. I am thinking of students who appear to know what they need to do - they are on-time, they have their materials and learning tools organised. I can think of many students who have reassured me that they know what to do, and have the skills and knowledge to complete the task, only to find that they are guessing about what to do and find the task too difficult. Of course, good teaching strategies must be employed where there are multiple check-ins and scaffolding, notwithstanding opportunities for practicing.

I am not suggesting that these students are deliberately being obtuse about their learning needs, rather they are unconsciously employing coping strategies that in the past have helped them successfully avoid focused attention on their learning needs. These students may want to be noticed and be invisible at the same time.

I have long been curious about adult students who seemed stuck in old behaviours - such as coming to class late and un-prepared, refusing to participate, being hostile, seeming uninterested and bored or being disruptive and leading a mutiny! I know they have chosen to enrol in classes and they genuinely want to achieve, so why do they sabotage success?

As a teacher, there were times when I definitely felt impatient and frustrated and other times when the more compassionate me came out. But the curiosity was always there.

When adults bring these same strategies to the classroom, it's a sure signal that:

- a. their threat system is engaged; and
- b. they need help to *feel* safe.

The best way educators can make a difference is to connect with students on a personal level: when we connect with others – in a safe way – the threat system is quietened, which allows for optimal learning to occur.

We know that adult students are using these adaptive coping strategies because that is what kept them feeling safe in their formative years – they belonged to the group through the use of humour etc. They drew attention away from what they – or others considered were deficits. One of the primary functions of the brain is to keep us feeling safe. Belonging to a group has meant safety for millions of years of human existence. In ancestral times, if we were kicked out of the group, we were likely to be eaten by a predator!

One experience that sparked my curiosity about brain science occurred when a student (let's call her Renee), whom I knew fairly well, complained to me about her

teacher – she was distressed and was convinced that her teacher was trying to kick her out of the class and make her 'get a job'. I asked her teacher about the conversation and she said that she wanted to let Renee know that she had developed some great skills and that if she was interested, she would support her to get some work experience.

What happened in between the utterance and the reception for Renee? I knew it was more than a misunderstanding because of the distress I could see in Renee. This was definitely a *misinterpretation* rather than a *misunderstanding*.

Understanding how the brain works has helped me understand Renee and her teacher's interaction.

The Triune Brain

One useful way of understanding how the brain works, is the triune brain. The triune brain model was developed by psychologist Paul Maclean in the 1960s and divides the brain into three main categories – the pre-frontal cortex (rational brain), the mammalian (emotional) brain and the (brainstem) reptilian brain. This model helps us to understand how learning and trauma are related.

Science tell us that the brain develops – both in-utero and from an historical perspective – in particular order; firstly, the reptilian brain, which is followed by the mammalian brain then finally the (prefrontal) cortex:

- The reptilian brain is the holder of all of our automatic functions – if you think about what a baby can do – cry, sleep, eat, release waste, this is the part that is responsible.
- The mammalian brain is named this because all mammals share this part of biology. The limbic system is located in the mammalian - importantly the amygdala and the hippocampus are located here. The amygdala processes emotional responses and the hippocampus is responsible for encoding a memory as long-term. The limbic system is responsible for our fight or flight responses – this part of the brain is assessing every interaction and situation with the question – am I safe/ under threat? The amygdala and hippocampus create neural pathways based on emotional responses to situations – so we know what to expect when we are in a situation we have been in before. We know that if we answer a question in class that is wrong, we are ridiculed or shamed or celebrated – depending on past experience. If we are shamed, we are less likely to attempt to answer the next question – if we are celebrated for trying, we are more likely to give it another go.
- The rational brain is only available when the emotional brain is at ease. Only when there is a *felt* sense of safety can the rational brain be fully engaged.

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“ When we connect with others – in a safe way – the threat system is quietened, which allows for optimal learning to occur.

Understanding the brain's function by using this model, we can make the connection that adult students who have a history of feeling unsafe in the classroom due to being treated poorly by educators and peers will see the classroom as a place of threat – the brain has encoded the classroom – the whole learning environment – as *situational danger*.

We know that learning is different for everyone and that many people do not learn best through traditional classroom teaching methods. We also know that there are others too, who's home-life is stressful at best and otherwise dangerous. When the brain is busy trying to make sense of relationships that are supposed to be safe, and the amygdala is hypervigilant because the need to protect oneself is exaggerated due to real and constant threat, there is little room left over for learning literacy and numeracy. The rational brain just doesn't get enough airplay for those lessons to be important (think about Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs).

The effects of trauma inhabits our bodies. Activities that are associated with positive learning experiences allows the release of endorphins, the chemical that is associated with happy feelings, which reinforces the message that learning can be successful. Activities which give learners a voice – that is, create space for learners to talk without being judged – put down or experience failure as shameful, are powerful ways to give 'the body' the message of belonging. Singing in a group is a powerful tool to create a sense of community and safety. Teachers who engage in relational-based activities like working in pairs and group projects offer students opportunities to engage in positive learning actions, thereby creating new neural pathways that have the message that learning is a positive experience.

Providing students with a message of safety through positive interactions offers new opportunities to engage with learning in constructive, meaningful and successful ways, allowing students to re-write their relationship with learning and education. ■

Linno Rhodes enjoys working in Language, Literacy and Numeracy provision in the Adult Community Education sector. She is the President of the VALBEC committee, is a member of the Fine Print Editorial Committee and the Reading Writing Hotline Steering Committee. Linno is interested in the wonders of the brain and learning. She is a 2017 International Specialised Skills Institute Fellow. Institute Fellow.

VET and Senior Secondary qualifications in regional communities – An international comparison

Paul Boys
TAFE Gippsland

The release of the *Review into vocational and applied learning in senior secondary schooling* in November 2020, clearly articulates the important role that Vocational Education and Training (VET) plays in a senior secondary certificate (Firth, 2020). The report recommends that further work be done over the coming years, to 'embed a vocational specialist pathway within the VCE' (Firth, 2020, p.2). In response to the Firth Review, the Victorian state government, has accepted the review's recommendations and set the group the task of moving to a single integrated VCE qualification with a specialist VET pathway by 2023 (Vocational and Learning Pathways Review – Government response, 2020). The review is a timely response to improving year 12 completions, with regional high school students across Victorian communities facing significant challenges to realise the attainment of year 12 equivalency, with only 62% of outer regional students achieving this benchmark compared to 78% in major cities (Lamb, Jackson, Walstab and Huo, 2015). Evidence has shown that there are numerous factors, including socio- economic status, location, family background and English language competency as being key, measurable determinants of a person's likelihood to achieve their year 12 equivalency (Lamb, Jackson, Walstab and Huo, 2015). The social cost of these low completion rates can translate to a challenging future for early school leavers, including limited employment opportunities, poor career progression and a tendency towards poorer health outcomes in later life (AIHW, 2016). This is further referenced by the Foundation for Young Australians (FYA) in 'The New Work Reality' report, where the authors claim that a lack of appropriate education and limited employment opportunities further erode a young person's post-schooling opportunities, especially in a rapidly changing workforce (FYA, 2018)

In addition to the low number of students in regional communities achieving a successful year 12 completion, has been the reduced number of Australian youths taking up apprenticeships and traineeships (Wolfe, 2018). Since 2012, there has been a sharp decline in the number of young people beginning traineeships when compared with 2018

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statistics although apprenticeships on their own have been stable over the past 20 years (Noonan and Pilcher, 2017). Low Year 12 completion rates measured against the significant reduction in new traineeships and a slight decline in apprenticeships, demonstrates that there is a need to address the structural deficiency within our education system that is not effectively supporting a significant number of our young people to achieve their best. To better respond to these challenges, I was fortunate to travel to the USA and Canada in 2019 to research how other jurisdictions have responded to this challenge by reforming their senior secondary qualification to meet a changing industry and community. An overview of their responses is detailed below.

Ontario Youth Apprenticeship Program (OYAP) – Ontario, Canada

What is OYAP?

OYAP allows students in year 11 and 12 to undertake a cooperative education course that leads to access to accredited apprenticeship trade training which may open up a potential career pathway. Cooperative education is defined as ‘a program governed by the Ministry of Education policy, which allows students to earn secondary school credits while participating in a work placement’ (Ministry of Education, 2017). The program aims to increase the number of secondary school students exploring trades, thereby setting the groundwork for a smooth transition to a formal apprenticeship whilst using the learning as part of their high school graduation requirements. The program is designed to encourage students to participate in the ‘Awareness and Exploration’ of their nominated trade area of interest.

Participant Eligibility

Students must meet the following criteria to be eligible for OYAP:

- Be enrolled full-time in a secondary school within the nominated local school district
- Be working towards the completion of their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD)
- Be enrolled in a cooperative education course that includes a placement in a relevant apprenticeship trade.
- Must have successfully completed 16 credits towards their OSSD.
- Must be at least 16 years of age.

All applicants must show an interest in an apprenticeship trade and apply for the OYAP with a formal application and interview to determine their suitability. Parents are involved throughout the process, especially for those applicants who are 16 years of age.

What are the benefits to students?

In addition to the individualised support services mentioned above, students also receive the following benefits:

- Earn secondary school credit.
- Participate and experience the operations of their nominated trade area of interest and interact with industry professionals.
- Financial support to attend training and work placement (potentially includes safety equipment, transportation costs and an exemption from testing fee)
- Future support services to access apprenticeships, post achievement of OSSD.

Careerwise – Colorado, USA

Careerwise was established to introduce a modern youth apprenticeship system to Colorado to support young people to complete their traditional high school studies whilst concurrently studying towards an apprenticeship in multiple career fields. The Swiss training system was used as the foundation for the development of the Careerwise initiative which focuses on bringing industry, students, colleges and schools together to help in shaping the future skill needs of Colorado. The model operates as below:

- Informing communities about apprenticeships and how the transferrable skills are applied in conjunction with traditional secondary schooling.
- Working closely with industry, apprenticeships can be developed in ‘non-traditional’ areas to meet the needs of a 21st century workforce that is adaptable and flexible to changing needs. This includes new and emerging industries with qualifications being developed quickly to meet the required needs.
- Replicating the Swiss vocational model, Careerwise was implemented to meet the specific labour market needs of the Colorado state.
- A 3-year apprenticeship – designed by industry, for industry – which operates in partnership with schools to combine practical workplace learning and secondary schooling with meaningful paid work.
- The program keeps options open for students, and upon successful completion, they receive an industry certification, debt-free college credits as well as their high school qualification. Students can then take the apprenticeship and convert this into a position in the chosen industry or continue to higher education.
- Business develops the competencies and they have control of the hiring process.

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“ Careerwise recognises the importance of young people developing 21st Century workplace skills.

Since its inception in 2015, Careerwise has worked with local school districts to implement the initiative and they are currently focused on the following industry sectors to best support job outcomes for Colorado businesses, including: Advanced Manufacturing; Information Technology; Financial Services; Business Operations and Healthcare. Aligned to these industry relevant skills, Careerwise recognises the importance of young people developing 21st Century workplace skills, which are detailed by the Foundation for Young Australian's (FYA, 2018) as essential skills to preparing young people for the future world of work and to build resilience and entrepreneurship in the changing world of work. These skills include critical thinking; problem solving; deductive reasoning; active listening; customer service; communication; creativity; innovation; teamwork; and collaboration. These skills have become a focus for integration into all curriculum across all industry areas.

Careerwise has also set about creating a direct relationship between colleges and universities so credits that students achieve during the apprenticeship are able to directly translate to further study, again minimising the cost of education, which can be prohibitive in many areas of the USA (Gunn, 2018). Although the initiative is in its infancy, there is considerable political, community and school support to see further evidence that shows a direct impact on the lives of young people in the regions. The program is also aiming to expose women and cultural minorities, who have traditionally not been represented in the apprenticeship landscape, to careers in industries that are the future of the Colorado workforce (Gunn, 2018).

Conclusion

Each of the above programs have been developed in partnership with industry, schools, colleges and community with local needs and circumstances influencing their design, implementation and target audience. Each response is unique but they all share the commonality of being centered on giving young people a better chance at remaining connected to their schools whilst exploring alternate career pathways in pursuit of a senior secondary qualification. In light of the Victorian Government's recommendation of the need for reform of the Senior Secondary VCE qualification, it is timely to see what can be learned from the international experience and how communities have responded to providing a more inclusive school experience that caters to the needs of all cohorts within a school community. ■

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Appreciating ‘messy’ pathways: Young refugees re-engaging in Australian education and training

Conor Butler, AMES Australia
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Introduction

Young people from refugee backgrounds often have disrupted education experiences that intersect with other forms of disadvantage (Beadle, 2014; Nunn et al., 2014). While specialised, learner-level support can be effective in assisting young refugees to maintain engagement (Lamb et al., 2018), the persistence of attainment issues are cause for a reassessment of the way programs are designed and outcomes are framed.

This paper examines the participation of young refugees in an educational reengagement program delivered in Melbourne. Pathways Counsellors worked with participants to document their aspirations and support them through a range of activities that complement educational reengagement. Our analysis demonstrates the importance of intensive planning and maintaining service engagement, combined with activities that build young people’s self-confidence, goal orientation and facilitate social interaction.

Following Woodman (2020), we argue that young refugees face complex barriers, with lived experiences characterised by ‘mess, non-linearity and lack of stability.’ However, appreciating the ‘messiness’ of these pathways can reveal non-educational and non-vocational outcomes (Fagan et al., 2018) that are incremental and more attainable. With uncertain social service funding arrangements making this flexibility difficult to implement at the program level, we suggest a focus on combining multiple sources of community support.

The AMES Australia model

Our research took place within a refugee and migrant settlement services agency and Registered Training Organisation (RTO), AMES Australia, which provides English language, education, community engagement and employment services. AMES programs build on

years of experience delivering specialised multicultural youth services with Commonwealth and State Government support.

The practice model for supporting young people includes core elements of case management, individual pathway planning and referrals, with the overall aim of supporting high-needs young people to reengage with education and employment. The model functions by, firstly, integrating a variety of grants and State Government support and through longstanding partnerships with youth specialist organisations and TAFEs, allowing for multiple streamlined and integrated referral pathways. Second, the program applies culturally responsive ‘narrative career counselling’ (Abkhezr 2015, p.76) whereby the young person and counsellor co-define career, education and personal goals.

The research

This article is based on an evaluation feasibility study conducted by the AMES Research & Policy Unit for an educational reengagement program delivered in Melbourne. From an extract of de-identified participant records in 2018, we constructed a sample of 32 participants that had complete data including case notes, reengagement challenges, educational needs, planned and completed activities and goals and aspirations. We first derived some descriptive statistics that were compared with ABS data on the education levels of refugee youth, and followed this with a thematic analysis of qualitative data.

Population data

The ABS Australian Census and Migrants Integrated Dataset (ACMID) reveals some differences between young refugees and Australian youth in terms of employment, education and training. For instance, young people aged 20-24 from refugee backgrounds - especially those who arrived in Australia within five years of the Census date – were more likely to be ‘not engaged in employment, education and training’ (NEET) than their Australian-born counterparts (see Table 1).

Table 1. Engagement in employment, education and training (20-24 year-olds) by permanent migration status, 2016 (%)

	Refugee	Refugee (arr. < 5yrs)	Australian-born
Fully engaged	64.6	64.8	69.9
Partially engaged	13.3	12.2	15.7
Not engaged	22.1	23.0	14.6

Source: ABS 2016

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Data on labour force and educational status of young refugees reveals similar discrepancies. Nearly one-fifth (18%) of all recently arrived humanitarian visa holders aged 20–24 years were not attending school and not in the labour force on Census night. Close to half (43%) of all recently arrived 20-24-year-old refugees who were not attending school were also not in the labour force (not employed and not actively looking for work) (see Figure 1).

Finally, there are significant differences between recently arrived refugees and the Australian-born population when comparing levels of educational attainment (see Table 2). The majority (85%) of all recently arrived refugees between 20-24 years of age had an educational attainment of Year 12 equivalent or lower on Census night. Nearly one-fifth (18%) of this cohort had an educational attainment of Year 8 or below, and 10% had no educational attainment at all. In comparison, almost all (96%) Australian-born young people had an educational attainment higher than Year 12 (i.e. at least a post-school qualification).

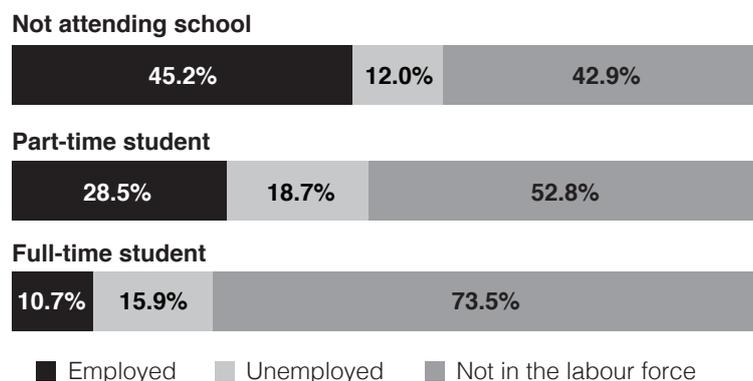
This analysis indicates that young refugees, particularly those recently arrived and aged 20-24 years, are faring worse than their Australian-born counterparts in terms of conventional educational attainment and employment outcomes.

Participants in the AMES Reengagement Program

The AMES program sample (see Table 3 over page) shares similar characteristics to the ABS data above; however, a greater proportion (36%) had an education level of Year 8 or below. Nearly all (97%) were unemployed at the time of the data being extracted (after almost one year in the program), and most (91%) had never worked in Australia.

To identify the key issues facing young people in our sample, we categorised and counted 'challenges and issues' recorded by Pathways Counsellors in case notes (see Figure 2). Prevalent issues relate to participants' mental health, social isolation, disengagement and self-esteem. Symptomatic issues such as drug and alcohol misuse or financial constraints are also significant. The category 'Other' includes responses related to transport, corrections or justice issues and other health barriers.

Figure 1. Engagement in education, training and employment, permanent Humanitarian visa holders (20-24 years) arrived 2012-2016 (%)



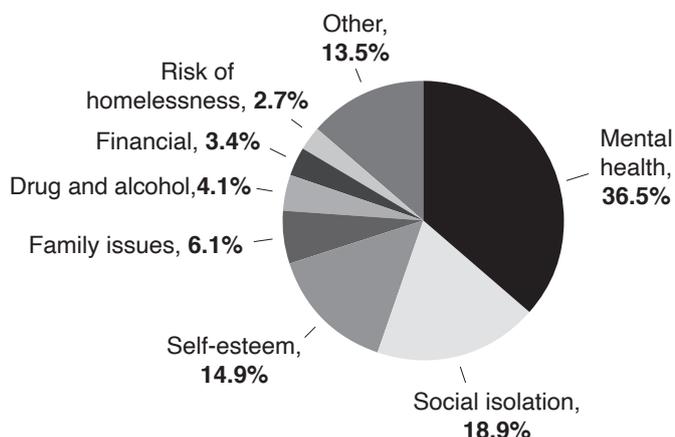
Source: ABS 2016

Table 2. Highest level of educational attainment (20-24-year-olds) by migration status (permanent Humanitarian visas arrived 2012-2016), (%)

	Refugee	Australian-born
Bachelor Degree or higher	1.8	15.0
Diploma	3.5	6.4
Certificate III & IV	9.2	63.1
Certificate I & II	1.0	11.5
Years 10-12	40.7	1.4
Year 9	6.2	0.5
Year 8 or below	17.5	1.9
No educational attainment	9.6	0.1

Source: ABS 2016

Figure 2. Identified challenges requiring support (n=148)



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Table 3. Sample characteristics (n=32)

Average age	21.9 years
Average time in program	49.2 weeks
% Identifies as having a disability	12.1
% Region of birth:	
Oceania (Australia)	27.3
North Africa & Middle East	27.3
Southeast Asia	21.2
Sub-Saharan Africa	15.2
Southern & Central Asia	6.1
Southern & Eastern Europe	3.0
% Highest level of school completed:	
Years 10-12	45.5
Year 9	18.2
Year 8 or below	33.3
No formal education	3.0
% Unemployed	97.0
% Never worked in Australia	90.9

Four key themes were identified in the analysis of participant pathways:

1. Intersecting engagement barriers

Young people in our sample commonly experienced multiple barriers that appeared to intersect and augment their disengagement from education or work. For example, experiences of past trauma from war and forced migration was commonly noted by Pathways Counsellors alongside social isolation, depression and anxiety.

Different program interventions are needed to assist refugee youth with what are likely to be multiple, 'messy' transitions. In this context, a focus on formal educational attainment such as course completion can obscure the necessary steps and support required to achieve them.

2. Participant goals and aspirations

Pathways Counsellors identified the goals and aspirations of participants using cross-cultural communication techniques and 'narrative counselling' (Abkhezr et al., 2015). Examples of participant goals described in case notes include career aspirations (technical, trades, and public health jobs, and digital literacy), increasing English literacy, developing greater personal independence, and overcoming financial debts.

Counsellors noted that many participants required at least one shorter-term transition to be able to define longer-term career and life goals. Fagan et al., (2018, p.6-7) has conceptualised non-educational and non-vocational transitions for refugees as: spatial (becoming comfortable

in unfamiliar places); interpersonal (relating to friends, teachers, tutors etc. in unfamiliar professional or collegial contexts); linguistic (relating to others in a new language in spoken, academic, professional, or informal registers); and cultural (comprehending new education systems, new ways of working, planning and thinking about one's future).

The diversity of future aspirations identified by participants suggests the importance of considering a wider set of goals that can aid or complement reengagement in mainstream education, and address intersecting settlement, mental health and learning disadvantages.

3. Service activities and support

Counsellors utilised a mentoring approach to support young people and drew on a diverse range of activities including: enrolment in English classes; individualised careers pathway counselling; general education and foundational skills training; financial assistance; service referrals; youth-centred events and outdoor education (camps); social events and facilitation of linkages to established community groups.

While many of these activities were non-vocational in nature, participants were also mentored throughout the program to consider longer-term career aspirations. Engaging refugee youth in counselling and multiple opportunities for social contact introduces participants to new spatial, interpersonal, linguistic and cultural environments.

4. Preliminary outcomes

Our initial appraisal of participant outcomes indicates a range of benefits for participants. Examples of measurable outcomes included: securing accommodation; completion of EAL courses; stable employment; participation in community groups; and accessing mental health and trauma counselling services. Examples of subjective outcomes included: self-reported improvements in confidence and motivation; increased ability to define goals and articulate career aspirations; and expanded social networks.

A balanced emphasis on both vocational and non-vocational (personal, social, cultural) outcomes by practitioners is positively related with the increased engagement that the sample had achieved.

Implications for practice

We believe that these findings challenge service providers and policymakers to rethink institutional norms that emphasise linear pathways and quantifiable participation measures—such as enrolment or completion rates—for disadvantaged learners. We propose consideration of several program design elements for

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refugee youth education programs, including:

- intensive support delivered by specialised service providers with intercultural competencies
- resourcing non-educational support such as mental health services
- an emphasis on building self-confidence and independence
- goal-orientation and facilitating community connectedness and social interaction
- coordinating multiple sources of public, not-for-profit and community support.

Such models are likely to be more holistic in dealing with young people's lives; offer multiple options; engage broader community involvement and provide central coordination between mainstream services such as health and employment (Davies et al., 2011).

It remains an unanswered question whether more flexible, holistic models can be successfully integrated within current public service contract arrangements. At present, cyclical and sporadic funding conditions for specialised youth services make this difficult to achieve, which compels practitioners to find 'workarounds' that benefit participants rather than pursue these approaches intensively. ■

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The role of interpersonal attributes in the apprentice experience

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Introduction

This research reports on an exploratory qualitative study about apprentices' interpersonal skills and people-related generic skills as described by them. The study explores accounts by 20 apprentices in their final stages of training, about the role of interpersonal attributes and/or their impact on self-reported progress in training and completion. It investigated how intrapersonal and interpersonal generic skills affected the training of these apprentices. It also explored how relationships and soft skills in the workplace influenced apprentices' accounts of their training completion. A holistic approach to the apprentice experience in the workplace develops from these accounts.

This research focused on building knowledge about the role of interpersonal attributes and people related generic skills within the Australian apprenticeship experience based on their lived training experiences. The study followed two forms of enquiry. The first aimed to explore how apprentices' interpersonal working relationships and soft skills affected their on- and off-the-job training within the apprenticeship. The second aim sought to investigate whether apprentices' working relationships and soft skills influenced their intention to complete their training.

These aims were linked to the following research questions:

1. What intrapersonal and interpersonal generic skills do Australian apprentices use?
2. To what extent do Australian apprentices' people-related generic skills affect their training experiences?

Literature review

Mayer et al. (2002) established that emotional intelligence (EI) is an essential component of an individual's critical and creative thinking. EI is a combination of two concepts with specific meanings that merge to provide a new and distinct definition. It defines the way we interpret behaviours and actions. Understanding how emotions affect others is the key to understanding their behaviours. EI interprets attitudes and conduct in individuals in various ways. Schutte and Loi (2014) viewed EI as an essential skill displayed through behaviours and actions. Coetzee and Harry (2014) portrayed EI as the likelihood

of certain conduct rather than the conduct itself.

An example of EI is the ability to communicate (Petrovici and Dobrescu, 2014). Understanding emotions – both one's own, and those of other people – contributes to developing communication skills and harmonious relationships (Petrovici and Dobrescu, 2014, p. 1409). EI is also relevant for managing workplace issues and maintaining interpersonal relationships (Wan et al., 2014).

According to Peart (2019), social-emotional learning (SEL) is vital for career success (cited in Paolini, 2020). Relationships and relationship building are fundamental aspects of SEL. This learning enhances collaborative and teamwork skills. SEL is essential for achievement at school and the workplace (Paolini, 2020, p. 132).

The ability of apprentices to learn EI in their training depends on their ability to form thoughts about (their) emotional experiences. EI influences an individual's 'capacity to relate to their feelings and behaviours and displayed by the application of emotionally adaptive practices' (Salovey et al., 2001, p. 280). This explains using reason before making a judgment about how to act. Holistic learning must link skills and knowledge to be meaningful in trade disciplines. For example, making a lighting circuit function requires knowledge of how it works. Applying knowledge to practice illustrates the ability to grasp the basic concepts. Other examples where emotional intelligence is used by apprentices in the workplace are when they adapt to the demands of their coworkers and maintaining activities that lower stress. Traits like self-awareness, emotional control and resilience complement the tangible skills demonstrated through work tasks. The importance of Emotional Intelligence underpins most research conducted on management in organisations. Yet, EI is seldom explored in the vocational sector and the workplace in the context of apprenticeships. Our a priori position in this research is to explore whether EI is essential for training apprenticeship workers in Australia and how it is manifested in such training.

Method

This was a qualitative study arising out of two quantitative surveys of apprentices across Australia conducted during the first author's PhD study. The surveys were administered in 2010 and 2012 across most states of Australia. Recruitment of survey participants was undertaken through private and public registered training organisations (RTOs) in regional and metropolitan centres. A total of 666 apprentices responded to the surveys. Of these, 20 survey respondents (out of 39 who expressed interest) accepted follow-up invitations to take

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part in one-to-one interviews about their apprenticeship experience. The other 19 survey participants either declined an email or telephone invitation or did not reply. The interviews used semi-structured questioning techniques. All interviews took place in Victoria at a training college in metropolitan Melbourne over four weeks in mid-2014. The interviews averaged 36 minutes in duration. All signed a consent form to take part, with the form and project approved by the Swinburne University of Technology Human Research Ethics Committee (SUHREC).

Results

Apprentices considered that to succeed in their apprenticeship, they needed to draw on their soft skills. These skills were interpersonal attributes, resilience, and personal effort. They regarded these skills as paramount to solving problems and learning their trade.

The research did not directly reveal what impact EI had made on the interviewees' progression through the apprenticeship, however, the interviewees frequently mentioned interpersonal skills in their interviews. Some viewed their progression according to a few key milestones. These were gaining more responsibility, having different work experiences and changes of employers.

The interviews highlighted how these apprentices were able to complete their training using a variety of soft or generic skills. The basis for successful apprentice completion appeared to rest on resilience. A good support structure like a nurturing employer, support from immediate family or both assisted in developing resilience.

Some interviewees recollected situational contexts where they observed the non-verbal cues of others in the workplace. Peoples' moods and emotions, body language and voice tones were examples cited. The interviewees reported developing coping strategies when faced with difficult situations.

Yeah, I've just learnt to just agree to everything he wants me to do, and just do it but you just learn to, to accept it, like if he goes to me to do something that's going to take me an extra 20 minutes, I don't care. (Interviewee 4, 2014).

I personally can do that [putting personal differences aside when having to work with others], so long as they're not personal to me, but I'll shut up, I'll do it just to keep the peace and so long as we're presenting a good dish to the customer. So, I basically just, you know, I'm quiet, and I just say, 'Ok, yep, you know you've told me nicely, I'll do it no problem'. (Interviewee 19, 2014).

The exercise of soft/generic/transferable interpersonal skills such as emotional self-control, emotional direct cognition, communication, and teamwork also contributed to building resilience and confidence in training and the workplace.

Discussion

The research revealed that teamwork, communication and problem-solving complement the apprentice experience. Emotional direct cognition (reasoning with emotions) and self-awareness also go with these items. Based on the evidence of these interviews, it appears that many of these apprentices were bullied at work. Bullying has been a common problem in the trades (Riggall et al., 2017, p. 513). Specific personal attributes of apprentices, culture and organisation settings intensify the possibility of them being targeted (Riggall et al., 2017).

The apprenticeship model requires an emphasis on interpersonal attributes to complement the technical skills taught in training packages. Adopting SEL (Paolini, 2020) in the vocational training curriculum could be a useful resource to prepare apprentices for the workplace. Its purpose is to enhance apprentices' interpersonal skills and assist with managing their emotions and maintain positive relations with others (Paolini, 2020). This may go some way to addressing apprentice attrition in apprenticeships. SEL assists with developing team-oriented activities rather than individual job-specific objectives and has project-based assessments with groups of students. It would also focus attention on key skills required in all work contexts and encourage apprentices to reflect on their interpersonal experiences in the work/training context.

It is difficult to infer similar conclusions about the training experiences of all the apprentices interviewed because they had different relationships with their peers and employers. What is similar is their training arrangements; that is, being under the supervision of a mentor while undertaking a blended training approach (classroom training for part of the week and on the job for the rest of the time). While it can be interpreted by the participants' comments that they were experiencing bullying, they did not directly name it. Yet, the study does tell us that these apprentices attached significance to their emotional skills and considered these important in their training experiences and completion behaviours.

Conclusion

The results provide insights into the importance of interpersonal attributes in the apprenticeship experience. The focus was on emotional intelligence and people-related generic skills in the apprentice experience.

This research indicates that interpersonal attributes are significant to apprentices' learning and completion behaviours. Their absence could be a risk factor in the current training approach.

A paucity of research exists in interpersonal attributes in apprentice training and the wider vocational education and training sector. This research advocates for the conduct of more research into interpersonal features in

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apprentice training. The unique characteristics of the apprenticeship system attract young people. Many have limited life experiences which can create issues on the job and given the low apprentice completion rate in Australia (56.7%) (NCVER, 2019) justifies applying more attention to interpersonal attributes and skills in apprenticeships. ■

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VET teachers' accounts of difficult teaching situations and how learning theories explain them

Erica Smith, Federation University Australia

This paper reports on a small 2020 research project with vocational education and training (VET) teachers in Australia. The project analysed teacher accounts to describe difficult teaching situations in VET and how learning theories explain the situations. The accounts were from teachers' assignments on this topic in a course (EDTAS2001: *Learning theories: VET in context*) in the Associate Degree of VET at Federation University. The project is currently being extended.

Background

The study of learning theories is almost ignored in the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, the only pedagogical qualification required for Australian VET teachers, except those with higher level VET or adult education teaching qualifications). Only one criterion in one element of one unit of competency (TAEDEL401: *Plan, organise and deliver group-based learning*) addresses this important part of teaching: '2.3 Use knowledge of learning principles and theories to generate ideas for managing session delivery' (<https://training.gov.au/Training/Details/TAEDEL401>). The 'knowledge evidence' listed in the assessment part of the unit refers only to 'learning theories and principles', with no specificity. In contrast, a range of learning theories are studied in depth in all university-level VET teacher-education courses. In the textbook produced by the Australian Council of Deans of Education Vocational Education Group (ACDEVEG), for example, exercises in the chapter on learning theories (Hodge and Ollis, 2014) encourage VET teachers to apply learning theories to their own teaching. But there is a gap in the empirical literature on how VET teachers actually do this, although school-education literature (e.g. Runesson, 2015) provides more instances. The lack of concrete examples in Australia VET is a problem for the sector, and affects teaching of the concept at all levels. That is why this research was carried out.

Method

Human Research Ethics Committee approval was gained. The students in the learning theories course, were emailed, after the end of the Semester 1 2020, to seek their permission to analyse their work in an assignment which asked, among other matters, students

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to 'write an account of one or more difficult teaching experiences of your own... and (say how) learning theories...help to explain the difficulties you encountered.' The email was sent by a third party as I was their teacher. 15 out of 29 students replied giving permission.

For this paper, the accounts were analysed by the two research questions:

1. What types of difficult teaching situations do VET teachers encounter?
2. How does learning theory explain such situations?

Data collection is being carried out during 2021 with an additional cohort of students, after which further analysis will be undertaken.

Findings

The types of difficult situations were described as follows by the students. The teachers themselves diagnosed the difficulties (see final column).

	Industry area	Type of student group	Difficult situation as described	Diagnosis made by their teacher (my student)
A	Plumbing	Apprentices	One student disruptive	Did not have need to know
B	Plumbing	Apprentices	Students disruptive	Did not have need to know
C	Plumbing	Apprentices	Students disruptive	Did not have need to know, and content too hard
D	Pathology	Mature learners at TAFE	Two students brought their babies	College rules precluded this
E	Earthmoving	Short govt-funded course	Some students disruptive	Enrolled for unemployment benefit – low self-efficacy
F	Welding	Apprentices	A student with special needs could not keep up	Content too hard
G	Training & Assessment	Short govt-funded course	Two students had low digital literacy	Content too hard
H	Beauty	Mixed-age learners at TAFE (two situations)	1 Special needs student 2 Students' eyes glazed over in theory class	1 Content too hard 2 Content presented boringly
I	Carpentry	Short taster course - teenagers	Some students disruptive	Content presented boringly
J	Plumbing	1 Pre-apprenticeship 2 Mature learners at TAFE	1 A refugee student angry with playful students 2 One student failed exam twice	1 Feared he would not be able to practice enough 2 Could not identify important elements to learn
K	Internet use	Refugee women with little English	Students were not literate in own language	Needed own-language assistance in order to learn
L	Plumbing	Mature learners at TAFE	Could not understand a particular unit	Content too hard
M	Electrical	VET in Schools (VETIS) student	Students disruptive	Content presented boringly
N	General studies	VCAL (type of VET in schools) students	Students disruptive	Students from disadvantaged background without role models
O	Parenting	Community centre course	Student made inappropriate comment	Attention-seeking

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The main topics mentioned in the teachers' accounts can be grouped as follows:

- Students were disruptive because they didn't see a need to know;
- The content was difficult for the students;
- The content was difficult for particular students because of learning needs or lack of skills;
- The teaching was boring;
- Students' personal circumstances made learning difficult (refugee status, long-term unemployed).

Teachers then went on to describe how learning theories could explain what had happened, and also how learning theories could prevent similar situations arriving in the future. (The latter points are not analysed in this paper. Some of the learning-theory-related explanations presented by teachers were:

- Plumbing students were not able to see a connection to their own experience (**Knowles's adult learning theory**)
- Slower students needed to build up to concepts (**scaffolding theory - Vygotsky**)
- Aggressive refugee student was at lower level of Maslow's hierarchy of needs than other students (**motivation theory - Maslow**).
- Women were attempting to **transform (e.g. Mezirow)** their lives, hence came to class even with their babies.
- Confiscation of mobile phones didn't work (punishment aspect of **behaviourism – Skinner** - failed)
- Teacher used **andragogy (adult learning theory - Knowles)** in a beauty class but younger students could not cope.

One comment helps to provide insight into the reflection that was taking place among the students as a result of studying learning theories:

'As a new teacher with little or no training in how to handle difficult students my arsenal of weapons for dealing with this type of situation was quite small. While I had over 25 years' experience in industry, with little teaching experience and virtually no knowledge of learning theory I found the firm approach and a pedagogical style was my only way of keeping control of a large class. This would usually work but on rare occasions could lead to a battle of wills or even direct confrontation which in turn could lead to a difficult student leaving the class. It was only after I started to become a more experienced teacher and my understanding of students and their needs grew that I naturally transitioned to a more andragogical/ cognitive approach to teaching, although at the time I had no idea what these words meant.'

Teachers described how the theory they were learning had prompted them to reconsider their teaching methods for the future. While the latter point is beyond the scope of this paper, these responses will be analysed later.

Conclusion

The research so far has shown that VET teachers find that using learning theories is a useful way to make sense of teaching situations and consider how to improve them. As one teacher said in the assignment response: 'Although I have only just started my Associate Degree, this module on learning theories has given me many tools. By understanding the way successful students learn, good teachers facilitate and the theory behind learning, I can implement these strategies and improve my teaching practice.' It is hoped that the study, through provision of current Australian examples, will assist VET teachers and can be used in teacher-training studies at all levels and also in professional development. ■

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AVETRA'S REPOSITORY OF RESEARCH RESOURCES

Ever wondered how to begin research, or how you yourself got started on your research journey? If so, you are not alone! Many early career researchers in the VET sector have been expressing the need for some means of readily accessing resources that would help them get started. This repository has been developed for you.

Check out the range of research resources on the AVETRA website: <https://avetra.org.au/pages/resources.html>

Partnership and cooperation in vocational teacher education as a focus of Erasmus + capacity building in the EU

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Context

Cooperation and partnership in vocational education and training (VET) have been enjoying support and encouragement from economic and government sectors of countries with market economies for a long time. Increasing the employability of VET graduates, enhancing the relevance of the gained in the VET system skills and knowledge to the real work setting, matching the needs of the labour markets are main drivers (Arribas, 2018; International Labour Organisation, 2020). The dual systems of VET in the German-speaking countries (Austria, Germany and Switzerland) or Denmark show that cooperation between sectors and stakeholders can be successful (Deissinger, 2010). Moreover, the term 'employability' has recently become a keyword of policymaking in higher education and the dual form of skill formation is now increasingly adapted even in the tertiary sector (Deissinger, 2005; Ulicna et al., 2016). However, these trends hardly touch teacher training as a whole and vocational teacher education (VTE) in particular. This is astonishing since the vocational teacher profession is at the nexus of the skill formation system where vocational teachers' expertise and competences play a decisive role in the quality of provided training and the formation of the professional identity of VET graduates. In this context, it is obvious that higher education institutions (HEIs) providing vocational teacher training, vocational schools and industry should cooperate closely when it comes to governing vocational teacher education (VTE). Our EU project PAGOSTE has its focus on this problem field.

Project rationale and objectives

In standardised VTE systems, where pre-service training for this profession is widely realised at universities via bachelor and/or master programmes (e.g. Austria, Germany, Estonia, Spain) cooperation between vocational schools and HEIs usually includes internships in schools and/or industry (Cedefop, 2016). However, mostly this is the only link that conveys the complexity of teaching in vocational school settings to prospective vocational teachers. Therefore, the question arises how the governance of VTE may be changed or at least newly designed in order to extend formally cooperation and partnerships between different stakeholders, namely VET institutions and HEIs. The cooperation of these stakeholders can contribute to bridging the theory-practice gap as the 'users' of VTE qualifications, schools

as well as employers of future teachers, are normally not involved in setting up or at least influencing how teachers are trained at university. The existing one-sided institutional reality explains why future teachers hardly feel well prepared for their future occupational destination. The overarching quality criterion of initial VTE should be to ensure that the expectations of vocational schools and the motivations and competencies of future teachers can be aligned.

With the intention to contribute to fostering cooperation and partnerships in VTE, the Erasmus+ project PAGOSTE was launched on January 15, 2020. The target country is Ukraine, which has a university-based VTE system. The project's title is 'New mechanisms of partnership-based governance and standardization of vocational teacher education in Ukraine', which gives a clear hint of its main goal. The project aims at fostering the quality and relevance of VTE in Ukraine by establishing standards with respect to partnership-based governance (PBG) mechanisms between universities and vocational schools. Partnership-based governance is seen as an instrument to tackle problems of the 'hierarchical' governance, the theory-practice gap and the overall relevance of training in HEIs by including VET schools in activities of pre-service training, such as curricula development and teaching methodology. It even could lead to establishing a governance system based on partnerships reaching beyond these two stakeholders. In more specific terms, the project pursues the following objectives:

- to establish effective mechanisms of the partnership between HEIs, which are involved in VTE, and vocational schools (and other stakeholders if relevant);
- to employ mechanisms of PBG for in-service vocational teacher training;
- to enable educational institutions involved in vocational teacher training to use standards for PBG.

Nine partners from Ukraine and the European Union have taken up the task to reach these objectives within 36 months. Besides the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, four Ukrainian HEIs in Kyiv, Odesa and Kharkiv, and a research institute from Kyiv, three EU partners from Germany, Austria and Italy (programme countries) are involved in the project. The University of Konstanz (Chair of Business Education) is the coordinating institution. The project is a structural 'Capacity Building' project that is expected to lead to visible changes in the Ukrainian VTE system.

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First research steps

The results of the need analysis (Radkevych et al., 2020), which was conducted within the project in April and May 2020 by means of surveying target groups in Ukraine (university staff involved in initial VTE, vocational teachers, managers of VET institutions and students, who are enrolled in VTE study programmes) revealed a considerable gap and dissatisfaction of all target groups with the current state of cooperation between HEIs and vocational schools. The weak cooperation between these stakeholders negatively impacts the outcomes of existing initial VTE: thus, 70% of vocational school directors, who provide HEI students with places for teaching practice, are hardly satisfied with the level of their practical skills (both pedagogical and subject-specific). The VTE system obviously fails to equip young teachers with pedagogical and professional skills. This fully complies with the self-evaluation by VET teachers of their practical readiness to teach in the classroom after graduation from universities. The conclusions drawn are that the university-based initial VTE cannot achieve its goal leading students to become 'a dual professional' (Smith, 2019). A preliminary conclusion leads us to the assumption that either the structure of VTE should be reformed fundamentally by, e.g. establishing the

second phase of VTE after graduation (in institutions like the seminars in Germany) (Deissinger et al., 2019), or governance should be reformed in a way that involves all relevant stakeholders systematically and reliably with their needs and expectations, i.e. vocational schools and, in the long run, employers.

Based on the results of the need analysis, the four Ukrainian partner universities have recently developed their concepts of involvement of vocational stakeholders and employers, where possible, into the VTE structure of their respective universities. However, as all these HEIs differ in terms of numbers of students, geographical locations and specialisations (for example, Kyiv National Economic University provides training of commercial teachers), therefore, each university needs to set up an individual approach in building up cooperation links and partnerships. The Ukrainian universities will pilot their concepts by the end of 2021. Besides, the project aims at establishing a national concept, which puts all these activities under one roof.

Solutions and expected outcomes

By implementing partnerships between HEIs and vocational schools, the project wants to sharpen the need and consciousness for what can be called shared ownership and responsibility for VTE. Active involvement of employers could also facilitate the awareness for a modern VTE system in Ukraine and raising the status of the teaching profession without leaving aside the pedagogical core of VTE.

After obtaining the results of piloting the concepts of partnership-based governance at the partner universities, a national framework shall be established, worked out and disseminated on a national level. As it was mentioned in the beginning, the idea of cooperation and partnership is not new in VET and has proved to be beneficial to all parties and should be transferred to VTE as well. Such efforts have been documented in recent European strategic documents on the development of VET and the teaching profession (Council of the European Union, 2020; European Commission, 2015). Some attempts to build partnerships are also made worldwide (Gerholz et al., 2020; Gunadi et al., 2020; Maskit & Orland-Barak, 2015; Pentelényi & Toth, 2011; Smith, 2016).

Therefore, the project not just has a European relevance but also fits into the international education agenda. Also, in Australia, VTE seems to be a consistent topic of educational research (Clayton & Harris, 2019; Smith, 2019, 2020). Maybe there is a chance to present the project at one of the forthcoming AVETRA conferences. ■

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AVETRA EVENTS

As we all have, AVETRA has adapted to the conditions of the time and our events have been conducted using remote access technology.

AVETRA Annual Conference 2021

AVETRA's 23rd Annual Conference – **Recover, Rethink, Rebuild: All Eyes on VET** – was delivered fully online over five days: 19–23 April 2021. Attendees were treated to a host of local and international speakers, including Ewart Keep (Oxford University), Sai Loo (University College London) and Antonio Ranieri (CEDEFOP).

Thanks to all involved in making the conference such a success!

AVETRA OctoberVET 2021

AVETRA's annual **OctoberVET** festival showcases VET research and promotes discussion between VET stakeholders about research needs. Members are encouraged to consider hosting an OctoberVET event, and watch out for more details in AVETRA emails and on the AVETRA website.

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JVET VOCATIONAL AND TECHNICAL EDUCATION KEYNOTES CONFERENCE



Friday 9th July 2021

Online
10:00am - 15:00pm

This year's conference will be on **Friday 9 July** and is offered completely online. It features a panel of international speakers brought together by the Journal of Vocational Education and Training (JVET).

More information available at: jvet.co.uk/

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Should educational leaders be required to upskill to fill in the gaps?

Educational leadership skills in the Early Childhood setting

Erin Emblin

Introduction

As an educational leader in the early childhood sector, I am constantly being asked by other educators, 'What is an educational leader?' 'What do you need to have to be an educational leader?' These questions are constant, as we need to have educational leaders in the field; many are put into the role with no or little experience, just to tick a box.

In this report, I will discuss the importance of educational leadership and the role that the Early Childhood Industry and Government legislation require educational leaders to have. In this report, I will highlight the skills gap educational leaders have in all states across Australia in 2018, which poses the question, 'Should educational leaders be required to upskill to fill in the gaps?'

Furthermore, I will analyse qualitative data to identify educational leadership skills, gaps and highlight the importance of upskilling. I will also discuss how *andragogy* – the educational theory progressed by Malcolm Knowles – informed my research on the importance of why I consider upskilling integral to the development of identified leadership skills.

Literature Review

Educational leadership will change from setting to setting so different skills will need to be demonstrated and implemented as these settings change. 'It is important to acknowledge that there are so many ways of seeing things and not one right way to do anything'. (Community Childcare Association, 2008-2012) There is a specific set of rules and compliance educational leaders need to practice and master within the role. (ACECQA, 2018)

When we talk about skills what are we talking about?

The Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) states that the role of the educational leader is to:

- Collaborate with educators and provide curriculum direction and guidance.
- Support educators to effectively implement the cycle of planning to enhance programs and practices.
- Lead the development and implementation of an effective educational program in the service.
- Ensure children's learning and development are guided by the learning outcomes of the Early Years Learning Framework and/or the Framework for School Age Care or other approved learning frameworks (ACECQA, 2018, p. 2)

“ It has been suggested that adults need to have their different ways of learning recognised and their unique styles and strengths addressed.

Early Childhood sector providers need to put in place educational leaders that are suitable to lead the development of programs and mentoring of other educators in the service, to comply with National Quality Standards, regulations and laws (ACECQA, 2018).

The article '*How do they manage? A review on the leadership in early childhood*' (Muijs, D., Aubrey, C., Harris, A. & Biggs, M., 2004), explores the skills required for an educational leader, but not the qualifications needed to be an educational leader. In the article, *The Educational Leader Resource*. Cheeseman (2012) notes that there is a range of skills required that is not mentioned in the regulations, such as:

- To have knowledge in different areas about the curriculum.
- Having access to current research.
- Knowledge of individual children and learning styles.
- Being able to mentor educators in the industry through coaching, mentoring, and reflection (Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority, 2019, p. 56)

Should then, educational leaders be upgrading their qualifications or upskilling to succeed in their job role?

When educational leaders are upskilling, it is important that they must be motivated to learn about pedagogy (rather than andragogy). Adults learn differently from children and for adults to succeed they need to have the following elements: 'self-concept, experience, readiness to learn, orientation to learning, motivation to learn' (Smith, 2020). It has been suggested that adults need to have their different ways of learning recognised and their unique styles and strengths addressed. Pedagogy in the Early Childhood environment is distinct from adult teaching and learning principles (Culatta, 2020).

Methodology

In this qualitative research, I analysed articles, journals, and documents from various Early Childhood industry sources, including the Early Years Learning Framework, National Regulations, and publications from the Australian Children's Education Care Quality Authority. My research was limited by time, and that I did not conduct a survey

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of Early Childhood educators. I used low-risk sources of data and no participants were used.

Discussion

Along with the introduction of the national regulations and the National Quality Standards (NQS) in 2012, were defined requirements

for the new role of 'educational leader', responsible to maintain educational leadership and guide and monitor the educators in the service (ACECQA, 2018).

The educational leader needs to motivate the team and make pedagogical and curriculum decisions (Holland, 2014).

An educational leader needs skills but no formal leadership qualification. All educators in Early Childhood sector are required to have a Certificate III in Early Education and Care as a minimum qualification.

The Certificate III level qualification requirements for educators are:

- for children preschool age or under all other educators required to meet the relevant educator to child ratios must hold, or be actively working towards, an approved certificate III level education and care qualification. The qualification requirements do not apply to an educator who has been employed on a probationary basis for not more than 3 months (regulation 126)
- for children over preschool age all other educators required to meet the relevant educator to child ratios must hold, or be actively working towards, an approved certificate III level education and care qualification or commence obtaining that qualification within six months of commencing to educate and care for children (regulation 356(3))

Diploma level qualification requirements for educators are:

- for children preschool age or under at least 50 percent of required educators must hold, or be actively working towards, at least an approved diploma level education and care qualification (regulation 126(1))
- for children over preschool age at least 50 per cent of required educators must hold, or be enrolled in and studying for, at least a diploma level qualification approved for educators working with children over preschool age in Victoria (regulation 356(2))

(NSW Government, 2011)

“ The educational leader needs to motivate the team and make pedagogical and curriculum decisions.

While not a formal requirement, educational leaders are generally expected to be Diploma qualified. The units of competency in the CHC50908 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care that focus on leadership skills are:

CHCMGT003 – Lead the Work Team

BSBLED401 – Develop teams and individuals

BSBMGT605 – Provide leadership across the organisation

CHCPRP003 – Reflect on and improve own professional practice

(Australian Government, 2020)

These units support the educational leader to provide the leadership required, it should be noted that these are all elective units, not core to the qualification requirements.

Given that the CHC50908 Diploma of Early Childhood Education and Care is the industry recognised standard for senior educators in the Early Childhood sector, reform of this qualification to meet new regulatory standards for educational leaders is required. Alternatively, educational leaders could also study a supplementary course on leadership.

Conclusion

A desktop review of the literature makes clear that educational leaders in Early Childhood Education and Care need certain skills to be successful in their job role.

However, evaluation of this information leaves unanswered questions and gaps in the research, for example:

- Do educational leaders need a higher qualification to play out their job role? and
- Is there a need for a review of the Early Childhood Education and Care (CHC) Training Package, higher qualifications, or incremented leadership courses?

In an industry constantly evolving to meet the needs of early learners, regular adaptation of the tools required to develop future generations of educational leaders will ensure ongoing, high quality education and care for children. ■

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What is the relationship between mentoring a graduate trainer and the quality of the initial training delivery?

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Abstract

The research project idea 'What is the relationship between mentoring a graduate trainer and the quality of the initial training delivery?' came from my own initial teaching experience as a newly graduated trainer and assessor. My induction at TAFE was thorough and I felt supported and welcomed. However, I felt that having a firsthand teaching experience might have supported me to be a more confident, self-assured, and possibly less stressed novice trainer. I would have welcomed an induction process that had included a mentoring and/or peer review process prior to teaching delivery.

The purpose of this research is to find out if there indeed is a need for a mentoring program to support novice trainers and if this has been a previous conundrum. Accessing secondary qualitative data, low risk methodologies, valid/current articles, library, internet, and documents relating to VET teacher training, my desktop research recognised the need for a mentoring program and/or a novice VET teacher support program.

This research report deliberately only uses Australian articles and data.

I discovered, that for some TAFE institutes there is no novice teacher mentoring program/s included in the initial induction. Moving forward this is something that Institutes could investigate to further improve their induction process and to ensure the students will receive the best possible outcomes, having confident and competent trainers/teachers.

Introduction

Investigating options for TAFE teacher quality development, it became apparent that novice trainers would benefit from mentoring and/or peer review during initial induction. This need is recognised in Francisco (2016), and Moodie (2012) further explores VET teaching support for new trainers and the importance of an induction program before starting teaching and training.

Throughout my research I came across the need for further research. As Francisco, (2016) argues, many novice VET teachers begin teaching without any prior experience or qualifications related to teaching.

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As teachers, their own experience of learning in the workplace (where they were employed) becomes an important component shaping their own methods as a teacher to develop the skills, knowledge, and understanding of skills and knowledge in students.

This research recognises the pressing need for graduate VET teacher/trainer support, especially in early years.

Literature review

This project sought the latest research into initial VET teacher/trainer supports.

Francisco challenged the relationship between mentoring a graduate trainer and the quality of the initial training delivery (2016) in contrast to Moodie (2012) who discusses VET teaching support for new trainers and the importance of an induction program before starting teaching and training. Walls, (2014) uses data gained through organisational interviews and document analysis to try and identify the best ways to support an entry level trainer in a TAFE system. As the author (Walls) identified, there is a gap in the initial induction process and its presence in the VET industry.

Throughout my research I came across the need for further investigation. Francisco (2016) argues that many novice VET teachers begin teaching without any prior experience or qualifications related to teaching, their learning in the workplace where they are employed as teachers becomes an important component of the development of their skills, knowledge, and understanding about teaching and their role as a teacher.

Furthermore, the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) documented in the case study - 'Supervising and mentoring new trainers' PQR Education example in the 'Users' guide to Standards for RTO's 2015' (Australian Government Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015) that entry level trainers and assessors will benefit from a mentoring program.

Discussion

The current induction program at one TAFE Institute gives an overview of online induction and workplace orientation requirements. The online induction introduces new trainer/s to the key aspects of the Institute's operations, and of course, addresses some compliance requirements and workplace orientation to ensure they are familiar with the team, workstation, and local amenities. On reflection on my own novice trainer journey, from where the research idea came from, together with the research findings, I believe there is a need for VET teaching support for new trainers.

Furthermore, as I believe and during my research, the problem became apparent that novice trainers would benefit from mentoring and/or peer review during initial

“ A mentoring program would eliminate the guesswork of their role as a trainer and would give them current experience and strategies to support the diverse individual learner needs and styles.

induction, as it would help with Vocational Education and Training (VET) teacher preparation and this way ensuring the quality of student experience and outcomes.

As Francisco S. L. (Francisco, 2016) questioned in her research paper 'How novice vocational education and training teachers learn to become teachers' and as Gavin Moodie's (Moodie, n.d.), research paper discusses VET teaching support for new trainers and the importance of an induction program before starting teaching and training. By adding a mentoring program to the induction process, it would benefit the novice trainers and perhaps help trainers with more experience to refresh their training processes and this way keep on trend and current in the VET training industry, whilst mentoring the new trainer.

Throughout my research I came across the need for further research as (Francisco, 2016) argues that many novice VET teachers begin teaching without any prior experience or qualifications related to teaching, their learning in the workplace where they are employed as teachers becomes an important component of the development of their skills, knowledge, and understanding about teaching and their role as a teacher.

A mentoring program would eliminate the guesswork of their role as a trainer and would give them current experience and strategies to support the diverse individual learner needs and styles. The review of the research, we can conclude that there is a need to begin addressing graduate trainer support.

Additionally, the Registered Training Organisation (RTO) Standards Guide (Australian Government Australian Skills Quality Authority, 2015) indicated in the Case study -Supervising and mentoring new trainers for PQR Education Company, that entry level trainers and assessors will benefit from a mentoring program.

The oldest recording of the existing problem I came across, was from the author Sandra Walls (Walls, April 2014) who used data gained through organizational interviews, document analysis to try and identify the best ways to support an entry level trainer in a TAFE system. As the author identified the existing gap and the need for a mentoring program during the initial induction. I can only assume that this problem has existed as long as VET delivery has been in TAFE's. This should be addressed, and mentoring programs should be a part of the initial induction processes.

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Throughout the research and by investigating the data from it, it is evident that adding a mentoring program to the induction process will not only benefit the trainers but the students by ensuring they will have the best possible training delivery and a trainer who is confident and knowledgeable in their industry. It will enhance and enrich our TAFE's quality of student outcomes. Furthermore, this will support BHI strategic plan and themes.

The research told the story properly and fairly, as the research idea and question were based on my own experience as a novice trainer. The research messages were very valid and presented with integrity, particularly as the focus for the research was an issue that Saini (researcher) has experienced firsthand.

Therefore I feel comfortable with the conclusion and I believe further research is needed, as it became apparent during my research that there is a need for a mentoring program for novice trainers. ■

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