

Shedding Light

The role of private 'for profit' RTOs in training young early school leavers

Kira Clarke

Lecturer

Centre for Vocational & Educational Pathways



About the research

Research Team

Research undertaken by consortium of researchers from Brotherhood of St Laurence, University of Melbourne and Victoria University.

Purpose

Provider level enquiry: learning from the private RTO experience

Method

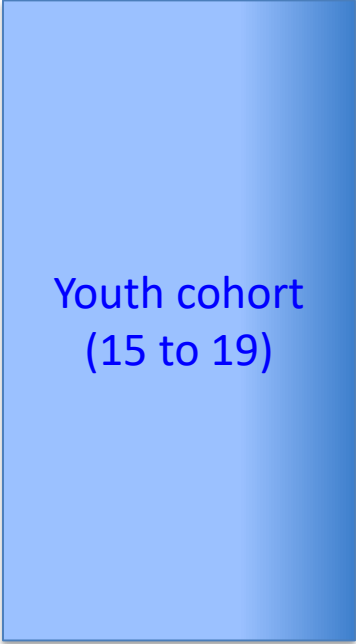
Qualitative and semi-quantitative analysis

Surveys of 130 PRTOS

Interviews within case study sites in South Australia, Queensland, and Victoria

Interviews with industry and government.


Rationale for the research



Youth cohort
(15 to 19)

Low skilled young people constructed as a policy 'dilemma'.

Rationale for the research




Youth cohort
(15 to 19)

Early school
leavers (ESLs)
(w/o Year 12
completion)

Persistently high dropout rates observed in many European and Anglophone countries (De Witte et al 2013).

Rationale for the research



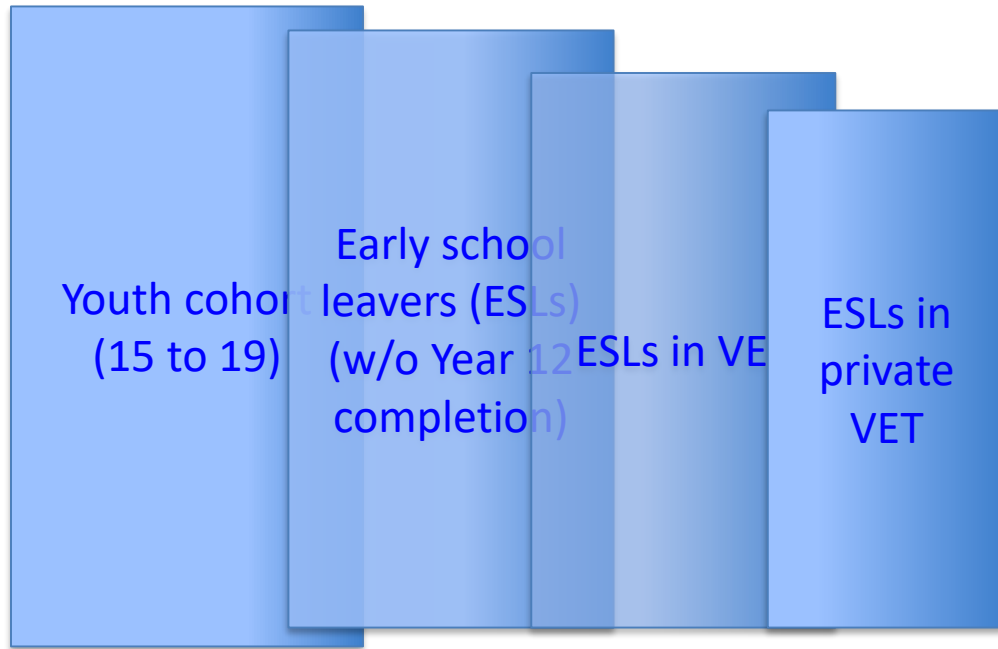
Youth cohort
(15 to 19)

Early school
leavers (ESLs)
(w/o Year 12
completion)

ESLs in VET

Human capital theory approach argues that any knowledge or skill attainment strengthens labour market prospects (Shavit & Mueller 2000, Becker 1975, Rumberger & Daymount 1984)

Rationale for the research

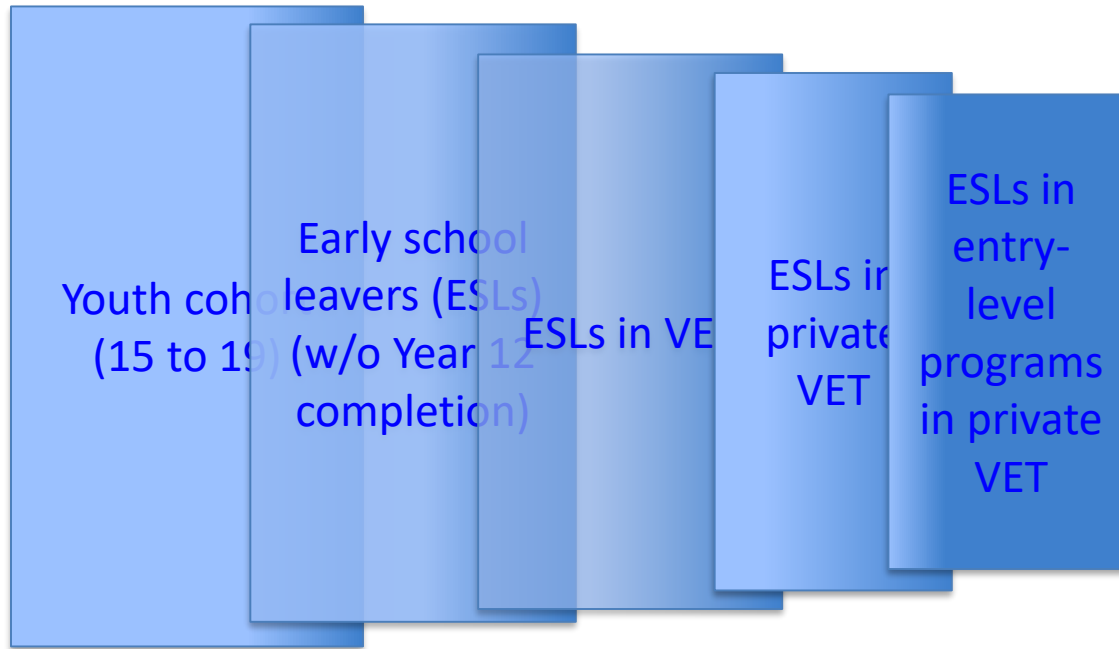


Market share of private RTOs has grown rapidly in Australia.

Within the neo-liberal market context, learners are constructed as consumers (Wheelahan 2011).

Marketised training landscape reinforces problematic assumptions that learners choose their provider based on an informed understanding.

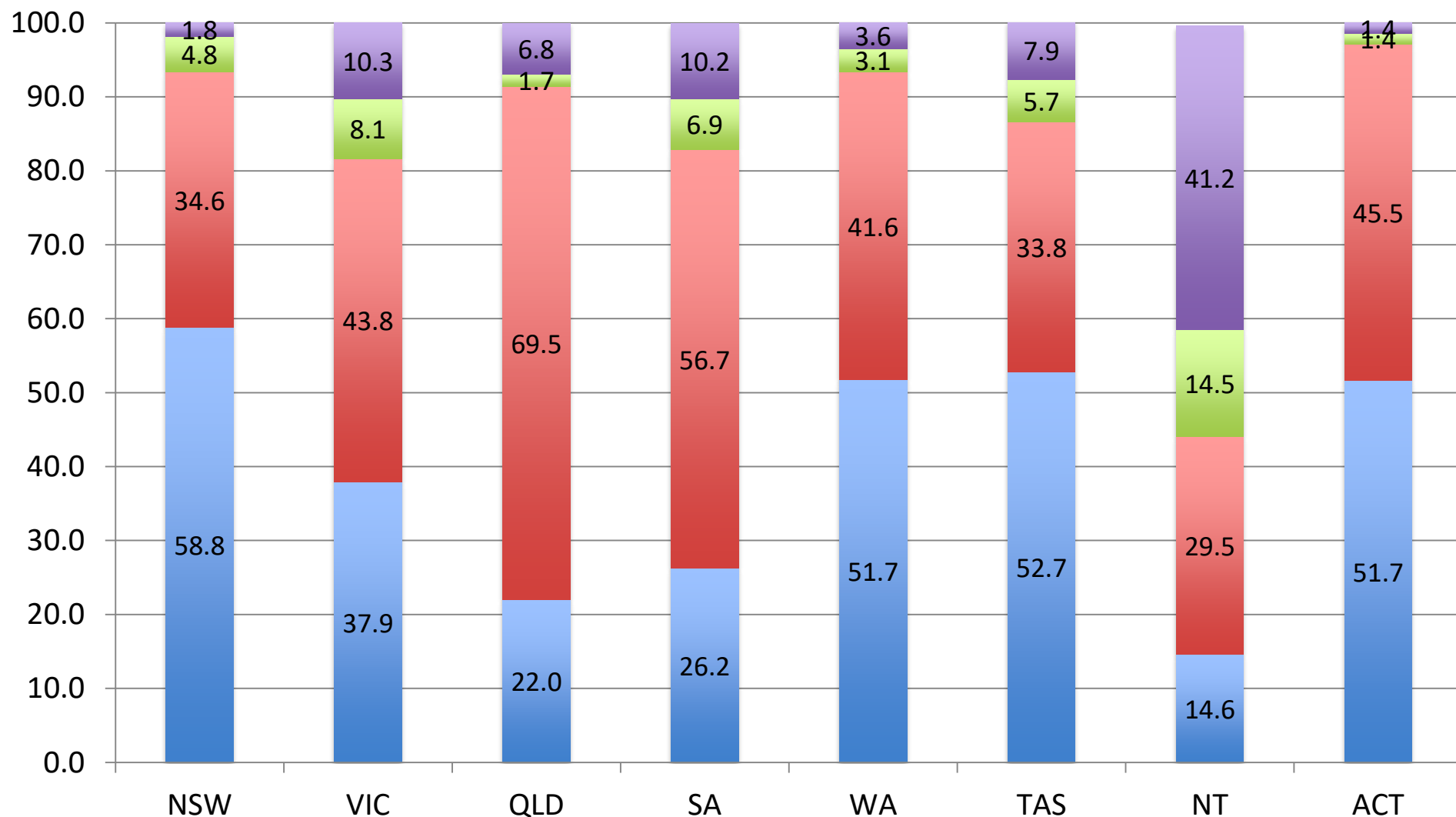
Rationale for the research



Entry-level programs have been described as “vocationally equivalent” (COAG 2008) to a traditional school completion certificate. If these qualifications are being equated to a senior secondary certificate in policy terms, it is necessary to gain further insight into their usefulness for learners.

Growing market share of private RTOs for young people without school completion (2015)

■ TAFE ■ Private training provider ■ Community education provider ■ Other



The survey (n=130)

PRT0 profile locale, size, mode, scope

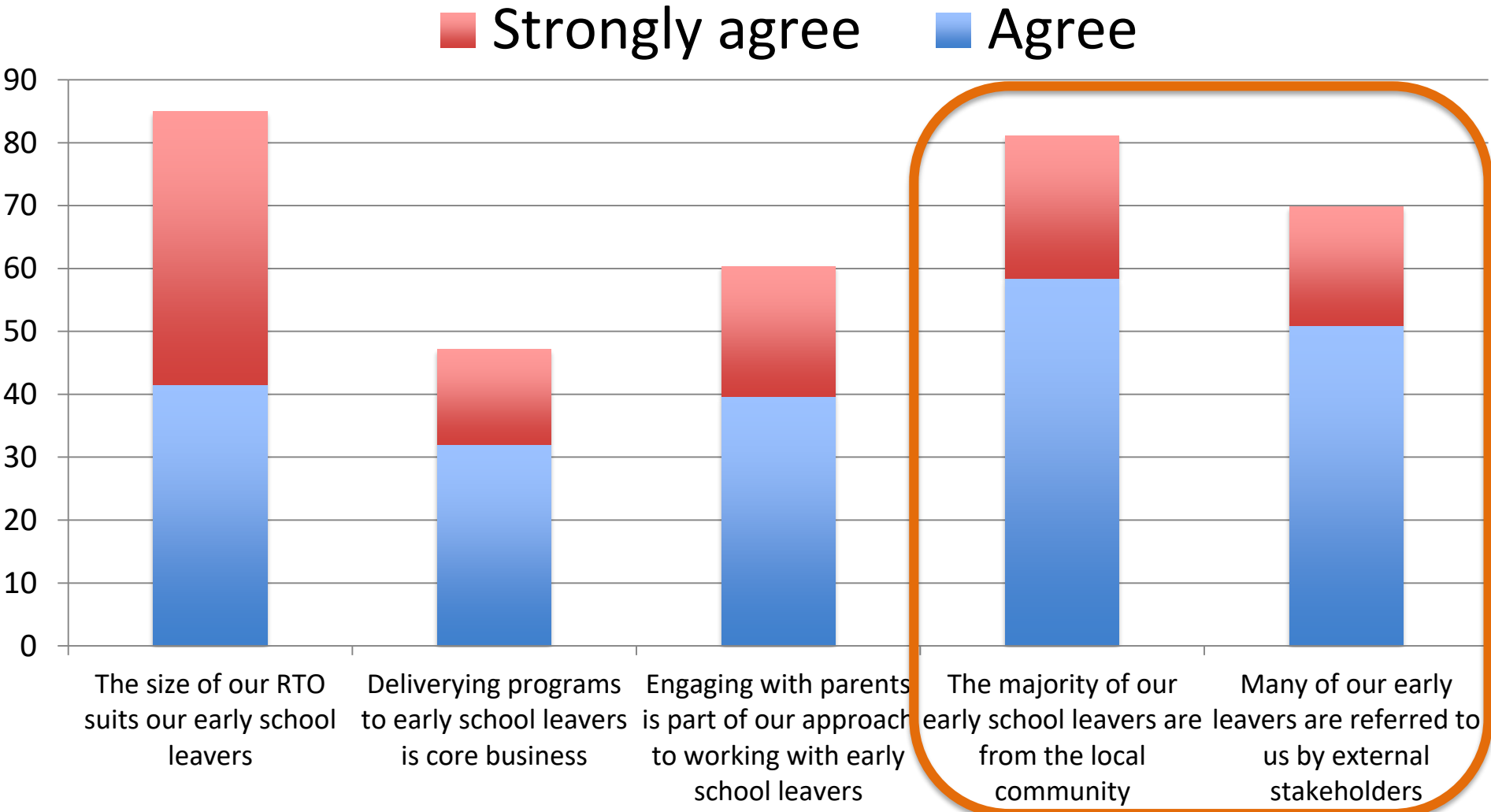
Student characteristics: background, skill level and readiness, **barriers faced**

Practice, teaching, **supports, engagement**

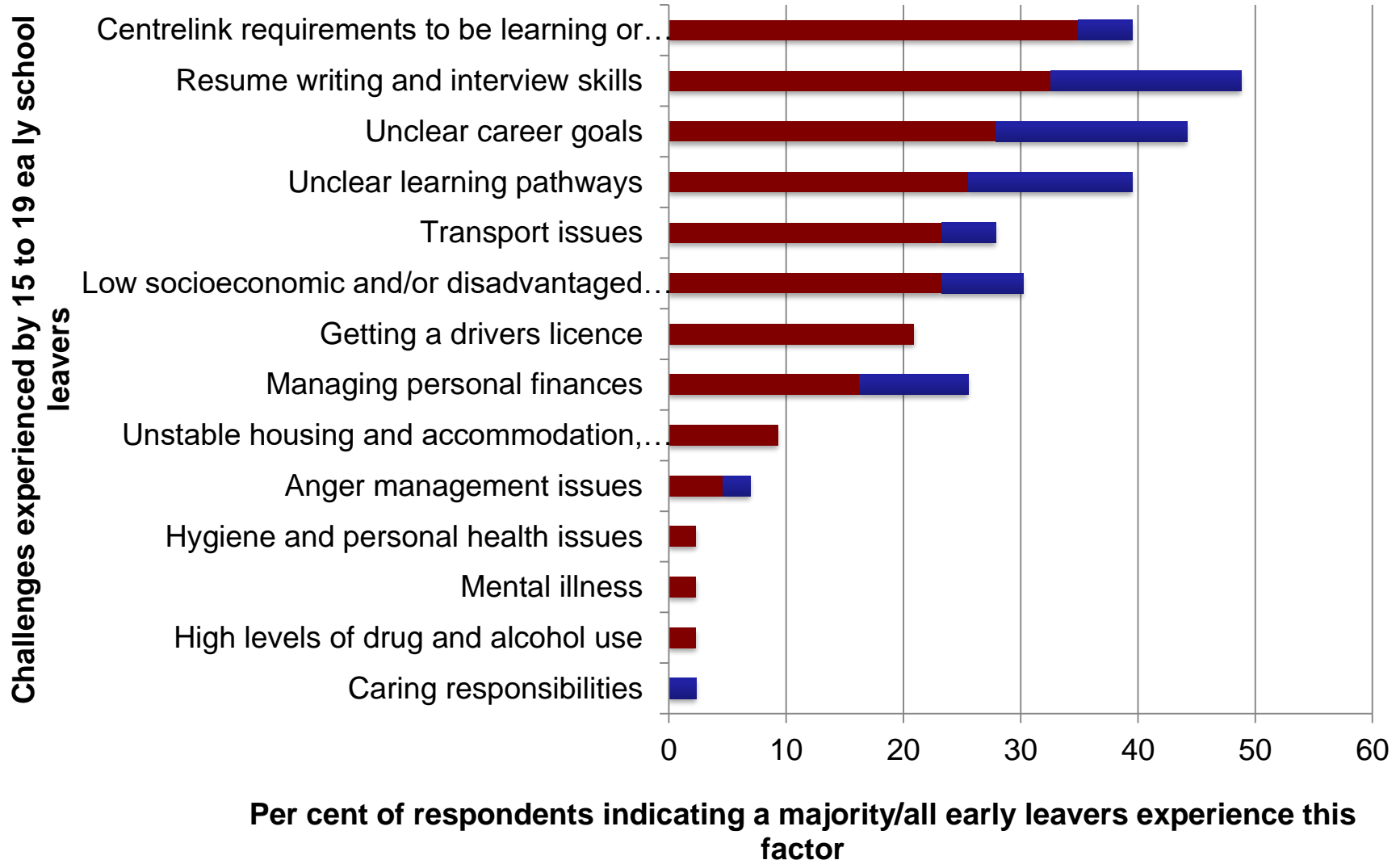
Pathways, completion and non-completion

Partnerships

The relationship to ESLs



Early leavers face several contextual challenges in their learning



Contributing to non-completion

“outside influences...drugs, alcohol, personal and health issues”

“multiple barriers to engagement e.g. family, social, financial behavioral issues”

“socio-economic barriers that have not been addressed in the job service contracts/system. Individuals not having opportunity to undertake career planning prior to commencing courses”

“boredom...distraction...difficulties extracting meaning from written learner materials”

“students ‘getting behind’ in their work”

“centerlink dependence” hence [they’re] compelled.

What skills do trainers need when working with young early school leavers?

“Patience, empathy, strength of character”

“Pastoral care skills”

“They should possess empathy, guidance skills, ability to provide educational support to students and if required where to seek further assistance and counselling.”

“Patience. Mental health training. Understanding of technology”

“Patience, empathy, negotiating and boundary management”

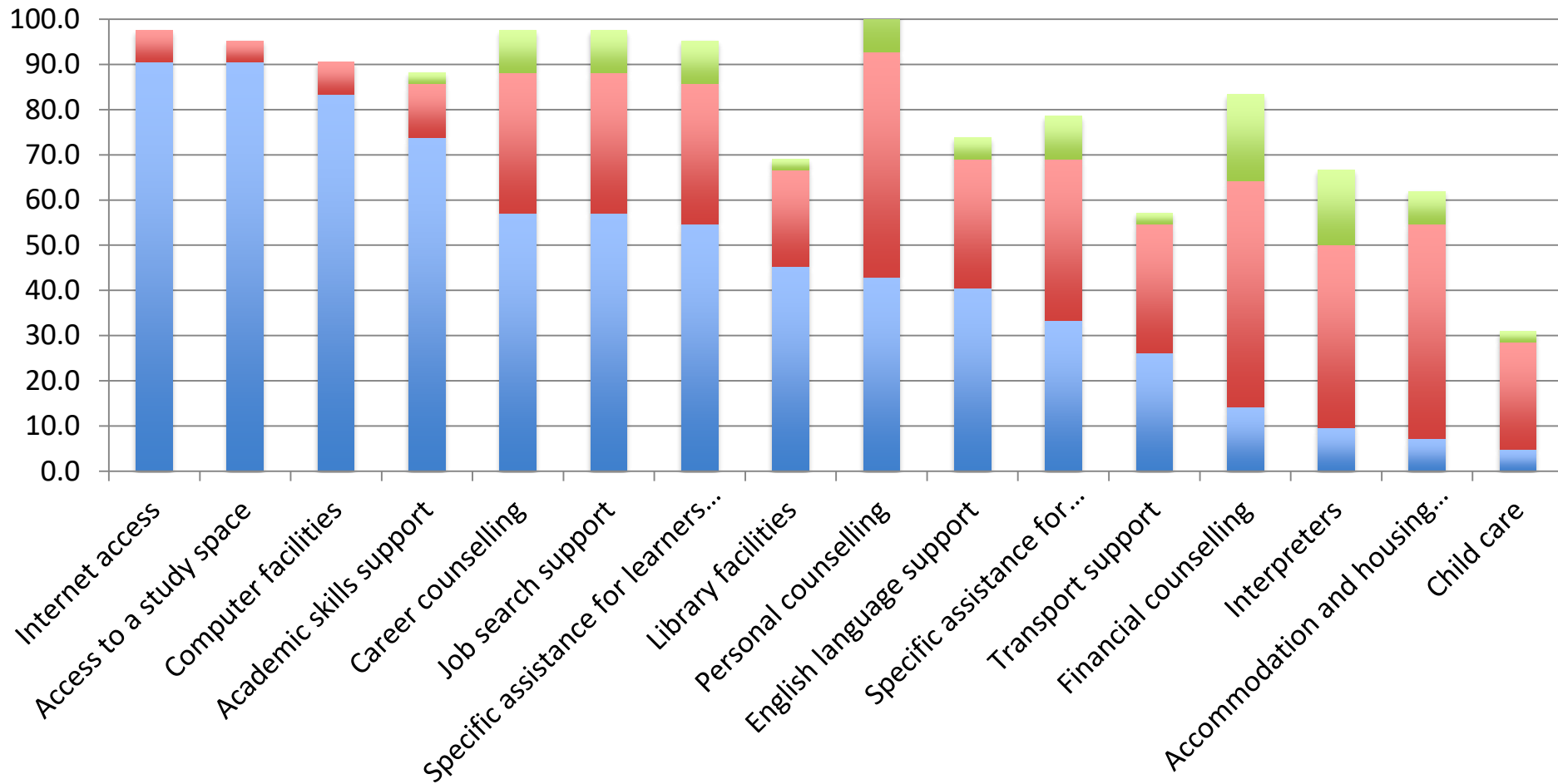
“Clear direct communication skills. Currency with areas they are teaching. Learner centred teaching. Behavior management skills.”

“Patience. Experience with bullying and harassment intervention.”

“Patience, sense of humour, flexibility, sound knowledge of issues facing younger learners, language and literacy skills.”

Support services provided

- External organisation brought in to the RTO to provide this service
- Through referral to an external organisation
- Available within the RTO, available to all students



Insights

- No one size fits all response to early school leavers.
- How do we include a range of different providers as partners in efforts to re-engage young people whose education has been disrupted?
- The importance of small informal and welcoming learning settings must be acknowledged, as must their limitations.
- Targeted assistance should be provided to suitably qualified niche providers for the express purpose of increasing their capacity to address early school leaver student needs.
- Intake and enrolment process requirements should be modified such that they have the capacity to identify a broad range of wellbeing needs.
- Clearer systems of cross-sector referrals by private RTOs and closer relations between private RTOs and specialist support agencies/other providers.

Shedding light: private 'for profit' training providers and young early school leavers

George Myconos
Brotherhood of St Laurence

Kira Clarke
University of Melbourne

Kitty te Riele
Victoria University

Thank you

kirac@unimelb.edu.au

