

Australian VET: Quality teaching, quality teachers

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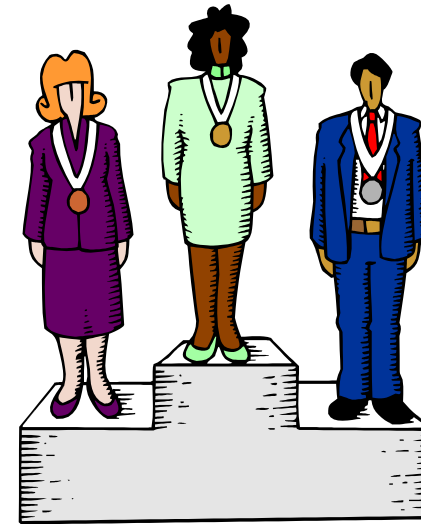
Mt Helen Higher Education Campus, Ballarat

Australian VET teachers and trainers... The bronze medal?

Compared with school teachers & academics....

- No name for VET teachers;
- Not a recognised career destination;
- Pay usually worse than the relevant industry;
- Hardly ever in the news – in a good way;
- Compares with other countries where a VET pedagogy degree is required for VET teachers (e.g. Laos) or a masters degree (e.g. Germany)

... How can this be changed?



We have a variety of VET teaching contexts



Types of training provider

- 50 TAFE (Technical and Further Education) Institutes: the public system;
- 4000 private training providers;
- Community colleges;
- Secondary schools;
- 200 Enterprise providers -training and awarding qualifications to their own workers.

History lesson: VET teachers and their qualifications

- Pre-mid-1990s: All full-time TAFE teachers had to become qualified pedagogically to degree level in VET/adult education;
- 1998: Certificate IV in Training and Assessment introduced as the regulatory minimum (before this there was no regulation). This is often delivered 'in-house' , i.e. to teachers within the training provider;
- State TAFE systems progressively stopped requiring degree qualifications, because there was now a minimum qualification, and because teachers expected time off for study and their fees paid;
- A few universities still provide degree level or post-graduate courses in VET teaching – these VET teacher-trainees are always mature and usually already teaching. All of the degree and post-graduate programs are part-time and distance;
- Some training providers, particularly TAFE colleges, reward staff who gain higher level qualifications in VET pedagogy: e.g. with higher rate of pay, or access to more senior jobs

What is the consequence of the decline in higher-level VET teacher qualifications?

- There has been a noted decline in the quality of both teaching and assessment in the system.
- TAFE and other training providers find it difficult to find good people to move into senior and management positions.
- The RTO standards have regulations for professional development (PD) participation – but much PD tends to duplicate matters which are included in Diploma and degree programs in VET pedagogy.
- Large training providers have professional development departments; and there are major ‘external providers’ of professional development for the sector – the latter are growing rapidly.

Qualification requirements for other sectors

- School teachers must have a degree in education, or a degree in a discipline area with a graduate diploma or masters in education;
- In the early childhood sector, all staff must hold a Certificate III in Early Childhood, but a proportion of staff must be qualified to Diploma and to degree level.
- University teachers must have a Masters in their discipline area and increasingly are required to undertake a Graduate Certificate in university teaching.
- **VET teachers/trainers are required to have the qualification which they are teaching (or in some cases, one level higher) and the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment.**

How do VET teachers compare with school teachers in Australia?

- The majority of new VET teachers are older, typically in their 40s, compared with school teacher entrants, at least half of whom are young graduates;
- They rarely study VET pedagogy (beyond a Cert IV) before becoming a VET teacher while school teachers must study before entry;
- They ALWAYS have an industry qualification and industry experience before becoming a VET teacher;
- They have often had several previous careers;
- They may be recruited full-time; or part-time or on a casual basis;
- Some have 'portfolios' of jobs across several training providers.
- A beginning TAFE teacher, who has a decade or more of industry experience and perhaps a diploma or degree in his or her discipline area, starts at around \$47,000 while school teachers who are often only 22 years old start at \$56,000.

How can we describe what a good VET teacher is? (1) Standards

- Sets of VET teacher ‘standards’ (in Australia there are several models but no national set of standards at present, unlike in U.K. for example)

e.g. Queensland College of Teachers VET practitioner standards:

Professional knowledge	Professional practice	Professional learning and experience
Know learners, their context and how they learn	Plan, design and deliver effective teaching experiences	Engage in professional learning in vocational area and in adult education theories & practices
Know the content and how it can be taught	Create and maintain a supportive and safe environment	Engage with industry, colleagues, community, regulatory and professional bodies
	Assess, provide feedback and report on learning	

National research project on the contribution of VET teacher qualifications to teaching quality

- Funded by the Australian Research Council in partnership with several industry bodies in the VET system, 2015-2017.
- Project involved
 - Initial interviews with stakeholders and teacher & student focus groups
 - Two national surveys- 'Teacher/trainer survey' and Professional development survey. 'Teacher/trainer survey' key questions based around the Queensland College of Teachers VET practitioner standards,
 - 14 case studies in TAFE and non-TAFE RTOs,
 - Validation 'Delphi' surveys in the sector.
- As there are many teachers still in the system with VET pedagogy degrees, we were able to compare people with different levels of qualification.

Stage/Phase	Activity	Number of research participants
Stage 1: Phase i	Stakeholder interviews	11
	11 focus groups of teacher/trainers and students	Teachers/Trainers: 29 Students: 40
Stage 1: Phase ii	National Teacher/Trainer Survey administered through eight TAFE and 48 non-TAFE RTOs	574
Stage 1: Phase iii	Case studies at four TAFE and four non-TAFE RTOs	128
Stage 2	Professional Development Survey administered through three external professional development providers	368
	Professional development case studies at three TAFE and three non-TAFE RTOs	50
Stage 3	Delphi process	70
Total		1200 (excluding Delphi participants)

Research questions

- What differences do VET teachers' levels of qualification (both pedagogical and discipline-based) make to their teaching concepts, approaches and practice?
- What differences do VET teachers' levels of qualification make to their ability to navigate complex training contexts, to teach across the large range of qualification levels and diversity of learners typical of VET, and to contribute to improved student outcomes?
- How do levels of qualification affect VET teachers' engagement in further professional development activities (pedagogical and industry-related), and how can PD be tailored for different groups?
- In what ways do more highly-qualified VET teachers contribute to improved quality in VET? What actual and potential barriers and facilitators are associated with this contribution, including resourcing issues and policy changes?

Researchers and partner organisations

Researchers: Professor Erica Smith (Federation University), Keiko Yasukawa (UTS), Roger Harris (University of South Australia), Jackie Tuck (Federation University).

Assistance has also been provided by Hugh Guthrie at Victoria University and Patrick Korbel at NCVER. Research assistance has been provided by Sally Burt, Catherine Cameron, David Adamson, Simone Bartrum, Nathan Stinton, Morgan Wise, Geordie Zhang and Scott Booth.

Partner organisations, providing financial and/or in-kind support:

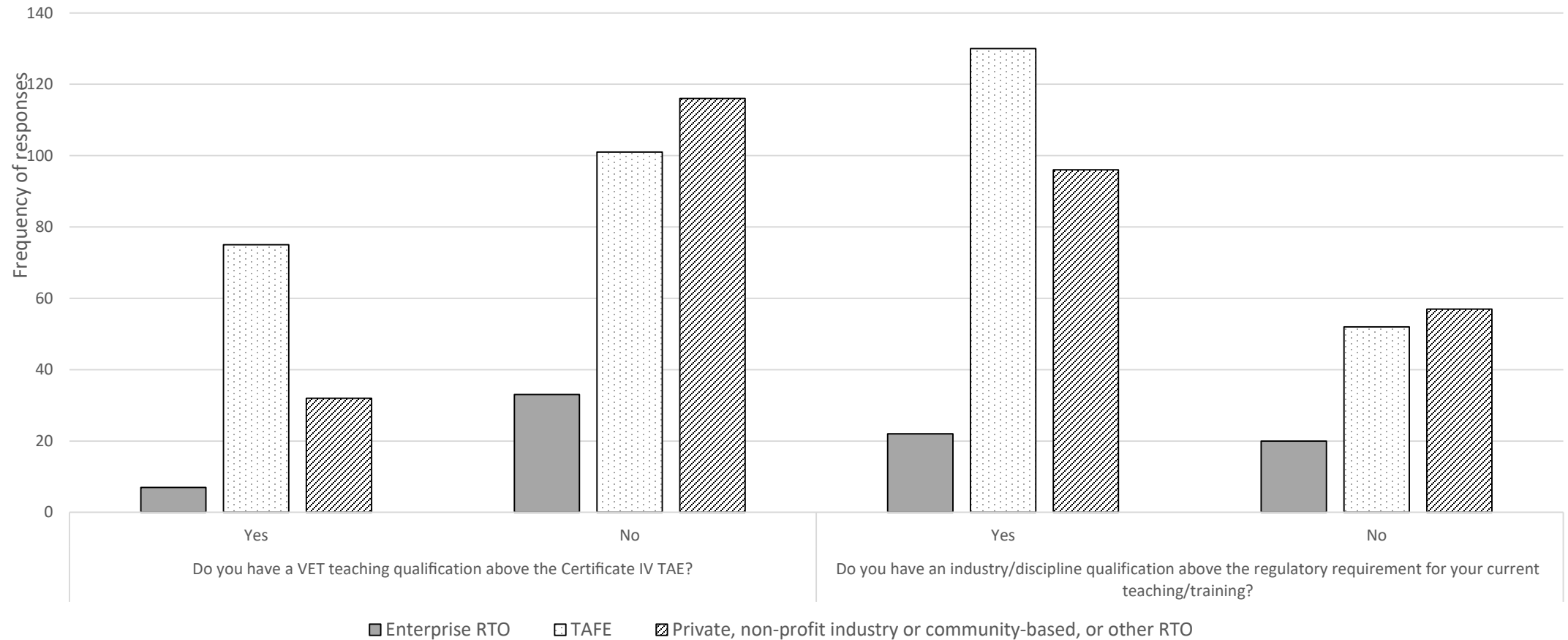
- TAFE Queensland
- Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET)
- National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER)
- VET Development Centre
- Federation Training

Research project findings on what makes a good VET teacher

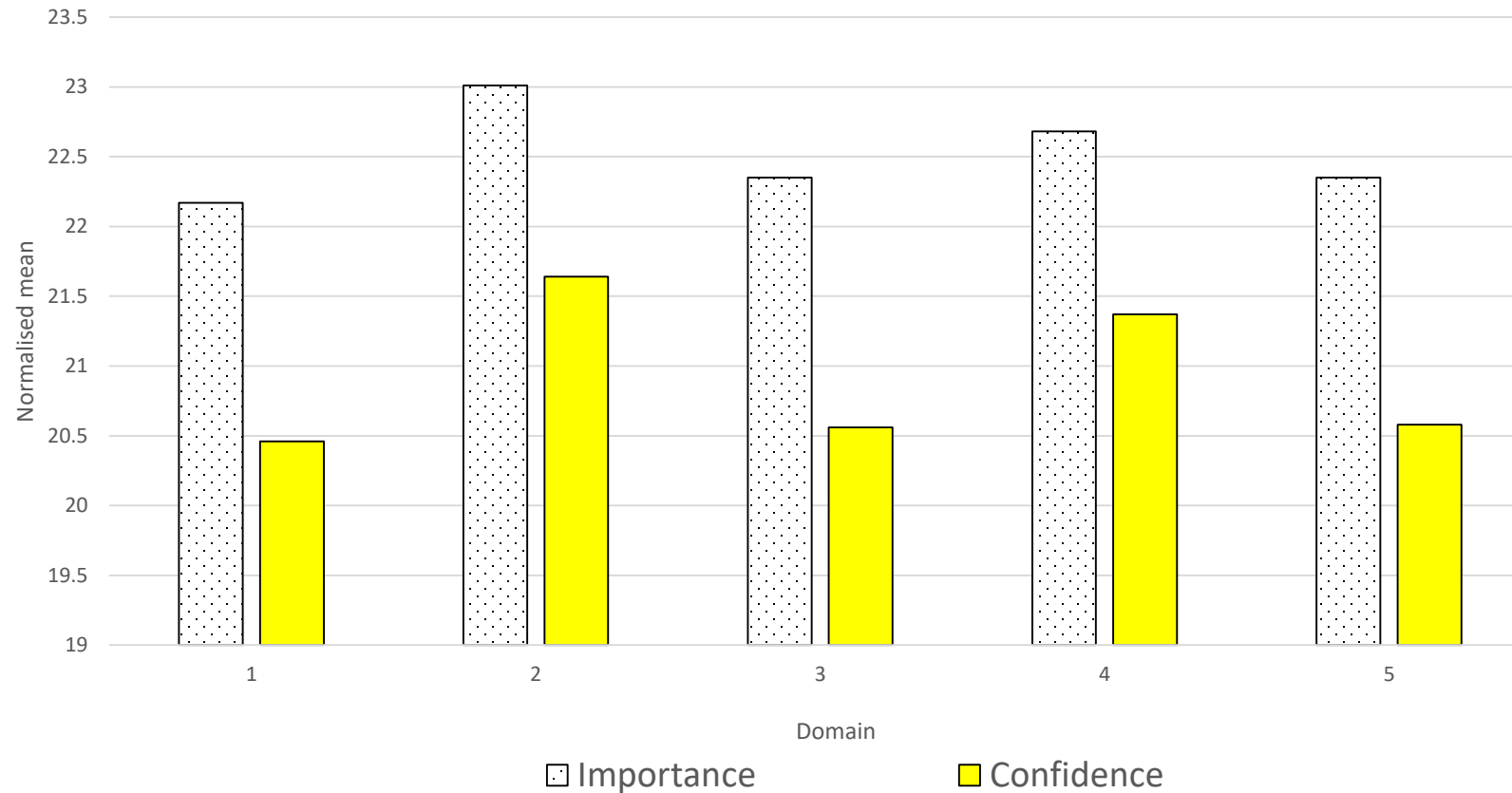
- What makes a good VET teacher?— Teacher and students agree but in a different order:
 - Ability to explain things, ability to identify student needs and address them, expertise in the topic area, being organised in their teaching.

‘Someone who makes you want to get up and go to college’ (student)
- From management point of view (as well as being a good ‘teacher’):
 - Someone who can be trusted with project work, who can progress to a senior position, who will complete paperwork properly, who will understand the broader implications of his/her work.
 - Good teachers naturally understood and implemented quality systems, and therefore their work would stand up to external audit.

Teachers/trainers' qualification levels (*from Teacher survey*)



Teachers/trainers' responses about the importance of each domain of teaching (Qld standards) and their personal confidence



Domains: 1 -Know Learners; 2- Know content; 3-Plan teaching/ training; 4- Assess and provide feedback; 5-Engage with industry/prof. bodies

Research findings on the benefits of higher level qualifications for VET teachers– pedagogy and industry

- In teachers from almost all industry areas and types of RTO, higher-level qualifications **of whatever nature** led to a higher level of appreciation of the importance of aspects of VET teaching and a higher personal level of confidence in these aspects;
- Teachers with degrees, in **either their discipline area or VET pedagogy**, were significantly more confident on a wide range of teaching indicators than those without;
- Degrees in VET pedagogy made more of a difference than degrees in discipline areas;
- Teachers with degrees in VET pedagogy were able to express nuances of their teaching more fully;
- Managers reported that teachers with degrees received better student evaluations, were more empathetic with students, were able to write online materials, and prepared better assessment tasks
- Some students - but not all - wanted teachers with degrees – *“Otherwise anybody off the street could teach you”*.
- **Case study findings agreed with survey findings**

Key findings in Stage 1

- **Key Finding 1: Higher level qualifications in VET pedagogy improve teaching approaches, confidence and ability to address diversity in contexts, learners and AQF level of teaching.**
- **Key Finding 2: VET teachers often have high level qualifications in their industry area or other disciplines and these too improve teaching approaches, confidence and ability to address diversity in contexts, learners and AQF level of teaching.**
- **Key Finding 3: Higher level qualifications in VET pedagogy make a significant difference to VET teachers' confidence in teaching a diversity of learners.**
- **Key Finding 4: The key qualification level that makes a difference is a degree.**

‘Delphi’ phase – Round 1 results received 24th July

- This phase examines policy and implementation issues, drawn out through a ‘Delphi’ process with over 70 experts .
- Each expert is surveyed three times.
- Its aim is to uncover (Stream 1 experts, n=35) the national policy national VET teacher workforce development implications of the findings; and (Stream 2 experts, n=34) institutional-level implications.
- In Round 1 we presented the findings of the main part of the project and asked a number of questions about whether the findings seemed credible, how they would be received in the sector, and about the implications.
- Round 2 will seek feedback on the findings about professional development, and feedback on the responses in Round 1.

Delphi participants who responded

(Invited-on recommendations & with assistance of peak bodies and government)

Policy stream

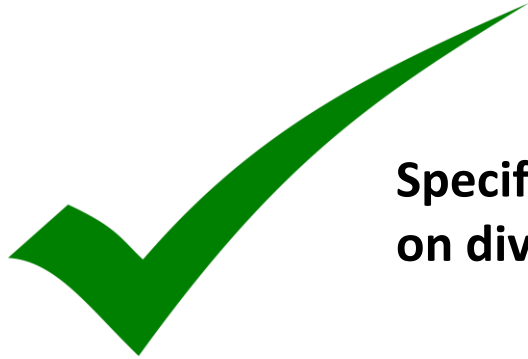
Type	No.
Government/regulatory body	9
Peak body – VET/adult ed	7
Individual expert	6
Skills Service Organisation	2
Other organisation	1
Total	25

RTO CEO stream

Type	No.
TAFE/ dual-sector uni	12
Private RTO	5
Community college	4
Enterprise RTO	4
Total	25

Agreement of participants with research findings

Findings from the Teacher Survey



Specific analysis of Teacher Survey findings on diversity

	My experiences strongly or partly align with the findings	
	No.	%
Policy stream	24	96
RTO stream	21	84

	My experiences strongly or partly align with the findings	
	No.	%
Policy stream	21	84
RTO stream	22	88

Agreement of participants that they would have expected each key finding – and how favourably would the VET sector receive it?

Key finding 1 (VET pedagogy quals)

- Policy stream 80% RTO stream 76%. 52%; 68%

Key finding 2 (Industry quals)

- Policy stream 92% RTO stream 96%. 79%; 80%.

Key finding 3 (VET pedagogy quals, including Dip VET, in diversity)

- Policy stream 88% RTO stream 76%. 75%; 72%.

Key finding 4 (It's a degree that makes a significant difference)

- Policy stream 62% RTO stream 54%. 13%; 20%.

Findings from CCA participants

- No different from the average in their favourable reaction to the importance of the research, or to the strength of the research methods:
- Not surprised by any of the findings from the research phases - agreed that they confirmed their experiences.
- But... less likely than the average to think that the VET sector would receive the findings favourably

What have been some trends in qualitative responses (all respondents)?

- Most comments have been supportive and constructive;
- A few people seemed to think that the findings of the value of teachers' qualifications meant that the researchers were advocating that all VET teachers should have higher level qualifications;
- Many people pointed out all the other aspects that needed to be taken into account;
- A few people seemed rather defensive;
- All responses will help us to frame questions for the next round, expected in August.

Initial findings on project's findings on PD in industry and pedagogy – still analysing

- Teachers with higher level qualifications, both in industry and in VET pedagogy, were more likely to undertake professional development of all types: external/internal to the training provider; and about VET pedagogy/about industry
- They were more likely to undertake professional development in their own time and at their own expense;
- They were more likely to search for professional development opportunities and to discriminate between high-quality and low-quality events.
- They were more likely to express satisfaction with the professional development that they attended-i.e. they were able to extract benefit.

What's going on elsewhere?

- 'Teach for Australia' program: **"Research indicates that *the most powerful policy lever* to improve educational outcomes for children is to *improve the quality of teaching.*"**
- UK Teach First: **"One great teacher can change a child's life."**
- US Teach for America: **"You don't have to be famous to be remembered."**

Why do we under-value our VET teachers and trainers and the effects they have on learners?

- Why don't we have a 'Teach VET for Australia' program?
- How can the VET system be regarded as equal in status to higher education if we neglect the development of its teachers and trainers – and if it is the case that teachers with higher level qualifications are better teachers and better professionals?
- How is the world of VET teaching less complex than twenty years ago when all TAFE teachers needed to study a VET pedagogy qualification at degree level or above?
- How can we make VET teaching/training an aspirational occupation?

Want to know more?

Research project: ***Would more highly-qualified teachers and trainers help to address quality problems in the Australian vocational education and training system?***

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

Australian Council of Deans of Education Vocational Education Group

<http://www.acde.edu.au/networks-and-partnerships/acde-vocational-group/>

ACDEVEG Third National Conference December 7th-8th Brisbane

<https://www.griffith.edu.au/conference/acdeveg-2017>