

**Australian Research Council ‘Linkage’ project**

***‘VET teacher qualifications and their contribution to quality’***

**Overview of progress, June 2016**

The two-year project is intended to examine the contribution of the level of VET teachers’ qualifications (in industry/discipline areas and in VET teaching) to teaching quality in VET, and to VET quality more generally. The project covers VET teachers working in all contexts: TAFE Institutes, private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) and enterprise RTOs.

The project is funded by the Australian Research Council ‘Linkage’ Program and by industry partner contributions. It formally commenced on April 1st 2015 and will be completed within two years (March 2017). All fieldwork will be undertaken by the end of 2016.

The research questions for the project are:

1. What differences do VET teachers' levels of qualification (both pedagogical and discipline-based) make to their teaching concepts, approaches and practice?
2. 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?
3. How do levels of qualification affect VET teachers' engagement in further professional development activities (pedagogical development and industry engagement), and how can PD be tailored for different groups?
4. 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?

Our industry partners for the project and the associated Partner Investigators are:

* Australian Council for Private Education and Training (ACPET) (Demmi Paris);
* Federation Training (Wendy Wood);
* National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) (Michelle Circelli and Patrick Korbel);
* TAFE Queensland (Christina Hong); and
* VET Development Centre (Martin Powell).

The researchers involved with the project are: Erica Smith (Federation University), Keiko Yasukawa (UTS), Roger Harris (University of South Australia), and Jackie Tuck (Federation University). Hugh Guthrie from Victoria University also assisted in the early stages of the project.

The project website is at: <http://federation.edu.au/research-vet-quality>

Progress update

* Establishment of reference group of 10 leading stakeholders;
* Stakeholder interviews (9), teacher focus groups (5 groups: 26 teachers) and student focus groups (6 groups: 40 students) to examine what makes a good VET teacher;
* Detailed case studies involving interviews and focus groups with managers, teachers and students, in eight RTOs, about the effects of teacher qualifications. Four TAFE and four non-TAFE sites, average of 20 participants per case study.
* Preparation of a national on-line survey of VET teachers and trainers, about qualifications, approaches to teaching, engagement in professional development, and views about quality. Piloting in five TAFE and non-TAFE RTOs;
* Distribution of the on-line survey to RTOs for forwarding to their teachers/trainers: 7 TAFE Institutes, 12 Enterprise RTOs (publicised via ERTOA) and 36 private RTOs (publicised via ACPET); and
* Collection of survey responses (550 received to 18 June; survey closes on 22 June)

Remaining activities

* ‘Professional development’ investigation. We will visit six RTOs (TAFE and non-TAFE) to examine teacher/trainer professional development and whether qualifications have an effect on engagement in PD. An initial pilot visit has already taken place. We will also work with specialist external providers of PD for VET practitioners, to survey participants in their programs.
* A ‘Delphi’ survey, with two separate streams, one for policy personnel and industry stakeholders, and one for RTO senior managers. We will undertake three iterative on-line surveys for the two streams to present our main findings and receive feedback on the policy and practice implications.

Outputs and contact details

A great deal of interest has been shown in our project throughout the VET sector in Australia.

Four conference papers have been presented on the findings, two at the Australian VET Research Association conference 2016, and two at the *Refocusing on teaching and training in vocational education and training* conference 2015. A presentation will be made at the UK conference *Research in Post-Compulsory Education* in July 2016. In addition, Erica Smith is presenting at a symposium **‘*Vocational Teacher Education in the 21st Century’***, with guests from policy, practice and academia, in Scotland on 24 June 2016.

The research team is happy to respond to invitations to present the findings.

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