



Building capability in VET teachers

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a pragmatic interpretive enquiry regarding the capability development of vocational education and training (VET) teachers. The significance of studying capability development of teachers is that currently VET sector requirements for teacher qualifications and teaching capabilities are much lower than many equivalent VET sectors internationally, and the compulsory education sector nationally. The research seeks to identify what is needed to enable VET teachers to acquire, maintain and advance their teaching capability to meet the unique features of VET education and its students. The focus of the study also includes the leadership and systems required to ensure that this progression in teacher capability occurs.

The outcomes of this study are relevant to the Australian Government's agenda to raise the qualifications level of the national workforce. The Government's goals are to halve the number of Australians aged 20 to 64 who do not have qualifications at a Certificate III level and above, and double the number of higher-level qualification completions by 2020. The Australian Government's agenda also seeks to increase the workforce participation rate to 69% (up from 65.1% in 2010) if Australia is to meet both national and global challenges for future economic growth. These goals are ambitious and will require growth in both the VET and higher education sectors, and will also require reform of the process to develop and support good teaching.

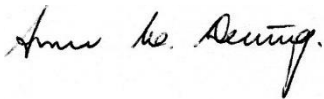
This qualitative research was undertaken through two methods. Firstly, a document analysis of four key documents that set a vision for the system in the context of educational change in the VET sector. The document analysis reveals that the major role afforded to industry constrains the adoption of a systematic and deliberate approach to the improvement and enhancement of the teaching skills of VET teachers. The result is a compliance driven national system for quality assurance, which does not include standards for teachers, but audits registered training organisations (RTOs) at the macro level. This espoused vision is then compared to evidence of the lived experience of nine Technical and Further Education South Australia (TAFE SA) teachers and educational managers working in the system.

The second method involved the collection of qualitative evidence interviews. This provides an insight into the nexus between on-the-job learning and the acquisition of formal qualifications in teaching skills. It also underscores the importance of supporting the growth of advanced practice teachers and for enabling others who are less skilled to achieve advanced skills development. This phase of the study identifies that ad hoc workplace learning strategies predominate in teacher skills development with an obvious lack of a deliberate, system-based strategic approach.

DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Anneke de Seuring". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent loop at the end.

Date.....27 August 2017.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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Finally, I would like to thank my family: my parents who believed that education was important in the life of a country girl and would be one way to find a place in the world, my daughters who have been interested and supportive of what I was attempting, and my late husband who would have been supportive and delighted at my achievement. My Dad's mantra of "knowledge is important and no weight to carry" has resonated often with me as I worked in my study.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION TO THE THESIS

If there is a link between quality of education and quality of teachers, and considerable research has suggested there is, then the quality of the VET system is only as good as its teachers and trainers. Unless the quality of teaching and training is raised the quality of the VET system will continue to suffer. The VET workforce plays a critical role in helping Australia increase workforce participation, productivity, skills and social inclusion (Harris, 2015, p. 30).

The focus of this thesis is an examination of the unique skills and knowledge required by VET sector teachers, and the formal and informal professional learning strategies that will enable them to best meet the needs of students, and to progress from novice teachers to advanced practice. The VET sector needs a pedagogically capable teaching workforce to best meet the needs of their students and, therefore, the industries that VET serves. Primarily, this thesis is interested in the development of VET teachers' capability to teach. The objective of this thesis, therefore, is how to provide an environment to enable teachers to develop pedagogically.

There are challenges in achieving this objective; for example, most VET teachers come to the role from industry or business. While their knowledge and experience in their job role may be extensive, they will not necessarily have any preparation for their role as teachers. There has been an emerging expectation for all VET teachers to complete the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE 40110) as a minimum requirement (Productivity Commission, 2011). There is, however, no guarantee that compliance with this requirement occurs. The Certificate IV was originally not designed for VET teachers, rather it was designed for industry work place supervisors who were team leaders. Thus, the intent and focus of Certificate IV is at a very practical and minimal pedagogical level.

Another challenge is that VET students often come to their learning with problematic preconditions. Some lack success in compulsory education and, as a result, they have a poor concept of themselves as learners (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a). Industry expects that VET will deliver employees with job-ready skills and knowledge, and the government expects that VET will provide employees for new and emerging industries that will contribute to national economic development (Skills Australia 2010). As a consequence of these challenges, it is essential for the VET sector to provide VET teachers with support and practical strategies to enable them to learn the craft of teaching. The justification for this study and its methods are now described.

1.1 Approach taken to this study

An interpretive approach was taken to the research. Interpretivism is predicated on the view that the researcher needs "to grasp the subjective meaning of social action" (Bryman, 2012, p.30). Both the document analysis and the semi-structured interviews sought to understand the meaning related to the challenges of teacher development in the VET setting, and the implications for further

action.

Integrated with the interpretive approach, was a pragmatic intent to identify potential solutions. Pragmatic research is concerned with the analysis of the real problems and finding feasible solutions. Feinberg (2014) argues that critical pragmatism aims to redirect expert knowledge so that it takes account of local knowledge. He seeks to show that critical pragmatism can be useful to “refine and expand local common sense understanding” (Feinberg, 2014, p.149).

The methods used for generating data for this study included identifying critical national commentaries on VET and VET education to identify the diverse voices and their inherent conceptions which seek to influence the strategic directions for reforming education in the VET sector. To do this, four key documents were selected following a critical scan of key commentaries on VET education. Two of these documents primarily focused on the government’s strategic VET agenda (Skills Australia, 2010; Productivity Commission, 2011). The other two documents (Wheelahan, 2011; Mitchell, 2010) engaged with the problematic area of VET pedagogy and were concerned with the question of teacher capability and the development of strategies that would contribute to it.

The focus of the four documents illustrates the dichotomous commentary regarding VET. One aspect of this agenda is the interests of government and business. The other aspect is the concern for educational quality. The documents were chosen because they represent diverse points of view focused at a national level. The documents were subjected to a detailed analysis to identify both the issues that were raised and the diversity of perspectives expressed in each of these documents.

This thesis also draws on the lived experience of teachers who have confronted their need to develop capability for teaching. It also draws on the lived experience of managers who have attempted to enable the development of their teachers. The method used to generate data was semi-structured interviews with experienced VET teachers and educational managers. The managers were invited to contribute their lived experience of the challenges of developing teacher capability and in mentoring other teachers. The teachers were experienced and keen to share their practical knowledge of how they had learned to teach and the strategies they thought could be applied to further skills development in teaching. All of them had acted as mentors for novice teachers in their team.

1.2 Relevance and significance of the thesis study.

The research is both necessary and timely because the VET sector has been in a state of constant change since early 2010 (Harris, 2015). The imperative for change disrupted the development of a professional teaching workforce and a VET culture that balanced the development of pedagogical

skills with vocational currency. Thus, in the context of this research, merely reporting statistical data is not enough. A qualitative approach was chosen, therefore, because a more descriptive study will deliver an understanding of the interplay of the complex factors involved in supporting the development of the teaching workforce, and the system-wide changes required. This thesis will deliver a set of principles and recommendations that demonstrate that it is feasible to provide sound development of teachers both at the sector level and at the local level

1.3 Context of the research

The challenges facing the VET sector are significant. The ageing workforce in this sector poses a problem which the Skills Australia discussion paper (2010) argued is an issue “requiring a major initiative in workforce development” (2010, p. 6). The reality is that many new VET teachers will have to be employed, and that significant expertise has been lost to the sector as the current advanced VET practitioners retire (Wheelahan, 2011). In this context it is important that there will be a deliberate program to develop the educational knowledge and teaching skills of new appointees. This challenge will be an issue for TAFE nationally and more broadly for the VET sector as a whole (Harris, 2015 and Wheelahan, 2011).

Increasingly, governments in Australia have drawn attention to the need for greater participation in education and the workforce (Productivity Commission, 2011). The focus of this concern has been to find measures to assist marginalised groups to develop the knowledge and skills needed to meet workforce requirements and find employment. VET has always engaged with students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This includes women returning to the workforce, people with disabilities, and those who either left school early or failed to complete secondary school successfully (Productivity Commission, 2011). In the past, TAFE has supported many Australian Government initiatives aimed at assisting those with limited language, literacy and numeracy skills to acquire the skills necessary for participation in employment (Skills Australia, 2010).

In the current environment, however, this aspect of VET engagement is likely to become even more challenging. The reasons for these challenges include that, while continuing to attend to the equity agenda, VET will also need to meet the needs of

- students who are already skilled but need further development to engage in the changing world of work
- older workers who wish to retrain to stay in the workforce
- young people entering the workplace for the first time.

In addition, the Australian Government set both higher qualifications targets for the national workforce and, following the publication of the Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper, higher targets for workforce participation rates.

Council of Australian Governments (COAG) qualifications targets, the need to increase workforce participation to offset the aging population and the need for higher productivity in the workforce to maintain living standards have renewed and increased the demands on VET to meet the needs of disadvantaged students and those in the community without foundation skills (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 15).

The Skills Australia discussion paper (2010) stated that “the best way to improve social inclusion is to ensure that all those who want to work can” (2010, p. 1). This paper, however, acknowledged that “raising workforce participation and increasing the number of qualified people will require greater engagement in training and education by people from a range of backgrounds, particularly those who experience multiple disadvantage” (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 6) and that extra support might be needed for this cohort of learners.

The Productivity Commission report (2011) on the VET Workforce, in response to the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), focused on the necessity for VET sector teachers to have significant skills updates in the context of the changing nature of the Australian workforce and the jobs market. The Commission report (2011) emphasised that VET was pivotal in building the national economy. In a separate report, Skills Australia (2010) emphasised the role of VET teachers. The report argued that if the quality of outcomes for students was to be improved, the skills of practitioners were more important than the issue of compliance with standards (Skills Australia 2010, p. 5). In order to achieve the necessary skill levels of practitioners, the Skills Australia paper (2010) also urged consideration of support for ongoing professional development, leadership and excellence.

The context in which VET teachers currently operate is characterised by rapid growth in the number and complexity of Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), negative press reports regarding the quality of VET teachers and their skills, and the implementation of a national quality framework which seemingly undervalues the skills required for VET teaching. Australian Skills Quality Authority’s (ASQA) previous audits have called into question the skills that teachers require, particularly in the area of competency-based assessment. The cancellation of the national professional learning program in Reframing the Future (2008) has resulted in a lack of focus on systemic professional learning for VET teachers. Reframing the Future was a national professional development program for the VET sector that supported many workplace learning projects for teaching and learning. This program began as Framing the Future in the late 1980s when the sector transitioned to competency-based training and assessment. The focus of Reframing the Future became leadership and change management as the sector moved to use flexible learning and online learning strategies.

Billett (2016) identified some of the critical issues facing the VET sector, including teachers’ capability and teaching practice. He expressed concern regarding the diminishing of VET’s ‘standing’, and he perceived this as a ‘perennial’ issue. Billett argued that:

It is difficult to summon interest, engage parents, and engage enterprises in productive ventures, let alone garner governmental support, when the knowledge required for effective occupational practice is downplayed and marginalised, and the shortest most cost efficient models of education are selected for implementation (Billett, 2016, p.211).

1.4 Researcher's background

My personal history has been a motivating factor in carrying out this research. My interest in this area of study comes from a long career in TAFE SA, particularly in regional campuses. Over more than 30 years, I was initially a part-time instructor, then a lecturer and later an educational manager for both teaching programs and services. In 2001, I became the Senior Manager for Teaching and Learning at a TAFE SA Regional Institute and was responsible for developing and implementing the Regional Institute's capability development plan. In particular, I was responsible for the professional development of all teaching staff and educational managers.

During my time as the Manager of Teaching and Learning, I was aware that the teaching staff had a highly diverse range of experiences and qualifications. Some were very experienced teachers, originally coming from the secondary school system, had qualifications in education, and had maintained their teacher registration. Others were the 'new broom' with experience in industry and the mandated Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. There were also teaching staff who had industry experience but had not begun their qualifications and, as a result, they were teaching under the supervision of an experienced and qualified staff member.

As part of my role as the Manager for Teaching and Learning, I used the Mitchell Capability Analysis Tool for VET teaching skills (VETCAT®) and the Capability Analysis Tool for assessing teachers' industry currency ratings (CURCAT®). These tools gave me, and all the staff, valuable information regarding skills gaps and organisational deficiencies in providing appropriate opportunities for capacity development. The plan of skills development was mapped according to the evidence from the surveys, and strategies were developed to ensure that staff needs for professional learning were met. The use of a statistically valid tool for measuring skills improvement provided an evidence-based approach to planning at the local level. This approach to the planning and implementation of strategies and programs for professional learning for teaching came from my disposition and interest. It should not, however, be left to one manager's disposition, but be systemic in intent and application.

The opportunity to conduct a quantitative research project to review teaching capability, as well as the opportunity to plan and implement a systematic approach to professional learning, afforded both me and the faculty managers insights into what was required to achieve a systematic approach to enhancing teachers' pedagogical capability. This experience, and the realisation that this approach could be successful in the improvement of teaching skills across the sector, was and still is what motivates me to engage in this study.

1.5 Research questions

This thesis focuses on providing a theoretical framework and a pragmatic approach to building the capability of VET teachers. There are currently two challenges for teacher professional learning in the VET sector:

- What are the unique characteristics of VET teaching that should be the focus of a professional learning program for VET teachers to enable them to progress from novice to advanced teaching; and
- How is this professional learning program best delivered for optimal impact?

1.6 Description of the study

In summary, this research was conducted in two stages. Stage 1 was an analysis of four key documents, published in the period 2010-2011, that outlined the issues and directions for the VET sector. The documents are used in this study to establish the unique characteristics of VET teaching and the implications for pedagogical skills and knowledge. Two of these documents focused on policy and strategic advice to governments, whereas the other two focused primarily on matters of curriculum, pedagogy and teacher capability. Stage 2 involved conducting semi-structured interviews with experienced teaching staff and educational managers of TAFE programs. 'Experienced' was defined as at least five years of teaching practice. All of the educational managers had at least five years' teaching experience prior to undertaking management roles.

1.7 Overview of the thesis

A brief explanation of the content of the chapters follows. This overview will enable the reader to understand the structure of the argument of this thesis. Chapter 1 has outlined the research focus and justification of this study, and the issues and challenges facing VET in the current economic and political context.

1.7.1 Chapter 2: Literature review

The literature review is separated into two sections. Section 1 examines the question, "What is the knowledge base required for VET teachers?" The answer to this question will assist in unpacking the research questions: What are the unique characteristics of VET teaching that should be the focus of a professional learning program for VET teachers to enable them to progress from novice to advanced practice; and how is this program best delivered for optimal impact? Current literature regarding teaching skills, both specific to TAFE or VET teaching and in a broader context, were selected for analysis. Section 2 analyses selected theoretical frameworks for developing teacher capability and reviews the role of continuing professional development in capability building for VET teachers. The three theoretical frameworks that describe learning and capability development

in workplace settings include practice-based education, informal learning and workplace learning. These theoretical frameworks provide further understandings about how VET teachers could more effectively learn the craft of teaching.

1.7.2 Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter reports on the research methodology, the theoretical framework and the choices made regarding research design and methods used in this thesis. This research employs a pragmatic interpretive approach with the intent to generate a deeper understanding regarding what is happening in the development of the VET teaching workforce and what might be done to improve current practices.

1.7.3 Chapter 4: Document Analysis: Unique characteristics of VET teaching.

Chapter 4 reports on and outlines the findings from the analysis of the four key documents to identify the unique characteristics of VET sector teaching and of the cohort of VET learners. This analysis examines the question of “What are the unique characteristics of VET teaching?”

1.7.4 Chapter 5: Document Analysis: Teachers’ skills and knowledge

Chapter 5 reports on the remainder of the research from Phase 1. The chapter outlines the findings from the analysis of the four documents that provides an understanding of the implications of the unique characteristics of VET teaching for pedagogical skills and knowledge. The two issues of understanding the unique characteristics of VET teaching methodology and the skills that VET teachers require in the current political context are providing challenges for VET stakeholders.

1.7.5 Chapter 6: Results and analysis of semi-structured interviews

Chapter 6 outlines the findings from the semi-structured interviews and provides interpretive analysis from the transcripts. Six experienced TAFE teachers and three experienced educational managers were interviewed, and the analysis of these transcripts identified some major considerations which included:

- Role of mentoring in skills development;
- Role of educational leadership in skills development;
- Use of reflective practice as a means of reviewing and improving practice; and
- Importance of formal learning.

1.7.6 Chapter 7: Discussion of data

Chapter 7 critically examines the findings of Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in the context of what is known currently about VET sector teaching as outlined in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. Against this background, Chapter 7 makes judgements about what has been learned through this research and describes the implications for the VET sector generally, and TAFE SA specifically.

1.7.7 Chapter 8: Emergent issues, conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 8 summarises the research results and provides an analysis of the emerging issues.

These conclusions will firstly provide the VET sector with recommendations regarding a professional learning framework that supports and assists teaching staff to progress from novice to advanced practice and, secondly, make recommendations that enhance the professionalisation of the sector and its teaching staff.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has introduced the thesis and located it in the context of my personal experience in leading a professional learning project as well as within the current national VET context. The next chapter critically reviews the key literature in light of this national context, and discerns the insights that the literature provides in answering the thesis questions.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

As established in the previous chapter, there have been significant changes to the VET system and particularly, VET pedagogy, since the introduction of competency-based training and assessment. The use of industry specialists to deliver and assess training without knowledge of pedagogy and the unique nature of VET students has been problematic. This chapter presents the review of the relevant literature concerning the nature of VET teaching and the pedagogical skills required for VET teaching which is the central focus of this research. The historical context for the implementation of competency-based training is included because of the far-reaching impact this has had on the implications for teachers' pedagogical skills formation. The literature review is presented in two sections:

- Section 1: The knowledge base for VET teaching; and
- Section 2: Theoretical frameworks for capability development of VET teachers.

In Section 1, the literature reviewed includes Guthrie's (2009) discussion paper regarding competency-based training (CBT) and the implications this has for teaching and learning in VET. Other literature reviewed includes Shulman's (2004) and Turner-Bisset's (1999) discussion of the knowledge bases for teaching; Robertson's reviews of both the Certificate IV in Training Assessment and Education (2008) and the Diploma for Training Assessment and Education (2009) and the ability of these VET qualifications to provide VET teachers with the skills they need; and Clayton's (2013) analysis of the role that industry and vocational currency plays in assisting VET teachers to achieve pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) are also included.

In Section 2, Boud (2012), Billett (2002), Orrell (2012), Harrison (2009) and Cox (2005) detail the theoretical frameworks underpinning workplace learning, informal learning and practice-based learning in the development of skills, knowledge and experience as VET teachers learn the craft of teaching. Section 2 is completed by a review of current literature including Eraut (2010) on the question of the role of managers and leaders and how they can assist and support VET teachers as they learn to teach, and strive to improve their practice and maintain high-level skills.

2.2 Section 1: Knowledge base for VET teaching

The VET sector is complex and this is evident in that VET "embraces school courses, through programs to assist the dis-engaged become re-engaged, to degrees and post-graduate qualifications in such disciplines as theology, and whatever is in between (including vocational education in most high schools and some universities)" (Harris, 2015, p.29).

According to the National Quality Council (NQC) Discussion Paper (2011) on the nature of

Vocational Education and Training, without a “paradigm of VET” (National Skills Standards Council, 2013, p. 4) it would be difficult for the VET sector to engage in discussions with the schools’ sector or with Higher Education and, that because of this, VET risked being marginalised and the absorption of some of its offerings, particularly those which overlapped with other sectors. One of the key areas of discussion is the disparity of qualifications in pedagogy required in the VET sector and those required in the schools’ sectors.

2.2.1 Competency-based training and assessment

CBT is a central concern of the VET sector: “Competency-based training (CBT) is at the heart of the vocational education and training (VET) system in Australia and has been so for a long time” (Guthrie, 2009, p. 6). Because CBT and assessment is the curriculum model used by the VET sector, it is imperative that both CBT and assessment form part of the knowledge base for VET teachers. CBT and assessment need to be embedded in professional learning opportunities for VET teaching staff.

There are diverse descriptions of CBT, which provide the potential for confusion when discussing the concept. The descriptions include:

- Outcomes not inputs focused;
- Flexibly delivered including using self-paced mechanisms where applicable;
- Performance based;
- Enabling recognition of prior learning; and
- Industry led or industry driven.

The move to CBT was part of the National Training Reform Agenda “which had the improvement of Australia’s productivity and international competitiveness at its heart” (Guthrie, 2009, pp. 7-8). At the time (mid 1980s–early 1990s), VET was seen as “having a significant role in enabling this” (Guthrie, 2009, p. 8). At the core of the introduction of CBT was a desire to move from the notion of time-served in training to the acquisition of industry agreed competencies.

As well as the introduction of CBT, the model of training reform included a system of national vocational qualifications which drew heavily on the experience of the UK system. This meant that the model was “strongly based on the functional competency approach” (Guthrie, 2009, p. 8). Guthrie contends that, like its origins in the UK, “the Australian conception has tended to downplay the importance of underpinning knowledge and a holistic view of the ‘craft concept’”(Guthrie, 2009, p. 8) in contrast to the German and Austrian models of competence.

CBT as a training and education philosophy required more than the writing of workplace competencies for specific job roles. Complementary to the implementation of CBT was the:

- development of training packages for industry sectors;

- introduction of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF);
- development and implementation of key competencies and, later, employability skills; and
- development and implementation of quality standards for registration of providers.

2.2.1.1 Conceptions of Competence

As pointed out above, there were several definitions of competency and, therefore, a range of conceptions of what it means to be competent. Guthrie (2009) posited that, while the concept of competence may appear to be simple, in reality, there is a consistent argument amongst theorists that competence is “a broader concept than the ability to perform workplace tasks” (2009, p. 18). Competency-based training stresses workplace performance and observable outcomes that are measurable and assessable. Underlying performance, however, are the parts that are much harder to observe, measure or assess; that is those parts that are “personally held skills, knowledge and abilities which collectively underpin and enable performance” (Schofield & McDonald, 2004, cited in Guthrie, 2009, p.18). This makes the task of assessment particularly difficult for the VET teacher as the intangible aspects of competence present significant challenges. There has been a tendency to emphasise the tangible and the performance, and place less emphasis on the underlying aspects of competence (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a). These underlying aspects, however, may be more important, particularly to employers, yet fail to be assessed and are, as a consequence, tacit and therefore invisible to the learners.

There are other definitions of CBT that indicate the complexities of understanding CBT. For example, Gonczi (1999) defined a competent individual as “one who possesses the attributes necessary for job performance to an appropriate standard” (Gonczi, 1999, cited in Guthrie, 2009, p. 19). Cheetham and Chivers (1996, 1998) developed an holistic model with five interrelated competencies:

- Cognitive competency which includes underpinning theory and concepts as well as tacit knowledge gained through practice and experience.
- Functional competencies include capabilities that should be able to be demonstrated.
- Personal competency, behavioural competencies. These are relatively enduring characteristics that relate to how a person behaves or performs.
- Ethical competencies which means having the appropriate personal and professional values for making sound workplace decisions.
- Meta-competencies which are those overarching competencies of coping with uncertainty, learning and learning to learn, coping with change. Meta-competencies are “Concerned with facilitating the acquisition of the other substantive competencies” (Cheetham & Chivers, 1998, cited in Guthrie, 2009, p. 20).

Le Deist and Winterton (2005) developed this model further and argue that the various holistic models of competence evident in Europe are coming together and drawing on the respective

strengths of the other dominant approaches: the United States' behaviourist tradition; the United Kingdom's (and Australia's) functional approach; and the more multi-dimensional and holistic approaches of France and the Germanic states (Germany and Austria) (Le Deist & Winterton, 2005, cited in Guthrie, 2009, p. 20).

Guthrie proposes that competence is an ongoing learning process and involves more than performance: "Competence develops as people develop their capability to integrate the skills, knowledge and behaviours associated with each of these domains to the point where the domains and their skills are fully integrated" (Guthrie, 2009, p. 20). Competence also is developed within the context of work or, more particularly, a workplace. It is contextualised for that workplace and the development of such competence takes time. Learning programs that are designed to develop competence in job roles must deliver not just "the requisite skills and knowledge for proficient practice but should also develop the practitioner's capacity to use those skills and knowledge in a consistent, seamless and integrated manner" (Guthrie, 2009, p. 21). Understanding the theoretical framework for CBT and assessment are key and necessary skills and knowledge for VET teachers.

When CBT was first implemented in the VET sector in Australia, there was little understanding of its different characteristics from other curriculum models that had previously been in place. While the majority of TAFE teachers of the time had been professional educators with undergraduate education qualifications, new teachers to the system were largely untrained in education. The underpinning principles that were part of the CBT conversation were an attempt to assist these staff to understand how to teach and assess in a CBT format. The work of Guthrie and others, as reviewed above, was a response to employer concerns that CBT was not producing graduates with the skills that were required in the workplace. As indicated in this section, there are many conceptions of competence. For this reason, the question of assessment in a competency-based framework has been fraught with misunderstandings and confusion.

2.2.2 Assessment

Competency-based assessment has been a challenge in the VET sector for many years. Wheelahan and Moodie (2011a) distinguished between those teachers who had responsibility for the design of teaching and learning strategies from competencies, the delivery of training and assessing of competencies, and the trainers who were employed for their industry knowledge or were new to VET teaching and were not responsible for designing assessment tools or making assessment judgements autonomously. Mitchell and Ward's (2010) research found that assessment was a skills gap nationally and that only 2% of the research respondents were assessed as learning and assessment specialists. This was viewed as insufficient given that many of these key staff were soon to retire. Assessment is such a critical issue supported by a large body of literature but few who are engaged in its practice have a sufficient level of literacy regarding assessment (Stiggins, 1995). Assessment in a CBT context could well be a topic for a

much larger work.

Stiggins (1995) maintained that there were five principles that underpinned sound assessments that would meet standards of quality. These principles were that:

“sound assessments 1) arise from and serve clear purposes; 2) arise from and reflect clear and appropriate achievement targets; 3) rely on a proper assessment method, given the purpose and target; 4) sample student achievement appropriately; and 5) control for all relevant sources of bias and distortion” (Stiggins, 95, p. 4).

In other words, assessment-literate teachers will have a clear understanding of what they are assessing and why; have a range of appropriate assessment tools that meet quality standards; and know how to select which of those tools meets the needs of the assessment task. They will also understand that any assessment is a sample of all the possible assessment tasks and make selections that enable valid judgements. Finally, assessment-literate teachers need to be aware that there are many factors which contribute to bias or distortion in assessment.

Rowntree (1999) describes an assessment system that is iterative; focused on the teacher making judgements about learner’s progress during the period of the course; reconsidering their teaching practices to incorporate re-teaching some aspects that learners may be unclear about; and regularly appraising “the nature and quality of the student’s thinking or practical performance” (1999, p. 3). VET teachers are familiar with the concepts of formative and summative assessments. Rowntree describes formative assessments as those that occur during a course that are used by teachers to assist learners to improve their learning or develop their skills and knowledge. Summative assessments are those that are a summary of one’s judgement about the learning which has occurred. Both Stiggins (1995) and Rowntree (1999) cite the importance of developing skills and knowledge required for the teacher’s task of making judgements in assessing learners’ skills. Advanced practice teachers in VET are often required to support other teachers for short periods of time, including those who come from industry and are not yet skilled in either teaching in CBT format or assessment. This section has demonstrated the importance of assisting new VET teachers to understand CBT and assessment. The next section analyses the literature regarding the role of the Certificate IV in TAE in developing a sound knowledge base for VET teaching.

2.3 Role of Certificate IV in TAE in developing the knowledge base for VET teaching

Capability in teaching and assessing in a CBT framework is a foundational skill (Mitchell & Ward, 2010). For this reason, it is necessarily a significant component of the knowledge base for VET teaching. Currently, the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is the formal requirement for all VET teachers and forms a part of their knowledge base. It is the usual entry point for novice VET teaching. While there has been criticism of the capacity of the Certificate IV in Training and

Education to adequately prepare staff for teaching in VET, and further criticism of the quality of the delivery, there has been insufficient research on the actual knowledge required by VET professionals in order for them to teach quality programs. There is also insufficient research consideration concerning an identity as a “good teacher” of VET (Palmieri, 2004, cited in Robertson, 2008).

Robertson (2008) posed the question about whether VET teachers need the same knowledge base as school teachers and “propose[d] that it is unwise to ignore research regarding school teachers’ required knowledge base when considering the knowledge required for VET teachers” (Robertson, 2008, p. 10). Robertson (2008) says that while there:

has been significant criticism of the capacity of these qualifications (Certificate IV in TAE and Diploma of VET Practice) to prepare people to teach in VET and specific shortcomings have been identified there is an absence of critique related to understandings of teachers’ knowledge and expertise (Robertson, 2008, p. 12).

Robertson’s (2008) thorough critique of the competencies contained within the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment concluded that, although the qualification may be adequate for novices to the VET system, it does not provide opportunities for reflection or the thoughtful critique of alternative educational theories. The focus is on compliance with the Australian Qualifications Training Framework (AQTF) and compliance with Occupational Health and Safety and other relevant policies and procedures. The approach of the learning materials for the Certificate IV in TAE is more indicative of a checklist applied to assessment criteria than the creative teasing out of pedagogical understandings. For many of the units, Robertson (2008) concluded that:

the resources of the Toolbox suggest the development of a superficial and general knowledge in respect to a knowledge of learners and general pedagogical knowledge. There is no evidence of critique or conceptual foundation (Robertson, 2008, p. 14).

Knowledge of learners and their learning styles was identified by Simons and Smith (2008) as a major deficit in the content and delivery of the Certificate IV in TAE. They interviewed participants studying the Certificate IV level courses for VET teachers and trainers, and also found that there was little critical analysis by researchers of the curriculum for the Certificate IV in TAE. Simons and Smith (2008) maintained that:

It would be expected that any programs addressing the development of teachers and trainers for the VET sector would include learning opportunities which developed an understanding of these various groups of learner characteristics and their potential impact on learning processes. Teacher training programs may also be expected to address major learning theories and ongoing developments worldwide in thinking about learning (Simons and Smith 2008, pp. 27-28).

Simons and Smith’s (2008) thorough analysis of the content of the TAE training package found that there were serious curriculum deficiencies in regard to the required knowledge and skills pertaining to learning and learning styles. While the initial research conducted by Simons and Smith (2008)

concerned a previous Certificate IV qualification, upon updating their analysis of the training program for VET teachers, they found that there are still serious issues with the content concerning learners and learning.

Robertson's critique of the content of the Certificate IV in TAE concluded that it was adequate for novices only. On the other hand, Robertson (2009) concluded that the coursework and practical placement of the Diploma of VET Practice, a qualification developed for Victorian VET teachers, could "provide opportunities for the development of the full suite of knowledge bases, including pedagogical content knowledge... and therefore the opportunity to develop the knowledge bases required of professional teachers" (2009, p. 11). Since then, however, the Diploma of VET from the Training and Education training package has been developed and is the requirement for staff in the TAFE sector who require the qualification for progression through the salary scales. One of the deficiencies in this new diploma is the fact that there is no requirement for practical placement in the qualification and opportunities for mentoring and peer review are not evident. As Robertson (2009) pointed out, there is even less opportunity to develop knowledge of and beliefs about teaching in this competency framework. He questions whether "such a program development approach is consistent with the development of professional practice" (2009, p. 11). In his analysis of the Diploma of VET Practice, Robertson concluded "that the potential for the development of pedagogical content knowledge that differentiates the novice from the expert (teacher) is doubtful" (2008, p. 1).

Turner-Bisset (2001) proposed another way of addressing the knowledge base for teaching. Her work in this field followed Shulman's (1987) work. Turner-Bisset (2001) proposed 12 knowledge bases (an additional three from Shulman's work) and the interactions between them for the profession of teaching. Turner-Bisset (1999) explained that "pedagogical content knowledge differentiates between the novice and the expert teacher" (1999, p. 47), that PCK requires experience and professional reflection on practice and is the culmination of knowledge that brings together all the knowledge bases. Turner-Bisset's (1999) twelve knowledge bases are summarised in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1 : Knowledge bases for teaching

Subject knowledge – Substantive	Content knowledge associated with facts, concepts, models and frameworks.
Subject knowledge – Syntactic	The ways through which propositional knowledge is generated and established.
Beliefs about subject	Relates to the way the teacher understands the history and purpose of the subject or discipline.
Curriculum knowledge	A broad concept incorporating knowledge of programs & instructional and assessment methods and resources.
General pedagogical knowledge	Generic and largely procedural knowledge about teaching that is gained from and is likely to develop with practice.
Knowledge/Models of teaching	Beliefs about what constitutes good teaching practice derived from one’s own experience as a learner.
Knowledge of learners – empirical	Relates to criteria such as age, interests, social nature and behavioural patterns.
Knowledge of learners - Cognitive	Relates to knowledge of learning theories which inform practice and contexts specific knowledge of how a particular group of learners respond and behave.
Knowledge of self	Combines the personal and the professional. Is important in shaping the way teachers perceive their identity and critical to reflection on personal teaching practice.
Knowledge of educational contexts	Knowledge of the settings in which teaching occurs.
Knowledge of educational ends, purposes and values	Based on the premise that teaching is a purposeful activity, expert teachers are able to make educational ends, purposes and values explicit.
Pedagogical content knowledge	That knowledge which embeds all other knowledge bases. PCK cannot develop in the absence of any other knowledge base.

Source: Turner-Bisset, 1999, pp. 13-19.

Turner-Bisset (1999) saw these knowledge bases as a map, particularly for the student teacher, and maintained that “equipped with a complete map of knowledge bases the student teacher could have a better grasp of what she or he needs to know and understand, in addition to what she or he needs to be able to do” (1999, p. 52). As Turner- Bisset pointed out, however, “for beginning teachers who are often rightly concerned with survival, this could be seen as esoteric and a long distance from their real concerns” (1999, p. 52). For Turner-Bisset:

teaching is a deeply complex, intellectual and practical activity. It is a creative act, in which the expert teacher selects from the store of experience and repertoire of teaching strategies and representations, the most appropriate ones for her or his purposes. The danger in focussing only on teaching skills and competences and standards, as they are now termed, is that it ignores the complex reasoning, thinking and synthesis which underpins the best teaching (Turner-Bisset, 1999, p. 52).

The point being made here, relevant to VET teaching, is that teachers need to not only have strategies for teaching practice, but also the theoretical framework for thinking, reasoning and synthesising the practice of teaching to create learning opportunities for students. Considering those who are already established in their teaching practice, “An accomplished teacher must understand what must be taught as well as how to teach it” (Shulman and Shulman, 2004, p.262;cited in Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 20). Teaching is therefore a complex process. VET teachers will require opportunities to develop capability in order to provide quality teaching and learning experiences for learners. Because teaching is a complex process and the development of

skills and capability occurs over time, it is important to consider what constitutes higher level pedagogical skills and the learning journey over time that is required to support staff to acquire advanced teaching capability.

2.3.1 Pedagogical Content Knowledge

Shulman (1987) proposed that pedagogical content knowledge was the amalgam of pedagogical knowledge and content knowledge. Shulman said the development of pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) was an ongoing and long-term personal development that required personal reflection and more, particularly experience. For Shulman “a second kind of content knowledge is pedagogical knowledge, which goes beyond knowledge of subject matter per se to the dimension of subject matter knowledge *for teaching*” (2004, p. 203). In the category of pedagogical content knowledge, Shulman included:

the most regularly taught topics in one’s subject area, the most useful forms of representation of those ideas, the most powerful analogies, illustrations, examples, explanations and demonstrations – in a word, the ways of representing and formulating the subject that make it comprehensible to others (Shulman, 2004, p. 203).

Teachers who have this advanced level of experience and expertise “must have at hand a veritable armamentarium of alternative forms of representation, some of which derive from research whereas others originate in the wisdom of practice” (Shulman, 2004, p. 203). Shulman argues that often learners come to a particular topic or subject with preconceptions or misconceptions. “Teachers need knowledge of the strategies most likely to be fruitful in reorganising the understanding of learners, because those learners are unlikely to appear before them as blank slates” (Shulman, 2004, p. 203). The implications for VET teachers are that they need capability in teaching and learning for the industry competencies and a thorough knowledge of the learners.

2.3.2 Industry currency contributes to PCK

Industry Skills Councils, through their authorship of the training packages, have placed emphasis on the role of industry currency, not only because it contributes to teaching capability, but as a necessary means of ensuring that students are prepared for employment with current knowledge and competencies. As can be seen from Turner-Bisset’s knowledge bases for teaching (1999), three of these directly relate to industry currency. VET teachers need both syntactic and substantive knowledge about their subject, and they also need a set of beliefs about the subject. Turner-Bisset (1999) maintains that PCK is not possible without any one of the other knowledge bases and, therefore, is impossible without a thorough understanding and knowledge of the industry sector that a teacher is involved in teaching.

Clayton, Jonas, Harding, Harris and Toze’s (2013) research on what both industry and the professions can teach the VET sector about industry relevance is most instructive. The sector claims as a unique identifier its work-based pedagogy, to an alignment with industry needs and the

training packages' competencies as its basis for teaching.

Clayton et al. (2013) made the point that "industry currency and professional obsolescence are terms that relate to the capacity of an individual to continue to perform their job" (Clayton, Jonas, Harding, Harris, & Toze, 2013, p. 4). In other words, industry currency defines one of the minimum requirements for VET teachers along with pedagogical skills. This is also reflected in the standard that relates to VET teachers. VET teachers are required to have vocational currency at least to the level being taught. This may not mean that the teacher will have a substantial and deep understanding of the industry sector or perhaps even meet the needs of the previously discussed knowledge bases with regard to content knowledge. How VET teachers improve their skills and understanding in vocational currency is of significant interest to the sector. This is a critical feature of VET teaching, as the teaching role combines both pedagogy and vocational skills. Clayton's et al. (2013) research argued that it was necessary and challenging for VET teachers to keep abreast of developments within the industry for which they were delivering programs. Indeed, Clayton et al.'s (2013) research found that all businesses and industry groups find it difficult to maintain currency for their staff.

Mitchell and Ward's (2010) research on the issue of vocational currency, as distinct from their study of VET teaching skills, showed that teachers used a wide range of ways to maintain vocational currency. Analysis of the data generated using the Currency Capability Analysis Tool (CURCAT®) found that "VET practitioners perceive themselves as maintaining their industry currency through two broad pathways:

- Industry engagement and practice; and
- Industry research and training" (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 16).

Mitchell and Ward (2010) found that, in using the first pathway of engagement and practice, practitioners involved themselves in the following strategies: professional and industry networks; personal contacts; industry experience and engagement which could include industry release; work placements and work shadowing; and using industry mentors and coaches. Mitchell and Ward's (2010) analysis for the second pathway included training courses that were either accredited or non-accredited; industry conferences; working in VET, particularly using opportunities for regular communication with industry contacts and representatives; professional conversations within the program team; and regular contact with their students in industry. They found that, for some VET practitioners, active inquiry was a necessity, particularly in those areas of rapid change. For example, teachers in the information technology field needed access to the latest journals and specialised industry publications. This was seen by teachers as the best option for maintaining currency.

I have thus far demonstrated that industry currency contributes to the pedagogical content

knowledge of experienced teachers. It is an essential component of the knowledge and skills base of every staff member. It is important to note that both PCK and industry currency are required for quality teaching and learning in VET. To date, the issue of 'quality' has been contentious and problematic, and sometimes only vaguely related to teaching and learning. For this reason, the literature relating to quality in teaching and learning is included in this review.

2.3.3 Quality in teaching and learning in VET

The focus of this thesis on building the capability of VET teachers to be effective in their role as teachers is motivated by the apparent need to support and enhance VET teaching and learning (Harris, 2015). In 2005, the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (NCVER) sponsored a national project in several parts that engaged the VET sector. One of these parts was a research project into the critical issues of teaching, learning and assessment in the VET sector, and this research determined that "quality is the major issue" (Mitchell, Chappell, Bateman, & Roy, 2006, p. 7). It was suggested that quality in teaching and learning would lead to enhanced outcomes for learners, industry and, ultimately, the nation. The key findings of the research were that VET practitioners needed more and improved skills in three domains, namely:

- using training packages as the backbone of their teaching and assessment;
- enabling them to use digital technologies for teaching purposes; and
- supporting learning in the workplace environment.

Quality of teaching and learning has been a challenge for the VET sector, at least since the rapid growth in the number of RTOs nationally. The National Skills Standards Council (NSSC) Standards Policy Framework describes quality as a "principle of content" that "underpins the development of standards to support the AVQS" (2013, p. 19). The NSSC describes quality, thus:

The standards assure quality in the delivery and assessment of national recognised vocational qualifications, ensuring learners, employers and prospective employers and other educational providers can be confident that the individual has the skills, knowledge and learning outcomes as assessed and certified (National Skills Standards Commission, 2013, p. 19).

In other words, compliance with the standards will guarantee quality. Compliance may be desirable in an environment of student mobility and growth in the number of providers. Compliance as a definition of quality, however, would seem too narrow. Compliance as quality also demonstrates a lack of understanding of the complexity of the relationship between students, industry and teachers. Quality has been an issue that has plagued VET for the last few years and this issue is ongoing (Harris, 2015).

2.3.4 Summary

The first section of this Chapter has reviewed the literature regarding the various definitions and

implications of the VET curriculum model, namely, CBT for VET teacher education. The review has revealed that teaching in the VET context is complex in nature and requires both pedagogical (Turner-Bisset, 1999) and vocational capabilities (Clayton et al, 2013). These arguments indicate that a diverse knowledge base is required for effective VET teaching and, according to Robertson (2008), currently mandated programs for the development of VET teachers are inadequate to support the quality and scope of the capabilities required. The next section will focus on the literature that relates to how VET teachers acquire and maintain their capability, and the important role that educational managers and leaders have in supporting this capability development.

2.4 Section 2: Theoretical frameworks for developing teaching capability.

This section reviews the literature regarding the issues concerning professional learning for VET teachers, and then reviews three theoretical frameworks that may form the basis for professional learning strategies and plans.

2.4.1 Continuing professional development

There have been many authors (e.g., Webster-Wright, 2009; Saunders, 2012; McDonald, 2013; Cramond, 1995) who have written on the role of professional development and the various strategies, both formal and informal, that contribute to the knowledge base of the VET teacher. Guthrie (2010) considered that there were five key principles that represented a best practice model for professional development. These were: using a holistic approach including setting goals and measuring progress; focusing on measurable outcomes to ensure success; using a variety of approaches so that different groups and individuals could be assisted; consciously recognising and valuing informal learning approaches; and empowering individual practitioners to be involved in their own professional development (Guthrie, 2010). As well as these five principles, Guthrie believed that “any professional development for the VET workforce needs to be part of a comprehensive approach to improving the quality of VET delivery and client outcomes” (2010, p. 19). Guthrie argued that professional development should be purposed for the improvement of teaching and the needs of learners and industry clients. Guthrie also implied that achieving this improvement will require a planned and systematic approach.

Workforce development and the use of metrics in determining the professional learning needs of staff are both relatively new areas of study. For many organisations, workforce development has been seen as part of the administrative functions of the human resource role. Harrison and Kessel's (2004) study of the knowledge economy, with particular reference to the UK, US and Europe, makes the point that “in a knowledge economy the competitive advantage of organisations relies on capability to adapt to the changing environment by the continuous generation and application of new knowledge” (2004, p. 3), and that the human resource development function is pivotal in this process. Harrison and Kessels (2004) argued that the source of competitive

advantage in dynamic knowledge-based environments:

cannot be knowledge as organisational commodity alone, since the value of all commodities is eroded by obsolescence, imitation and poaching. We argue for a paradigm where the organization is viewed as a system of learning and knowing processes and activity, situated in workplace communities of practice (Harrison & Kessels, 2004, pp. 9-10).

Harrison and Kessels (2004) also claimed that knowledge-based firms are heavily dependent on tacit knowledge, namely, that knowledge which is not formalised but is deeply embedded in individuals. If an organisation wishes to stimulate continuous improvement and innovation, then it must value both tacit and explicit knowledge, and find ways to distribute this integrated knowledge. In this environment, organisations can be described as “multiple communities of practice, each of which is continually engaging in experimental and interpretative activities in a workplace environment from which sense-making emerges” (Brown & Duguid, 1991, cited in Harrison & Kessels, 2004, p. 44). As the national economy looks to develop skilled employees with higher level qualifications in organisations that rely on their ability to generate new knowledge, it will become increasingly imperative for the VET sector to understand the knowledge economy and the fact that VET contributes to, and is influenced by, new knowledge. This has implications for the professional learning required for VET teachers. Capability development and ongoing learning throughout a teaching career will be required in both pedagogical and vocational fields in order to maintain currency in both.

In the following section, the literature regarding three different theoretical frameworks on professional learning are reviewed. These are practice-based education, informal learning and workplace learning and have applicability for capability development for VET teaching. Each framework has been reviewed separately as this seemed to be the best way to elucidate practical solutions to providing an optimal program of professional learning for VET teaching. While each of these perspectives is reviewed separately, there are undoubted relationships between them in their practical applications.

2.5 Practice-based education

Practice-based education is “a notion and an approach to education that is grounded in the preparation of graduates for occupational practice” (Higgs, Barnett, Billett, Hutchings, & Trede, 2012, p. 3). This occupational practice “encompasses the various practices that comprise occupations, be they professions, disciplines, vocations or occupations” (Higgs et al., 2012, p. 3). For many occupational groups, including VET teaching, “practice refers to the activities, models, norms, language, discourse, ways of knowing and thinking, technical capacity, knowledge, identities, philosophies and other socio-cultural practices that collectively comprise their particular occupation” (Higgs et al., 2012, p. 3). Higgs et al. maintained that the key question for educators who wish to employ a practice-based education framework is “what theory might frame education

for practice?” (2012, p. 4).

Higgs et al. (2012) presented PBE as a pedagogical perspective, a curriculum framework and a set of teaching and learning strategies. The teaching and learning strategies included such things as supervised workplace learning, simulated workplace learning, distance and flexible practice-based learning, peer learning and blended learning methodologies. All of these are very familiar teaching and learning strategies for VET teachers delivering competency-based training to students in any program, and could therefore be translated to the CBT and education provided to novice teachers undertaking VET qualifications.

Higgs et al. (2012) provided eight key social practice dimensions or factors that need to be considered when defining PBE as a pedagogy.

1. Pedagogical frame; PBE is a pedagogy that enables student preparation “for a practice and an occupation”.
2. PBE aims to develop skills and capability for a profession, “forming their occupational identities” and technical and relevant social skills.
3. PBE is shaped by the context in which it is taught and the context of the profession
4. “Students’ prospective practice needs to be continually appraised and evaluated to provide a relevant frame of reference to situate their curriculum and pedagogical experiences”.
5. Students are socialised into the practices of the profession or occupation and into “the multiple communities and circumstances of practice of their working worlds”.
6. Practice and pedagogy are fundamentally concerned with relationships.
7. “Authenticity and relevance are themes embedded in the goals, venues, activities, student assessment and program evaluation of PBE programs”. “The education approach, including educators’ role- modelled behaviours, should reflect the expectations, norms, knowledge and practices of the profession”.
8. Standards is a dimension that needs to permeate all aspects of practice including curricula and pedagogies: “standards as reflective of practice expectations and professionalism and professional codes of conduct or industry standards that are part of practice/professional socialisation” (Higgs et al., 2012, p. 76).

These eight factors could form the theoretical framework for planning a continuing professional development (CPD) program of learning for VET teachers including new teachers. There are several key considerations when introducing new teachers to the VET sector or in further developing the skills and professional practice of longer-term teachers. It is important for them to understand what the practice of the occupation is and the capabilities to which they aspire for membership of this practice. Understanding the context, resources available and further opportunities are part of their personal development. Knowing who their role models and mentors

are, and how to build a relationship with these resource personnel, are critical for a deliberate approach to understanding the standards and expectations of the practice for VET novice teachers. These issues are critical in planning professional learning strategies that induct new teachers to VET practice and refresh the practice of established teachers.

While the eight factors could provide the theoretical framework for CPD, there are teaching and learning strategies that emerge from this framework. Boud (2012) asserted that practice-based activities cover a wide range including “practicum, work placement, internship, field work, clinical education, [and] clinical supervision” (2012, p. 55). While many VET programs (for example, Community Services and Health, Agriculture) use work placements and fieldwork for their students, there is no such provision for VET teachers to engage formally in practicum as they learn the skills and craft of teaching. For Boud, the question of what is practice is beyond what takes place in a course; “The use of the term practice clearly goes beyond knowledge of the practice to involve conduct of the practice” (2012, p. 56). Furthermore, questions of ethics and culture, and how new employees learn the culture of an organisation arise in a practice-based learning environment. Schatzki viewed practice in a social and organisational sense; “A practice is a social phenomenon in the sense that it embraces multiple people. The activities that compose it are organised” (2012, p. 14). A practice-based education approach has the possibility for providing the VET sector with the principles and theory for engaging staff in CPD as well as the practical strategies for a more systematic capability enhancement.

While a proportion of the learning that occurs within a practice-based setting can be categorised as informal learning, it is important to consider this learning strategy separately. The next section considers informal learning because of its importance as a tool for capability development of both experienced and novice staff.

2.6 Informal learning

The requirement for formal qualifications or teacher training for VET teachers is minimal and, therefore, it can be assumed that a major factor for teachers in learning to teach is via informal workplace learning strategies. Eraut (2004) focused his research on understanding and investigating the theoretical frameworks of informal learning in the workplace. Eraut contrasted informal learning with formal learning or training, and recognised “the social significance of learning from other people” (2004, p. 247). For Eraut (2004), informal learning is that which is learned from others in a workplace or other setting, while formal learning is recognised or accredited. Eraut maintained that there were some problems inherent in researching informal learning. Firstly, it is largely ‘invisible’ or taken for granted and sometimes is not even acknowledged as ‘learning’. Secondly, the knowledge that is gained is tacit and may be seen as the person’s capability rather than learning. Finally, respondents often find it difficult to discuss complex aspects of their role and are not comfortable talking about their expertise. The characteristics of informal learning include

“implicit, unintended, opportunistic and unstructured learning and the absence of a teacher” (Eraut, 2004, p. 250). Despite the intrinsic complexities of using informal learning as a professional learning methodology, Eraut (2004) found that there were opportunities for planning for that learning.

Eraut (2004) found four main types of work activity that regularly gave rise to learning. These included: participating in group activities that enabled a team work towards a specific goal; observing others and working with them to learn new practices and perspectives; and taking on new challenges that may lead to increased motivation and confidence. Eraut’s research also found that working with clients (industry groups and workplaces in the case of the VET teacher) was also a learning experience. This experience entailed learning “(1) about the client, (2) from any novel aspect of each client’s problem or request and (3) from any new ideas that arose from the joint consultation” (2004, pp. 266-267).

These four methodologies described in the paragraph above and associated activities accounted for a very high proportion of the informal learning on the job encountered by Eraut. Their success, however, depended on the quality of the relationships in the workplace. “For this and other reasons the amount of learning reported varied significantly with person and context, raising important questions about appropriate intervention strategies for enhancing the quality and quantity of informal learning” (2004, p. 267).

As the economy in first world countries has evolved over the last two to three decades, organisations are expecting a deeper knowledge of workplace practices and engagement in issues such as productivity and restructuring of the workforce (Billett, 2002). Billett maintained that “interest in workplaces as learning environments has intensified” (2002, p. 27). Interest in learning environments is driven by pragmatic concerns of reducing the cost of vocational skills development and enhancing access and relevance to industry sector needs as well as relating to the organisation’s needs (Billett, 2002). These same issues apply to the organisations that comprise the VET sector.

Billett outlined the four main reasons for developing a “workplace pedagogy” that he sees as critical for the improvement of vocational skills, in particular enterprises, and necessary for enterprise success.

- First, for large groups of workers the workplace “provides the most likely situation to initially develop vocational knowledge” (Billett, 2002, p. 28). For these workers, there may be no appropriate course or training outside of the industry or enterprise which will meet their needs, or it may be inaccessible to the employee, or the skills required are so customised for that organisation that there is nowhere else they can be learned.
- Second, “workplace experiences make important contributions to learning vocational

practice” (Billett, 2002, p. 28). There are many professions and vocations which prize periods of time in the workplace including law, medicine, teaching and the trades.

“Acceptance into these vocations is not possible without lengthy periods of workplace practice supervised by more experienced co-workers” (Billett, 2002, p. 28).

- Third, workplace experiences are increasingly being prized in educational programs for diverse reasons, including improving understanding of the world of work, developing specific industry skills and contextualising the learning from an institution (Billett, 2002, p. 28). Billett contended that using workplace learning as legitimate in its own right is an exception, and rather that it is seen as augmenting what is learnt in the classroom. With the increasing use of ‘recognition of prior learning’ (RPL) and the acknowledgement of this recognition as another means of assessment of learning, workplace learning is more recognised now than previously. The fact that RPL is now routinely available to enrolling students in VET, and is part of the standards for teaching and learning, means that both teaching staff and students are more aware of the value of workplace learning and skills development.
- Fourth “and perhaps most important – most of the ongoing development of workers’ skills throughout their working lives will occur through participation in work” (Billett, 2002, p. 28). Because the skills required in the workplace evolve and change over time, employees’ skills must also adapt and develop. This has been particularly so with the advent of computer systems impacting on all jobs. These rapid changes are the reason that Billett proposes that every workplace needs to have “robust, strongly empirical and conceptual bases for how learning at work should best proceed – a pedagogy for the workplace – is now urgently warranted to inform how vocational development should proceed through working lives” (Billett, 2002, p. 28).

Generating a clear and shared understanding of these key issues will provide managers and leaders with an educational perspective for establishing new workplace learning strategies as a capability development tool for VET teachers.

2.6.1 Reflective practice

Harrison (2009) and Cox (2005) expressed the view that all of these frameworks for learning were more effective and efficient if a reflective practice model was implemented and embedded in practice. Harrison (2009) understood that reflective practice ensures that staff are motivated to review and assess the activities in which they are involved in the workplace, and to subject these activities to scrutiny and review. This review of practice then becomes the basis for making changes and improvements to practice. Harrison (2009) noted that reflective practice had become influential in some professions, particularly teaching, and systematic approaches had been employed to incorporate the practice into training for staff at different levels. This process was particularly applicable for novices and, in this case, an experienced facilitator was required.

Most people do learn from experience and Cox suggested that “they do this moderately well without any pedagogic intervention” (2005, p. 460). Cox asserted, however, that “the regular use of a reflective practice tool or model makes learning from experience a more reliable and faster method of gaining access to necessary knowledge and wisdom about our work processes and about ourselves” (p. 460). Cox stated that “reflection-on-action could be viewed as a highly introspective activity that has little relevance except in higher level occupations” (p. 460). She suggested that these higher-level occupations were “those where there were ethical dimensions to be considered and important decisions needed to be made” (p. 460). This has implications for VET teachers who are assessing student competency for workplace roles and impacting on students’ futures.

The theoretical frameworks of practice-based education, informal learning and workplace learning as the basis of a deliberate professional learning strategy may be a useful means of addressing VET teacher capability development. These theoretical frameworks may provide an effective methodology for induction to teaching and educational programs for VET teaching. Orrell and Higgs (2012), however, reported that there are a number of factors that are essential in developing effective educational programs that will contribute to building this important capability.

These factors are:

- Adequate induction and preparation of students prior to their practice-based experiences.
- The provision of structured, critically reflective, self and peer learning processes during and after WIL (Work-Integrated Learning) experiences.
- The presence of an element of risk to contribute to profound learning for students (Orrell & Higgs, 2012, p. 48).

These issues are central to the role of educational managers and leaders in supporting and building teacher capability. The next section reviews the literature regarding the complex and important role of educational managers and leaders in the development of the educational capability of their staff.

2.7 Role of educational leadership in development of pedagogical skills

Educational managers and leaders have a critical role to play in ensuring that the teaching staff employed in VET have adequate pedagogical skills and industry knowledge and experience to enable a quality learning experience for VET students. Eraut (2010) noted that the role of managers in supporting learning is complex, requiring analysis of the capability and learning needs of individuals and the team as a whole, and providing the support structures and mechanisms for progress. It involves managers knowing and understanding what is required of teachers’ performance and “what (this) performance should resemble or achieve” (Eraut, 2010, p. 56). The

role of manager necessarily requires excellent communication skills and the ability to discuss with individuals their work and their career aspirations, and whether those aspirations can be accommodated within the organisation's goals and requirements. It should not necessarily be the manager alone who describes the learning needs of the team, but rather in consultation with experienced staff who may be closer to the action and know more of the everyday knowledge and skills gaps. A responsibility of most managers is to ensure that their workers do not get assigned to tasks beyond their competence. The ideal work situation for apprentices, including beginning teachers, allows them to consolidate their competence through further practice while also expanding their competence through a combination of peripheral participation and coaching. Even for experienced workers, however, what counts as competence will change over time as practices change and the speed and quality of work improves. Thus, from a learning viewpoint, "competence is a moving target" (Eraut, 2004, p. 264).

"Of particular interest to us was the balance between support provided to people on the spot when, or soon after, the need first became apparent and support from a designated mentor or manager" (Eraut, 2004, p. 267). Eraut's research found that, in many instances, informal support "from whoever was available was more important for learning than were formally designated" (mentors) (pp. 267-268). Eraut made the point that "good short-term feedback on performance was often accompanied by an almost total absence of strategic feedback, giving even the most confident workers an unnecessary sense of uncertainty and lowering their commitment to their current employer" (pp. 267-268).

Transferring knowledge between an educational setting and a workplace context is difficult. Eraut found that there are two main reasons for this difficulty. These are "the narrow conception of practical knowledge used in most formal education and the lack of any ownership of the transfer process itself" (2010, p. 49). While this is a problem for initial professional training, it is also an issue for Continuing Professional Development (CPD). Eraut established that there were five interrelated stages in transferring theoretical knowledge to practice and, although they are presented as a logical progression, in fact, they are intertwined and there is considerable interaction between them. These stages are:

1. Extracting relevant knowledge from the context of previous use.
2. Understanding the new situation or context, "a process that often depends on informal social learning".
3. Recognition of knowledge and skills that are relevant to the new situation.
4. Transforming this knowledge and skill set to the new context.
5. "Integrating them with other knowledge and skills in order to think/act/communicate in the new situation" (Eraut, 2010, p. 49).

None of these stages is simple, and all require reflection and time before they are progressed.

While the integration of theory and practice is difficult, there are some practical strategies that can be considered in the facilitation of learning in the workplace. These factors could be deliberately implemented in developing programs that contribute to VET teacher capability building. Eraut specifies six factors in successful facilitation of learning:

1. Providing an appropriate level of challenge is important for confidence and progress. This applies for novices and mid-career teachers
2. “The quantity and quality of informal learning can be enhanced by increasing opportunities for workers to consult with and work alongside others in teams or temporary groups” (2010, p. 56).
3. Managers may need skills in conflict resolution or in addressing poor relationships which threaten the group culture.
4. “Support and feedback are critically important for learning, retention and commitment” (2010, p. 56).
5. More structured feedback on meeting the organisations’ expectations and goals and individual’s progress and strengths and weaknesses is also required.
6. Negative or upsetting feedback about status or performance, or anxiety about any aspect of either the workplace or outside the workplace can influence an individual’s work life and may need attention from the manager for a time (2010).

Each of these factors addresses important learning for the development of VET teacher capability. These complex issues will require intervention by, and support from, managers and leaders if the learning is to be effective. Harris noted that “there have been calls for continuing professional development and recognition of a range of qualifications, more appropriate for a range of VET teachers and trainers, rather than a ‘one size fits all’ approach” (2015, p. 26). Harris cites Walker who claimed that “in VET, trainers and assessors are ‘the most valuable asset and arguably least cared for resource’ and ‘in the end the quality of the service provided to learners is entirely dependent on the quality and performance of the trainer” (Walker, 2012, cited in Harris, 2015, p. 26).

2.8 Conclusion

VET teachers are dual professionals in an Australian VET context that uses CBT as the curriculum framework. This VET system has, by definition, used a functional approach to CBT and this forms the initial knowledge base for VET teachers. There is an existing recognised body of knowledge that VET teachers should have as they practice teaching. There are also recognised theoretical frameworks that should be useful in assisting VET teachers, and their managers and educational leaders, to plan and implement a program of teacher training that uses solid theory as a background to learning the body of knowledge for teaching in the VET sector.

My research will analyse whether teachers in VET are afforded opportunities that enable them to incorporate the knowledge bases for teaching into their practice. It will also assess the methodology for professional learning opportunities and whether, in reality, CPD uses any of, or a mix of, the theoretical frameworks to support teachers as they learn the craft of teaching in VET.

This background analysis will assist in analysing a gap in the literature concerning how VET teachers progress from novice to advanced practice, and how CPD can be constructed in order to successfully support capability development.

The following chapter provides the theoretical framework for the research phase of this work. The chapter outlines the processes for engaging with both a document analysis and semi-structured interviews with experienced staff in order to generate the data necessary to answer the research questions.

CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This purpose of this chapter is to outline the research methodology used in this study on the characteristics of VET sector teaching and the necessary pedagogical skills for the VET teaching workforce. The research approach adopted is a combination of interpretivism and pragmatism. Interpretivism has been chosen because the research seeks to gain a critical understanding of the unique characteristics of VET teaching. Pragmatism has been chosen because based on the understanding gained, the research seeks to propose changes to the current way VET teachers' capability and development for teaching is enacted. This chapter provides detail of the methods of data generation and analysis. The research questions have been devised in order that an understanding of what is unique about the VET sector will underpin VET teachers' capability and influence the professional learning program that will enable teachers to progress in their profession.

3.1.1 Research questions

- What are the unique characteristics of VET teaching that should be the focus of a professional learning program for VET teachers to enable them to progress from novice to advanced teaching?
- How is this program delivered for optimal impact?

3.2 Research approach

Two main branches of epistemology inform educational research: positivist and interpretivist. Characteristics of the interpretive paradigm at work include seeing the issue through the eyes of others or understanding the issues from another's point of view; providing a rich description of what is occurring in a particular situation, and thereby contributing to a deeper understanding; and interpreting a particular aspect of the research in the light of the whole context (Gibbs, 2002). Central to the interpretive framework is the notion of gaining understanding of the meaning underlying the text or the answers to the questions at interview (Bryman, 2012).

The primary aim of interpretive research is to develop an understanding of what is occurring (Erickson, 1986) rather than to change what is happening. In the context of the VET Reform Agenda, where rapid and radical changes were imposed on the sector, it is appropriate to apply such a methodology in order to fully understand and critically analyse and interpret what the major stakeholders are requiring of the VET sector and, in particular, VET teaching staff in the context of answering the research questions. This research adopts a qualitative methodology. Qualitative methodologies are a diverse group but they all rely on the analysis and interpretation of language rather than the analysis of numerical data. An interpretive methodology is one approach to

qualitative research which seeks to describe and interpret data (Elliott & Timulak, 2005). This research has adopted an interpretive paradigm approach.

3.3 Pragmatism

The research will also apply a pragmatic approach since the goal of this study is to recommend changes to the current situation regarding the development of VET teacher capability. 'Achieving results' or 'getting things done' is often seen by business and politicians as pragmatic. Pragmatism is based on the principle that the usefulness of ideas is judged by whether they 'worked' or not. Goldkuhl stated that "one of the foundational ideas within pragmatism is that the meaning of an idea or concept is the practical consequences of the idea/concept" (2012, p. 141). This has implications in that 'truth' is seen as 'what works', and success of the idea or policy is determined by whether it 'works'. Policies and processes, however, may work for one stakeholder at the expense of another.

This research examines the 'common sense', as espoused in the Standards for RTOs, the reflective practice of practitioners and from key documents regarding VET teaching. Understandings of the situation drawn from the reflective practice of individual teachers and managers, and research previously reported in key documents, are represented as 'common sense' and the norm for practice. These are sometimes partial understandings, however, and serve to impede alternative considerations and alternative solutions to problematic situations (Feinberg, 2015).

Pragmatism has two branches; 'traditional' pragmatism and critical pragmatism (Feinberg, 2014). Critical pragmatism highlights situations in which power relations influence the formation and internalisation of 'common sense' to conceal alternative ways of understanding. It is, thus, aware of the likelihood of systematic silences or distortions in communication, and works to bring these to consciousness and to resolve them. Critical pragmatism "differs from traditional pragmatism only in emphasising that failure to perceive or define a problem is problematic in itself" (Feinberg, 2014, p. 150). A critical stance was adopted for this research because it seeks to identify problems and challenges with the current professional development options for VET teachers and propose pragmatic solutions that may potentially lead to enhanced capability development for VET teachers.

There are several issues that critical pragmatists take into account in conducting research and analysing research data:

- Awareness that local understandings may be incomplete but not necessarily defective.
- Viewing conflicting values as invitations for further conversation rather than taking sides.
- Valuing the contribution that expert knowledge of practitioners makes to the inquiry and

to further generalisation, but that it may also contribute to relations of power and domination.

Both critical pragmatism and traditional pragmatism are concerned about understanding breakdowns in experience that impair opportunities for individuals to lead enriched, reasonable, autonomous and collaborative lives. Yet for the critical pragmatist, the concern about breakdowns in experience is not sufficient. There are times when experience is constrained but does not actually break down. In these cases, unequal power, ingrained habits and customs, and unimagined possibilities may all play a role in limiting the kind of experience people can have, even if the present experience seems to be flowing reasonably well (Feinberg, 2014, p. 153).

Therefore, one of the key objectives of a critical pragmatic approach is to analyse the obstructions to communication between the key stakeholders, firstly by identifying their source and looking for a way forward. The data generated in this research will be analysed with this critical approach. This analysis will seek to examine issues pertaining to the stakeholders to the VET system who may be advantaged by the current situation of low skills and qualifications for VET teaching and, because of this advantage, maintain silence about the gaps in skills for teaching.

3.4 Combining interpretive and pragmatic research approaches

Goldkuhl (2012) noted that there were major differences between pragmatic and interpretive paradigms. One of these differences was in empirical focus. The pragmatic paradigm is often empirically concerned with actions and changes, whereas the interpretive paradigm is focused on beliefs and socially constructed cognition. Pragmatic research values new knowledge in terms of its usefulness for implementing change. Knowledge in interpretive studies is valued if it is seen as interesting in itself.

The role of the researcher is also a point of difference. Pragmatic research engages the researcher in the change process and this affects the collection of data through assessment and intervention. Interpretive research engages the researcher in understanding and interpretation of the data. It is possible, however, to see clear connections between understanding oriented narratives and the path to appropriate action and change.

This research project has adopted an interpretive paradigm approach with pragmatic elements. The research is concerned with understanding meaning and interpreting the held beliefs about vocational education. The research, however, is also fundamentally concerned with recommending changes that could be made to the sector that may provide more effective outcomes for students, for industry and, therefore, for the national economy.

3.5 Research design

The research was conducted in two phases: Phase 1 was a document analysis and Phase 2 involved conducting semi-structured interviews with TAFE SA staff. The staff who were interviewed had many years' experience of teaching in the VET sector, had been immersed in the many radical changes to the sector and understood the effects of these changes for teaching in the VET sector. Each of these phases is described below and situated in the current VET context.

3.5.1 Phase 1

Phase 1 is a critical analysis of four key documents that have been selected for their focus on, and depiction of, the national educational agenda for the VET sector. This selection, depiction and analysis is reported in three sections. The first section, which forms part of this chapter, will outline the intent of the documents, the criteria for including them in the analysis and the analysis process that was used. The second section, which forms Chapters 4 and 5, will outline the findings from the analysis process and will focus on the themes of (i) the unique educational characteristics of the VET Sector and (ii) the skills required by teachers to address these characteristics.

The information generated from this data analysis will be the basis for answering the following question:

- What are the unique characteristics of VET teaching that should be the focus of a professional learning program for VET teachers to enable them to progress from novice to advanced teaching?

Currently, these two issues are significant challenges for the VET sector. Teachers' capabilities and teacher development are impacted by the policy initiatives embodied in the documents chosen for analysis. This is particularly so for the Australian Government's agenda for promoting higher level skills across the workforce (Productivity Commission, 2011; Skills Australia, 2010; Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011).

3.5.2 Phase 2

Phase 2 of the research involved semi-structured interviews with experienced TAFE SA staff regarding their personal career journey of progressing from novice to advanced practice as teachers, and the strategies that they have enacted to facilitate this transition. An aim of this research is to develop understandings from the lived experience of VET practitioners regarding the professional learning required to enable VET teachers to transition from novice teacher to advanced practice, and to identify the workplace learning and practice-based learning strategies that may be effective in this process. Fundamental to developing this understanding is acknowledging the different perceptions and experiences that major stakeholders have of the role and function of the VET sector in pursuing successful outcomes for learners and industry groups. While the semi-structured interviews provide a grounded understanding of TAFE teachers'

progress from novice to advanced practice, the research will also develop a perspective of how answers to the research questions could have applicability to the wider VET sector teacher workforce.

The results and analysis of the interviews will provide answers to the second research question:

- How is the program of professional learning best delivered for optimal impact?

In addition to the two research questions, there are several sub-questions that will provide further, more explicit data regarding the answers to these two research questions. Therefore, the analysis of the interview transcripts will provide answers to the following sub-questions:

- What learning strategies are effective in building capability as teaching staff progress from novice to advanced practice?
- Which professional learning programs contribute to advanced practitioners maintaining and further enhancing their skills?
- How do VET teachers use workplace learning and practice-based learning theories to build their capability from novice teacher to advanced practice?

In April 2011, the Productivity Commission published a research report on the VET workforce in response to a Council of Australian Governments (COAG) request to report on various aspects of education and training, particularly the teaching workforce. Several sections of the report focused on the necessity for VET sector teaching staff to have significant skills updates in the context of the changing nature of the Australian workforce and the labour market. One section of the report addressed the issue of professional development for the VET sector.

The Productivity Commission report (2011) said that VET was pivotal in the building of the national economy, and a discussion paper authored by Skills Australia (2010) emphasised the importance of skills in the VET sector.

Lifting the quality of VET outcomes goes beyond the issue of compliance to the skills of VET practitioners. Consideration is needed of the essential requirements for professional practice, as well as the types of mechanisms that will better support professional development, leadership and excellence (Skills Australia, 2010).

It is within a context marked by the ongoing call for VET sector teaching skills improvements and CPD for VET teachers that my research occurred.

3.6 Research methods

Qualitative methods are used to analyse language and text. In the case of this research, text from selected documents is analysed and includes interpretations that are inferred from the language of the text. The research analysis addresses the language of the interview transcripts, including the

interpretations arrived at by the researcher as a result of being present to the interviewee and listening not just to the language, but to the underlying beliefs and emotion of the interviewee. Gibbs (2002) viewed language as a most telling medium by which we reveal meaning and communicate that meaning to others. Language is the tool used to describe and express ideas, and communicate the context in which people operate. From the qualitative researcher's perspective, the more interesting ideas "are, those referring to and representing the experiences, social organisations, institutions, activities and practices that we have created in human culture and society" (Gibbs, 2002, p. 2).

3.6.1 Document analysis

The standard approach to document analysis is to focus primarily on the messages the documents contain. While this focus is valid, it is also true that documents have a dual relationship. Firstly, they enter the social field as a means of communicating instructions, contracts or reports. Secondly, they are agents in their own right and, as such, have effects for many years and are subject to manipulation by others. One of the challenges of document analysis then, is to ensure that the voice of the documents is honestly and validly reported and that any ambivalence or dispute between the documents is noted and interpreted.

The approach to the analysis of documents adopted in this research is to analyse the contents by concentrating on words and phrases as well as text expression. This process necessarily used a coding scheme. This kind of content analysis ignores context and meanings. Document analysis often uses interpretive analysis to capture ambiguity and covert meanings. This form of analysis looks at how messages are encoded and hidden. Prior (2014) makes the point that although document analysis is sometimes categorised as an 'unobtrusive' method, it should have at least the same standing as an interviewee or an anthropologist's informant.

3.6.2 Knowledge of the VET sector through interpretive analysis

Interpretive analysis is a methodology that is effective for engendering deeper understandings of what is taking place in the sector, and is an appropriate tool in the context of the complexity of the VET sector and the rapid changes that have occurred over the last ten years. NCVET has produced many research papers and reports concerning issues in different aspects of VET. While there is a body of research on VET, gaining agreement on issues such as quality in teaching, for example, has been fraught.

3.6.3 Situating the researcher

As already elaborated in Chapter 1, Section 1.4, as the researcher, I have many years' experience in the TAFE sector, both as a teacher and a program and senior manager, and as a secondary school teacher prior to working with TAFE. For these reasons, my personal bias for pedagogical skills may have been an issue. Accordingly, the questions for the semi-structured interviews

needed to be structured in such a way to mitigate against this personal bias and to allow the interviewees the opportunity to describe their personal career journey without reference to mine. Although I had held a senior management role in Regional TAFE SA, most interviewees had no knowledge of me or my work, and those who had known me, focused on their own career path through the course of the semi-structured interview. One critical advantage of many years' experience working within the TAFE sector was a deep knowledge and understanding of how to interpret the political changes and 'reforms' to the VET sector from the perspective of teacher, leader and manager, and an understanding of the major stakeholders and their expectations and requirements of the sector.

3.7 Phase 1: Document Selection and Process of Analysis

Qualitative techniques of interpretative analysis were employed to gain understandings from these documents. The document analysis contributed to answering the major questions of the thesis regarding how the major stakeholders view the unique characteristics of the VET sector, and the implications for the pedagogical skills and expertise of the teaching workforce (see 1.2). There is a wide range of research and discussion papers available, both nationally and internationally, regarding the requirements for the VET sector to position itself so that the national economy is served by the sector. In Australia, there have been several investigations into the role of VET; the necessary modernisation of VET; the need for the sector to be more flexible and more business oriented; for the sector to be demand driven rather than supply driven; and for quality to be more of a focus.

Here I describe Phase 1 of my research and the processes of document selection and analysis. While the documents chosen are from 2010-2011, and were recently published when I began this doctorate study, it is interesting to note that there have been no documents produced since that time which deal with the issues of VET staff teaching skills, qualifications and professional development on this scale.

3.7.1 Justification and criteria for document selection

Approximately eight key documents that addressed teachers' skills and qualifications were scanned, and four were selected for analysis.

The following focus areas were used as criteria to select documents for analysis:

1. Vocational education and training sector interests at the national level;
2. Workforce change and planning for the broader workforce of the future;
3. Skills development of the teachers in the VET sector; and
4. Their publication coinciding with the national VET reform agenda.

3.7.2 Source documents

The following documents were chosen for analysis:

- Document 1: Skills Australia, (2010). *Creating a future direction for Australian vocational education and training*.
- Document 2: Productivity Commission, (2010). *Vocational Education and Training Workforce*.
- Document 3: Wheelahan & Moodie, (2011a). *The quality of teaching in VET*. <https://austcolled.com.au/announcement/studyt-quality-teaching-vet> accessed December 2015. This project produced another four documents which were included in the analysis.
- Document 4: Mitchell & Ward, (2010). *The JMA Analytics Model of VET Capability Development; A report on the National Survey of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Practitioner Skills*. www.jma.com.au/JMAAnalytics.aspx accessed June 16 2014.

A number of other documents were also considered. One report, in particular, that was seriously considered for inclusion in the document analysis was 'VET Teaching and Learning: The Future Now 2006-2010' (Guthrie, Perkins & Nguyen, 2006). This report was commissioned by the Western Australian Government Department of Education and focused on the roles, knowledge and skill requirements of the VET practitioner. As it was written in 2006, however, it did not have the same national economic background and was not in response to the Government's new VET agenda as espoused by the other documents chosen. Although the issues for VET practitioners in Western Australia are similar to the national challenges, the document did not necessarily have a national focus (inclusion criteria 4). A second document considered included the Training Package for TAE. This training package has been developed by IBSA (Innovations and Business Skills Australia) which has oversight of skills development in an extensive range of mainly business related occupations of which VET teacher education is only a very small component. In previewing this document, it was clear that this training package adopts of business perspective on VET teaching. While this is an interesting perspective the scope of this package is so extensive its critique could constitute a thesis in its own rite and did not relate to the interests of this study. A third document considered was the Queensland College of Teachers project to determine a set of Standards for VET teachers. This project, however, was terminated during the writing of this thesis. A fourth document was based on the Victorian Government's commissioning of a research project to determine a skills analysis tool for VET teachers. The development of this tool was similar to the Mitchell and Ward Capability Analysis Tool because it had been grounded in their work as a foundation. As a result, this document added nothing new to the original work and for this reason, it was not used for document analysis in this thesis.

3.7.2.1 Document 1: Skills Australia, 2010, 'Creating a new future direction for Australian vocational education and training; a discussion paper on the future of the VET system'.

In October 2010, Skills Australia released 'Creating a future direction for Australian vocational education and training'. Skills Australia (from 2012 known as the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, and subsequently dismantled) conducted research and provided advice to the Australian government in relation to the skills Australia needs. The discussion paper was part of their research agenda. The purpose of this document was to outline the issues that would set the directions for the Australian VET sector as it attempted to achieve higher level skills for the national workforce and higher rates of workforce participation.

Some of the critical issues discussed in this paper include the changes to the labour market "and the fiscal challenges of an ageing population and burgeoning international competitiveness" (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 5), as well as Australia's requirement for "more people with significantly improved foundation and higher level skills. Those skills also need to be applied in the workplace to improve Australia's lagging productivity and innovation levels" (p. 4). Growth in VET enrolments at the time of writing had been "slight – less than an average of 1 per cent per annum in the last five years" (p. 4). Skills Australia's discussion paper maintained that these factors would mean changes to the way VET delivers its services, particularly in the area of workforce development and innovation. "To meet the challenges of increased output and improved skills utilisation, the VET sector would need to significantly improve its performance and boost outcomes" (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 4).

3.7.2.2 Document 2: Productivity Commission, 2011, 'Vocational Education and Training Workforce'.

This report from the Productivity Commission (2011) (previously known as the Industry Assistance Commission) was commissioned by the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and released in April 2011. The document focuses on the VET teaching workforce and the changes needed in capability and capacity to meet the government's agenda. The terms of reference for the report required the:

Commission to consider and advise on in relation to the VET workforce:

demand for the workforce's services with particular regard to the skill sets required to meet society's current and future needs for education and training;

the ongoing supply of workers, in terms of numbers, knowledge and skills;

the workforce composition that most effectively and efficiently delivers desired educational and training outcomes; and

appropriate directions and tools for workforce planning and development (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 1).

The Productivity Commission report also made a connection between the acquisition of higher level skills for employees and the skills of the VET teaching workforce. The Productivity Commission stated: “In a highly skilled, labour intensive industry such as education and training services, the quality of the output is closely linked to the quality of the workers responsible for delivering the services” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 3).

3.7.2.3 Document 3: Wheelahan, L. & Moodie, G 2011. ‘The quality of teaching in VET.’

The quality of teaching in VET project was funded by the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, managed by the Australian College of Educators, and implemented by the LH Martin Institute at the University of Melbourne. The project produced four research papers and one options paper:

- Wheelahan, Leesa & Curtin, Emma (2010) *The quality of teaching in VET: Overview* <https://austcolled.com.au/announcement/study-quality-teaching-vet>
- Wheelahan, Leesa (2010) *The quality of teaching in VET: Literature Review* <https://austcolled.com.au/announcement/study-quality-teaching-vet>
- Moodie, G (2010) *The quality of teaching in VET: Framework* <https://austcolled.com.au/announcement/study-quality-teaching-vet>
- Wheelahan, Leesa & Moodie, G (2010) *The quality of teaching in VET: Options paper* <https://austcolled.com.au/announcement/study-quality-teaching-vet>
- Wheelahan, Leesa & Moodie G (2011) *The quality of teaching in VET: final report and recommendations* <https://austcolled.com.au/announcement/study-quality-teaching-vet>

This research project involved interviews, online responses, focus groups and presentations nationally, and engaged all stakeholders including industry, teaching staff and students from both TAFE and the wider VET sector. The purpose of the project was to:

research and make recommendations on the quality of vocational education and training (VET) teaching; VET teacher qualifications and continuing professional development; the impact teaching has on the quality of the VET student experience and student outcomes; and how this can be evaluated (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 3).

While some of the project outcomes are outside of the scope of this thesis, the work on teacher skills and qualifications and continuing professional development is applicable to providing answers to the thesis questions (see 1.2).

3.7.2.4 Document 4: Mitchell, J. & Ward, J. 2010. ‘The JMA Analytics Model of VET Capability Development; A report on the National Survey of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Practitioners Skills.’

This research report was the result of an online survey comprising approximately 140 questions that related to VET practitioner teaching skills. Over 2,200 VET teaching staff nationally answered the questionnaire and provided the researchers with valuable data regarding skills sets and

professional development aspirations and pathways. Analysis of the data showed that there are five skills sets that VET practitioners need in order to demonstrate foundation skills in VET teaching, an additional two skills sets to demonstrate advanced practice, and two skills sets are generic and contribute to both foundation and advanced practice.

Structural Equation Modelling analysis of the survey data demonstrated that there was indeed a model of VET Practice and that practitioners believed that the professional development on offer was insufficient and usually ad hoc. Prior to the publication of the research report, there had been no agreed model of VET practice. Mitchell and Ward saw this deficit as a challenge for the sector and proposed that “This lack of an overarching model means there is no comprehensive understanding in the sector of how VET trainers and assessors transition from basic or foundation level to advanced practice” (2010, p. 8).

3.7.3 Data analysis

Each of these documents was scanned in NVivo and then analysed to ascertain the major themes in the documents regarding the questions of the unique characteristics of the sector and the implications for teachers’ skills and professional learning. Because of the extensive size of the combined documents (approximately six hundred pages), NVivo was used for the document analysis. Each document was uploaded to NVivo and analysed to discern the answer to the questions: What are the unique characteristics of VET teaching, and what are the skills that VET teachers need to have?

The texts that related to these questions were aggregated into nodes or themes that were created in NVivo. The following section describes the node tree developed from the document analysis and clearly distinguishes the key elements that differentiate the unique characteristics of VET sector teaching.

Components of National VET System

- Competency-based training and assessment
 - Rationale for implementation of CBT
 - VET curriculum models; Training Packages
 - Competency-based assessment
 - Learning in the workplace
- Industry leadership of and engagement with the VET sector
 - Industry leadership of the sector
 - How industry engages with the sector
 - Employer expectations of the VET sector; jobs focus
- National regulatory framework
 - Purpose of a national quality framework

- Challenges and difficulties in a national system of regulation

Uniqueness and diversity of learners

- Who are VET learners?
- Equity groups, low socio-economic background or other disadvantage

Skills for teachers

- Identity of the VET teacher; teacher or trainer
- Dual professional
- Teacher qualifications; Certificate IV in TAE
- Teaching skills and qualifications
- Vocational experience and qualifications
- Continuing professional development.

The individual sections of each document that contributed to that node and the emergent themes were then analysed in each node. This analysis made it possible to identify constructs relating to VET teaching in each document and identify the differences in reasoning, emphasis and weight of significance between documents.

The key themes were:

- VET curriculum models encompassing CBT, training packages and an emphasis on workplace learning strategies;
- the influence of industry and the expectation that industry has of the sector;
- the national regulatory framework;
- the unique cohort of VET students; and
- the skills and qualifications that VET teachers need.

Chapters 4 and 5 detail the findings from the in-depth analysis of each of these themes. Chapter 4 references, in particular, the themes of the components of the national VET system and the uniqueness and diversity of learners, and analyses what each document articulated overtly and inferred about each of the themes. Chapter 5 details the findings with regard to the required skills for teachers and the consequent professional learning requirements of the sector's teachers.

As has already been described, each of the documents has a unique focus and was written for a specific purpose and audience. Necessarily, the documents portrayed differing perspectives with regard to some of the key issues. The document analysis gave a clear understanding of what government and industry were saying about the unique characteristics of the VET sector and the implications these characteristics have for the essential skills for VET teachers. These factors were

described and critically analysed. In addition, the views of key VET educators on the same issues, namely, the unique characteristics of the VET sector and the essential skills of teachers, was also made evident.

3.8 Phase 2: Interviews

Phase 2 of the research comprised conducting semi-structured interviews with staff from TAFE SA, transcribing the texts of the interviews and conducting an interpretive analysis of the interview transcripts. Semi-structured interviews gave the respondents the opportunity to talk about the lived experience of their own skills development over their career. This included their experience of mentoring and assisting other new members to their team as they learned the craft of VET teaching.

Semi-structured interviews require a series of predetermined but open-ended questions that the researcher puts to the respondents. While it is true that the researcher has more control over the topics of the interview than in unstructured interviews, there is often an assumption that it is also more difficult to analyse the answers than for closed questions. In contrast to structured interviews or questionnaires that use closed questions, there is no fixed range of responses to each question. Foddy (1993) contended that the relationship of the researcher and respondent can be seen as one of joint researching because the nature of open questions means that further information can be called for in follow-up questions. Therefore, the development of rich, relevant data rests on the interviewer's ability to understand, interpret and respond to the verbal and nonverbal information provided by the informant. One of the complexities of the interview process is ensuring that the question is understood in the way that was intended by the researcher. Foddy argued that, at the very least, there are four steps that must occur when planning a successful question-answer sequence:

- The researcher must be clear about the information required and 'encode a request for this information'.
- The respondent must de-code this in the way the researcher intends it to be de-coded.
- The respondent then needs to encode an answer that has the information requested.
- The researcher must de-code the answer as the respondent intended it to be de-coded (1993, p. 17).

It is obvious from the above process that there are opportunities for error and misunderstanding, and a list of sub-questions was used to further tease out understandings.

Semi-structured interviews were chosen as a suitable data collection technique because it enabled a grounded approach to data collection and the subsequent analysis. Grounded approaches have been defined as "theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analysed through the research process. In this method, data collection, analysis and eventually theory stand in close

relationship to one another” (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, cited in Bryman, 2012, p. 387).

3.8.1 Participants

The TAFE SA Director of Educational Programs was contacted for approval to interview educational staff for this research. Volunteer interviewees were recruited from a group of senior teaching staff who were involved in an Educational Leadership Program and from the cohort of senior program managers with responsibility for educational programs. Members of this group were selected based on pre-established research criteria, namely, that they were experienced teaching staff who had at least five years of teaching experience in a VET program area. They may also have had experience of several teaching delivery methodologies. Table 6.1 gives a brief summary of relevant experience and qualifications of the interviewees in relation to the research agenda.

The interviewees had extensive experience both in teaching and in their relevant vocational area, and had formal qualifications that contributed to their understanding of their role as either teachers or educational managers. Informed consent was gained via the form endorsed by the University Ethics Committee and all interviewees had signed the form before any negotiations regarding interview time and place were engaged in.

3.8.2 Lecturers’ teaching experience

Six teaching staff were interviewed and each of the interviewees had more than the required five years’ teaching experience. All of them were currently teaching in a TAFE SA program and were either Step 6 or 7 on the lecturer’s classification scale. This scale refers to both teaching experience and skills, and pedagogical qualifications. There are documented qualifications required at each level of classification and these qualifications relate to capability development in teaching and industry currency.

As well as many years of teaching experience, they also brought a wide range of other experience to their teaching roles. One had a background as a driving instructor in the UK as well as mentoring apprentice diesel mechanics before working for TAFE SA. Another had experience as a Learning Support and Career Welfare Officer in TAFE before doing undergraduate studies and teaching as a secondary school teacher. One of the trades lecturers had worked overseas as an aircraft engineer for twenty-six years before beginning lecturing for TAFE.

The lecturer in Children’s Services had worked as a child care worker for many years and her first job in TAFE SA had been as a workplace assessor of competencies in the Children’s Services program. At the time of the interview, she had sixteen years of teaching experience and had been involved in delivering a program for child care workers that comprised some face to face workshops on-campus as well as mentoring and assessing the on-job component of training.

The lecturer in management for the Business Services program began work for TAFE SA as a finance clerk and had progressed to a senior management role before an organisational restructure. He had then re-trained in the teaching stream and completed the qualifications necessary for Step 7, namely, the Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education, and had been teaching for 12 years. Another example of a redirected career was the wine lecturer who began work as an administrative assistant and then re-trained as a lecturer in information technology and, more recently, lecturer in the wine and viticulture program area. He was teaching core units for several programs. These included Communications, Occupational Health and Safety, and Food Safety. Because he didn't have a background of working in either wine or viticulture, it may limit his teaching to these core units. All of this experience contributed to rich data for interpretive analysis.

3.8.2.1 Educational qualifications

Four of the interviewees had completed the Bachelor of Adult and Vocational Education which was specifically designed for TAFE SA and VET teaching staff. One had undertaken extensive further studies including a Master of Education and Career Development and a Graduate Certificate in Vocational Learning in Schools. The two interviewees who had not undertaken a degree program had completed the Diploma of VET. This qualification follows on from the mandated Certificate IV in TAE and forms a pathway to accelerated study of the specialised degree program. This degree has been discontinued by the local university and, to gain this qualification, staff now need to enrol interstate and study externally. Several commented that this situation was not ideal in their view.

3.8.2.2 Vocational qualifications

One interviewee had extensive overseas experience and university qualifications in the aviation industry. He had used this knowledge and experience to gain his first job in TAFE but was now working in another area that related to the field of his initial experience. Two of the interviewees had worked for many years in the area in which they were teaching and had gained advanced diplomas in that field since they started teaching. As mentioned earlier, one does not have a specialist qualification in the program in which he works and has no previous background in the industry. However, he has extensive experience in the delivery of core units for the training packages for the industry and he has passed the units that he is teaching. While he may not have a full qualification, he meets the broad requirements of the VET quality framework for vocational currency.

3.8.3 Data generation

Interviewees were invited to give personal accounts of how they had acquired skills for teaching and how they believed their professional learning strategies had enabled skills development. The fact that the interviews were semi-structured enabled staff to deviate from the topic and to include any event or circumstance that they believed was relevant. The interview questions were emailed to each participant several days prior to the interview time so that participants had time to make

personal notes and to think about their responses prior to the interview. Two pilot interviews had taken approximately forty-five minutes and staff were assured that this was approximately the time required. Assuring staff of this fact was important and acknowledged the busy teaching loads that all staff had to accommodate at the end of the year. The interviews were conducted from late September through to mid-December 2015. In fact, all the interviews were longer than 45 minutes because staff were enthusiastic in their responses and generous in their allocation of time. As the questions called for responses about personal experiences of learning to teach, there was, in fact, no right or wrong answer. This contributed to honest responses on a topic that they obviously regarded as valuable to themselves and the sector as a whole.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of the strategies that were found to assist TAFE teaching staff to develop pedagogical skills as they progressed from novice teacher to advanced practice, and to gain an understanding of whether they used work-based or practice-based learning strategies as they developed capability in teaching.

The interviews were recorded and the transcripts provided to the interviewee for checking. Interviewees came from several different program areas and across the career spectrum. The informants were recruited because of the anecdotal, experiential, cultural and systems knowledge they possessed, and because of their knowledge about teaching and learning in the VET sector. Experienced teaching staff were recruited because they are often mentors for new staff not only in terms of teaching and learning strategies, but also in how to navigate their way in the system. They are well placed to be leaders in programs and to understand the skills needed for quality teaching and learning. Through their career experience, they know what professional learning has been useful for themselves and their colleagues.

The managers who were approached for interview were ideally situated to respond to both how their own personal journey as a VET teacher was influenced by professional learning strategies and the strategies they make available to staff they manage. A critical aspect of their role is to manage the employment of teaching staff and provide the required resources and skills development for these staff in the program they manage. Educational Managers are responsible and accountable for the professional development of staff, for the delivery of a quality teaching and learning experience for students, and for ensuring that teaching staff have the credentials and support to fulfil their professional role. As a result, they were well placed to answer questions regarding staff development programs, including methods of program delivery and skills for effective career advancement. Many educational managers have come to management via a teaching role and have valuable career experience of teaching in TAFE. Therefore, they have a deep understanding of the issues that challenge teachers' capability development.

Negotiations regarding the time and place of the interviews were conducted via email and phone, and all interviews were held at TAFE campuses or other sites nominated by the interviewees. The

interview questions were emailed to the participants prior to their interview to give them an opportunity to reflect on the issues involved and in order to maximise the opportunity to extract full and appropriate data. The interviews were audiotaped and the resultant tape was transcribed by the researcher. All transcripts were emailed to the interviewee for checking and approval for use prior to analysis. The interviews occurred after institutional ethics approval and research ethics approval.

3.8.4 Data analysis

The interview questions are set out in Appendix 1 and a sample of a transcript forms Appendix 2. Because the number of pages was significantly less than the documents, NVivo was not used to undertake the analysis of the interviews. Each interviewee was asked the same set of questions and I (the researcher) transcribed each interview as this process assisted with becoming familiar with, and reflecting on, what had been said, including tone of voice, and contributed significantly in the interpretation of responses. The interviews were transcribed by question and the participants' responses to each question were then aggregated. This approach to the analysis enabled the discernment of similarities and differences regarding the answers to each question and faculty-specific experiences of professional learning opportunities. The themes deduced from analysis of the answers gave individual insights as well as group or faculty insights, and revealed any discrepancies or deficiencies in approach to professional learning opportunities. The key themes were:

- Mentoring, both informal and formal, as a key factor in system orientation and teacher development;
- Reliance on mentors to transmit knowledge about the compliance requirements for ASQA audits and quality systems;
- Deliberate approaches required in the delivery and content of the Certificate IV in TAE; and
- The importance of the role of educational managers in capability development for both novice teachers and advanced practitioners.

The results of the interpretive analysis of the interview transcripts form the basis of Chapter 6. The main issues raised by the educational staff from TAFE SA were the foundation for answers to the questions of:

- What professional learning programs should the sector provide in order to transition new lecturers to advanced practice? and
- How can workplace learning and practice-based learning theories be useful in implementing an effective VET teaching development program?

3.8.5 Limitations

Although the teachers and managers who were interviewed all came from the TAFE sector, they are representative of the VET sector as a whole because they are subject to the same curriculum framework, namely, CBT and training packages, the same quality framework, and the same ASQA audits as the sector as a whole. Where there were differences in the context of TAFE and private providers that may impact on the data, this information was noted. For example, as TAFE is a large bureaucracy responsible for a still significant proportion of VET delivery, enterprise bargaining processes inform teacher classification steps relevant to salary scales and promotional opportunities. This circumstance may not apply to smaller non-TAFE RTOs.

3.8.6 Ethical considerations

Issues of confidentiality and anonymity were considered as part of the research proposal for this study. Interviewees were assured that no information that identified them would be published or made public by the researcher. Free consent of all participants was reinforced and participants gave their consent after reading the information sheet and consent form. Participation in the study was voluntary and any information that might identify individuals was not transcribed. Participants were assured that they could withdraw from the study at any time, though none withdrew. The interview transcription was sent to each participant for checking as soon as possible after the interview, and the interviewees were assured that they were free to withdraw any section at their discretion. The scope of the research was limited to the question of capability development in teaching and learning for VET, and did not include how this capability might impact on personal classification or promotion purposes. Pseudonyms have been adopted to protect the anonymity of the participants.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach to the research, the research design and research methods. The research seeks to provide an understanding of the professional learning strategies that enabled the progress from novice teacher to advanced practice in the sector and, therefore, to provide a rich description of what constitutes quality in teaching in VET. As outlined in this chapter, the research methodologies included a document analysis and the conducting of semi structured interviews with VET managers and teachers. These data were then analysed to answer the research questions.

The next three chapters provide the results from both the document analysis and the analysis of the interview transcripts. From the document analysis, Chapter 4 details the results concerning the unique characteristics of VET and Chapter 5 details the results regarding the implications for teacher skills in the VET sector. Chapter 6 details the results from the interview transcript analysis

and seeks to present data that will offer answers to the contested questions about effective professional learning strategies including practice-based approaches that enable capability development from novice practitioner to advanced skills.

CHAPTER 4 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter reports the findings from Phase 1 of the research by providing an analysis of the four documents that were detailed in the previous chapter. These selected documents were analysed to identify and interpret the major themes of the unique characteristics of the VET sector and the implications these characteristics have for teachers' capability development and professional learning. These to provide an illustration of the diverse views about what needs to happen in order to improve the quality of VET education. As these were written with a national perspective, it made each document significant.

The documents were selected to take into account the different audiences for whom they are intended. Two were commissioned studies intended to guide government and took a governance and managerial focus. The other two documents had educational practitioners as the intended audience, and focused largely on pedagogy, student learning needs and the development of teacher competence.

In order to arrive at an answer concerning the unique characteristics of VET teaching, it is important to analyse what makes VET education unique and then to examine the implications for VET sector teaching and teachers. This chapter will provide answers to the research question:

- What are the unique characteristics of VET sector teaching?

The analysis of the implications for the development of teachers' pedagogical skills and knowledge will be the subject of Chapter 5.

As detailed in Chapter 3, the documents analysed were:

1. Skills Australia, (2010). *Creating a future direction for Australian vocational education and training.*
2. Productivity Commission, (2011). *Vocational Education and Training Workforce*
3. Wheelahan, L. & Moodie G., (2011). *The quality of teaching in VET.*
4. Mitchell, J & Ward, J., (2010). *The JMA Analytics Model of VET Capability Development; A report on the National Survey of Vocational Education and Training (VET) Practitioner Skills.*

4.2 Unique characteristics of VET Education

This section seeks to analyse what distinguishes VET education by an analysis of the features that are unique to VET. In order to analyse the unique characteristics of VET education, it is necessary

to first agree on a definition of VET sector education. NCVET, which is responsible for maintaining the official VET glossary of terms, defines VET as:

Post-compulsory education and training, excluding degree and higher level programs delivered by further education institutions, which provides people with occupational or work-related knowledge and skills. VET also includes programs which provide the basis for subsequent vocational programs (NCVER 2008, p77).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report, however, defined VET activity as that which is undertaken by an RTO. This definition will be the one used for this research because it encompasses all activity of a RTO and includes the various categories elaborated in the first definition.

Three of the four documents analysed (Skills Australia Report, 2010; Productivity Commission Report, 2011; and The Quality of teaching in VET Project, 2011) identified four characteristics unique to VET sector education. These were the use of CBT and assessment as the basis for the curriculum framework; industry leadership of, and engagement with, the sector including the use of industry-endorsed training packages; a national regulatory system; and a cohort of learners with characteristics that are unique to VET learners.

An analysis of each document concerning each one of these four characteristics of VET education will be the focus of this chapter. Each characteristic is addressed in a separate section. While there are many areas where the documents concur on the unique characteristics of VET teaching and the implications for teacher skills knowledge and qualifications, there are also some inconsistencies, conflicts of interest and tensions.

The contradictions and tensions centre on:

- the authors' variation of focus;
- variable understandings of competency-based training and assessment;
- industry expectations of the VET sector; and
- differing expectations of specific cohorts of learners.

The following Table 4.1 is a summary of the key ideas generated by the document analysis regarding the unique characteristics of VET.

Table 4.1: Key concepts from the documents regarding unique characteristics of VET education

Themes from Document Analysis; Unique characteristics of VET teaching	Skills Australia Discussion Paper (2010)	Productivity Commission Report (2011)	Quality of VET teaching project (Wheelahan and Moodie (2011))	JMA Analytics Model of VET capability Development Report Mitchell & Ward (2010)
CBT Rationale for introduction	Most courses relate to specific job outcomes. However, most learners do not end up working in that field.	CBT introduced as a way of moving away from a provider-driven approach to training.	CBT was introduced to give industry a voice in the national training reform agenda. Narrow concept of education. Teachers are restricted to development of teaching and learning strategies for specific job roles.	
Training packages	Training Packages are at the core of VET delivery and strong support from industry	Training packages should provide advice from industry regarding vocational competencies required by assessors and keep pace with industry changes.	Training packages were seen as a challenge and constraint. Teachers not good at interpreting training packages and relevant assessments.	
Assessment	Noted challenges of wide variation in assessment practices across the sector. Implementation of national validation system might be an answer	Viewed a national validation system as too costly. Each RTO was responsible for ensuring integrity of assessment processes.	External validation was sporadic. Suggested a staged approach to improving assessment processes.	Assessment is foundation skill and assessment in alternative methodologies necessary for advanced practice. Nationally, there was a skills gap in assessment skills and knowledge.
Learning in the workplace	VET's main role was preparation for work. CBT meant to ensure workplace learning Advantageous to business because it is convenient and cost-saving.	Significant percentage of students were not employed in the industry field of their study. Waste of training resources should be a concern.	VET's main role is to ensure students are able to access skills for jobs.	Teaching in the workplace is an advanced skill for both Commercial Specialists and Advanced VET practitioners

Industry leadership	Mechanisms to ensure VET is industry led and connected.	Industry Skills Councils (ISC) are influential in formal sense; total control of training package content.	ISC may be able to assist with CPD for teachers which would enable teachers to maintain vocational currency.	
Industry engagement with VET	Suggested development of new role for teachers as industry or workplace consultants.	Industry may choose to register as an ERTTO, engage with graduate students of VET for employment, may engage VET to train their workforce. Industry provides vocationally current staff for VET course delivery.	Ability to use business and industry specialists as part time VET teachers was necessary and the sector needed to maintain this method of employment of staff.	Commercial Specialists were expert in engaging with Industry as educators and consultants.
Industry expectations of VET	Continued close connections between learning, employment, labour market and economy. Provide foundation skills in areas of LLN because these skills essential for employment.	Very high expectations that VET will deliver work-ready employees with skills specific to particular workplace. Deliver broader employability skills including LLN skills.	VET must give access to quality vocational education supporting wider numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in gaining the foundation skills they need for work and further study	National competitiveness is dependent on skills of the workforce.
National regulatory framework Purpose of national regulation	Quality regulated under AQTF but it has limited legal force.	Role is to benchmark and validate activities of RTOs. Core activity is to promote national recognition of qualifications, oversee quality assurance, ensure national consistency of AQTF standards.	Increase national consistency, improve student outcomes and increase quality and integrity of system.	One of the foundation skills is 'course organisation and management' which focuses on compliance with AQTF requirements for audit purposes.
Challenges in national system of regulation	Challenging because of size and diversity of the sector. Problems include inconsistent regulation, variable assessment practices and insufficient transparency.	Amendments to AQTF necessary to correct problems in international education delivery within the sector.	Sector's increasing diversity makes ensuring quality and evaluating outcomes a considerable challenge.	

<p>VET Learner characteristics: Low socio-economic background, other disadvantage</p>	<p>Many 'disadvantaged' learners studying in VET, need foundation skills Can relate to poor employment outcomes which will affect the Government targets. Need to do more than teach. Approximately 27% of campus-based learners are studying for reasons relating to their current job, 23% are employed but studying in a field unrelated to their current job and about half (or 30% of all VET students) are unemployed or not in the labour force.</p>	<p>Student profile is very diverse and likely to become more diverse Student body likely to become even more diverse.</p>	<p>VET must meet needs of this diverse group if COAG targets and the national economy requirements for skilled workers are to be met. Need teachers with higher level teaching skills.</p>	<p>Foundation skill of 'Learning Facilitation' has as a subset 'Learning among equity groups'.</p>
<p>LLN requirements</p>	<p>Students with low levels of LLN need help as these skills sets are core to people gaining employment.</p>	<p>Students should be able to expect that VET will address their need for LLN skills Must improve educational attainment, LLN skills and broaden accessibility.</p>	<p>It is reasonable for students to expect assistance with LLN skills. VET is supporting wider numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds to gain foundation skills needed for work and further study.</p>	
<p>Learner expectations: Employment</p>	<p>Different approaches may be needed.</p>	<p>Satisfaction high in this group because of job outcomes.</p>	<p>Need for change because work skills more complex.</p>	
<p>Further study</p>	<p>Key challenge is transition from VET to higher education.</p>	<p>Use VET to re-engage with formal study. But VET is a destination in its own right.</p>	<p>VET enables pathways to further studies including higher education.</p>	

4.3 Unique Characteristic 1: Competency-based training

This section analyses the four documents and reports the findings on CBT and assessment. Included are the rationale for the Australian VET system's adoption of CBT in the late 1980s, the use of industry endorsed competencies in training packages to provide a curriculum framework and the connection between learning and workplace performance in a competency-based framework. These elements are inextricably linked.

Competency-based training and assessment in education is unique to the VET sector in the Australian context. It is defined as a method of training which develops the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to achieve competency. In 1992, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) defined competency-based training as:

A way of approaching (vocational) training that places primary emphasis on what a person can do as a result of the training (the outcome) and as such represents a shift away from an emphasis on the process involved in the training (the inputs). It is concerned with training to specific industry standards rather than an individual's achievement relative to others in the group (ACCI, 1992, cited in Guthrie, 2009, p. 7).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report stated that the "desire to move away from a provider-driven approach to one based on the attainment of competency standards set by industry was a key motivation" (Misko & Robinson, 2000, cited in Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 12) for moving to competency-based training. Wheelahan and Moodie (2011a) agreed with the Productivity Commission (2011) report but also argued that the rationale for changing to competency-based training in the Australian VET context was to give industry a formal voice in the national training reform agenda because industry had complained that training did not meet their needs. Both the Productivity Commission (2011) report and Wheelahan and Moodie (2011a) relied on a reference from Goozee (2001) who said that VET had implemented CBT as a means to developing a training market and an industry-led system. Guthrie said that CBT was introduced to ensure that "VET delivered what industry wanted. These reforms were in part a response to perceptions that TAFE was unresponsive to the needs of industry" (Guthrie 2009, cited in Wheelahan, 2010, p. 6).

One of the few references that Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) make to CBT is to reference Hager who argued "that there needs to be a clear distinction between performance and its outcome; the underpinning constituents of competence (capabilities, skills, abilities); and the education, training or development of people to be competent performers" (Hagar, 2004, cited in Moodie, 2010, p. 19). Moodie (2010) noted that Hagar suggested that Australia's introduction of competency-based training was intended to cover all three items but in fact only dealt with the first. He argued that:

...by attending to the first item and assuming that this also took care of the second and third ones, the National Training Reform Agenda (NTRA) has resulted in a deeply flawed VET system. His view is that while it is possible to describe precisely performance and its

outcomes, this is not possible for the underpinning constituents of competence (capabilities, abilities, skills) (Moodie, 2010, p. 19).

4.3.1 Assessment

Assessment has posed some specific challenges in the VET sector. One of the main challenges for VET sector teachers is that national training packages and national competency standards require consistent national standards of assessment and portability of qualifications. This has proved difficult across such a diverse and rapidly expanding sector.

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper noted the challenges created particularly by wide variations in assessment practices. These variations challenge the philosophy of portability of national qualifications.

National Quality Council (NQC) research has identified the key elements of this issue:

- The understanding industry, employers, learners and VET practitioners have of what it means to be competent;
- The calibre of the RTO;
- The currency of the assessors' industry knowledge; and
- Whether the assessor took a 'tick and flick' approach or whether they used a variety of evidence-gathering techniques (Skills Australia, 2010, p.53).

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper questioned whether implementing a national validation system, similar to the one which operates in New Zealand, would assist in ensuring quality outcomes. The question, as Skills Australia saw it, was whether a system of external moderation would "ensure a Certificate III awarded by one provider is to the same level as a Certificate III awarded by another" (2010, p. 12).

The Productivity Commission report voiced reservations about an external validation system noting that it "would involve additional costs — at least in administration of assessment arrangements" (2011, p. 266). The report argued that each RTO was responsible for ensuring the integrity of assessment conducted by their teachers and presumably external validation of assessment was not necessary.

Wheelahan and Moodie argued that "external validation of assessments by RTOs is sporadic" currently, and suggested a staged approach where RTOs were required to "demonstrate that they validate their assessment externally" (2011a, p. 11) as a first stage. The next stage would include that "The national VET regulator consider whether Australia should introduce mandated external validation of assessment of VET qualifications undertaken independently of RTOs" (2011a, p. 11).

Mitchell and Ward's (2010) research found that assessment is a foundation skill for VET teaching.

Foundation Novices are not yet competent in that skill and must rely on mentors and experienced teachers to assist them in developing the skill of assessment. Foundation Established teachers are competent in competency-based assessment. Specialist Learning and Assessment staff held expert skills in assessment not confined only to classrooms or workplaces, but in online and flexible learning methodologies as well (Mitchell & Ward, 2010). Their research found that there were significant skills gaps in assessment and very few teachers (2%) nationally were assessed as learning and assessment specialists.

Mitchell and Ward's (2010) finding that there were very few specialists in the area of learning and assessment able to assist novice teachers with leadership in assessment, coupled with a rapidly growing VET sector, would inevitably lead to problems with ensuring that assessment was consistent nationally. The issues noted by the NQC regarding the key elements that contributed to the problem of variation in assessment are mainly factors that have implications for the skills and capability of VET teachers and the 'calibre' of the RTO. Three documents proposed a national system of external validation for assessment. This would seem to be an expensive and bureaucratic response to a valid problem that might better be resolved by capability development of the VET teaching staff.

4.3.2 Training packages

Training packages formally prescribe nationally recognised competency-based qualifications. They are subject to continuous improvement and review during the three years for which they are endorsed. Qualifications within the training package may be a Certificate I, II, III, or IV, diploma, advanced diploma, vocational graduate certificate or vocational graduate diploma. All qualifications endorsed within a particular package are registered on the National Training Information Service (NTIS). "Training Package developers must ensure each qualification leads to a distinct occupational outcome" (Guthrie, 2009, p. 12).

The Skills Australia discussion paper noted that at "the core of the VET qualifications system is the Training Package" and that "Training packages, with their emphasis on competency-based learning, play an important role in Australia's national training system and have strong support from industry" (2010, p. 37). But while the Skills Australia paper indicated the importance of training packages, this work also cited Buchanan and others who have criticised the narrow approach to competence in vocational education and training, suggesting it impinges on the quality of general education, which is transferable across industries. These writers argue that "it limits students' access to forms of knowledge that facilitate autonomous reasoning – at work and beyond" (Buchanan et al cited in Skills Australia, 2010, p. 37).

The Productivity Commission report noted that the National Quality Council had issued a Determination in late 2009 which mandated that training packages "include advice from industry on the vocational competencies required by assessors" and, in addition, be also required to provide

advice “on the types of evidence that practitioners might use to demonstrate that they are maintaining their vocational currency” (2011, p. 209). This report was also concerned to ensure that training package development kept pace with industry changes and maintained that “the profound impact of structural change on industry practices also highlights the importance of effective industry advisory arrangements, to ensure that Training Packages are suitably designed and updated” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 134).

Wheelahan and Curtin reported that some of the research respondents considered VET curriculum models, particularly training packages, to be a “challenge and a constraint” (2010, p. 30). They saw CBT as “based on narrow conceptions of education and preparation for work” and argued that teachers were restricted in developing learning strategies that “went beyond training for specific occupations” (p. 30). Other respondents argued that the problem was that teachers in the sector were not “very good at interpreting training packages or in developing appropriate assessment” (p. 30).

Wheelahan and Curtin maintained that VET training packages were sometimes controversial but, given the variety of stakeholders involved in the review and development of them, it could be expected that there would be a range of views and opinions about the content, level of qualifications and the qualifications architecture (2010, p. 30). The range of stakeholders involved in the process included Industry Skills Councils, large and small employers, educators and learners. This range of views directly relates to the parallel cultures regarding VET teaching and learning, namely, the voices of industry and education. These competing cultures will necessarily have opposing views or perspectives on most aspects of VET education including defining competency.

4.3.3 Learning in the workplace

One of the main considerations for the introduction of CBT was that workplace competencies would predominantly be delivered within workplace settings. This section analyses the four documents with regard to learning in the workplace.

The Skills Australia discussion paper claimed that there was no doubt that the VET sector had, as its main role, “preparation for work and industry determined outcomes, with a focus on competency-based learning and the primacy of workplace learning” (2010, p. 25). Although the original ideology around CBT was that competencies would be workplace-based, the majority of students are studying in an institution (2010, p. 25). One of the major reasons for this is that a significant proportion of VET students are unemployed and use VET study as a means to gain employment skills and, therefore, have no workplace to practice their skills. There is another proportion of VET students who wish to train for employment in a different field from the one they currently work in.

Despite the pre-dominance of campus-based delivery, the Skills Australia paper pointed out the advantages to business of workplace delivery:

For businesses workplace delivery is convenient and offers cost savings. There is an advantage in being able to train staff on the equipment used in the workplace. Training can be flexibly delivered and tailored to clients' needs and worker down-time reduced to a minimum (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 36).

The Skills Australia (2010) paper noted that the OECD (2009) research favoured workplace delivery and claimed it was better for acquiring the 'soft skills' of customer service and communication because it occurred through dealings with customers and colleagues. The OECD (2009) research argued that delivery in the workplace sent strong signals to the business about the value of training. However, this does not take into account those students mentioned above who are unemployed or working in a field or industry unrelated to their area of study as learning the skills they require on-the-job will not be available to them.

The Productivity Commission (2011) report agreed that, although CBT was introduced to focus on learning in the workplace, a significant percentage of students were not employed in the industry field in which they were currently studying or had gained VET qualifications for. The report noted the differences between types of VET study and employment outcomes.

Seventy-nine percent of recent VET graduates from a trade apprenticeship or traineeship and thirty-eight per cent of those from a non-trade apprenticeship or traineeship were employed in the same occupation group as that course following training. On the face of it this mismatch is a cause for concern for employers (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 120).

Wheelahan and Moodie maintained that VET's role is to ensure that students are able to access skills for jobs. They found that a common theme is that "VET must provide students with access to high quality *vocational* education that prepares them for changing workplaces and work" (2011a, p. 25). They also indicated that this is becoming more difficult because "the nature of the knowledge and skills students need for work is increasingly complex as work and society become more complex" (2011a, p. 25). Mitchell and Ward's (2010) report acknowledged that teaching in the workplace is an advanced skill characteristic of commercial specialists and advanced VET practitioners.

While the original intent was that job-role competencies would be delivered in workplace settings, in reality, this has not occurred for the majority of students and, in fact, is not practical for a significant number of either unemployed students, or those seeking to acquire skills for different jobs. Although the analysis of the documents indicated that workplace learning was indeed the preferred option, three of the documents pointed out the practical difficulties and the impossibility of applying the philosophy too rigidly.

While CBT and its components of training packages, assessment and learning in the workplace

are inextricably linked, for a significant proportion of the VET student cohort, this last component, namely, learning in the workplace, is not a possibility. This means that VET teachers are compelled to make alternative arrangements to support a system of curriculum framework that does not work for all the students.

4.4 Unique Characteristic 2: Industry role in VET sector

As detailed in the previous section, industry is significantly involved in the VET sector through the development of workplace competencies and the delivery of training using industry endorsed training packages. This section details the key ideas from the document analysis of another of the major distinguishing features of the VET sector, namely, that of industry's role in the VET sector.

Industry has considerable political influence in determining the content of training packages and the assessment criteria for each competency. Industry involvement and influence on the National Quality Council has been instrumental in any changes, or any resistance to change, to the regulatory framework.

Firms are represented – along with unions and other groups- in Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) that play a key role in shaping Training Packages. Industry organisations also contribute to other major VET advisory arrangements, including Industry Training Advisory Boards and the National Quality Council (NQC) (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. xxxiii).

As can be seen from Table 4.1, the Skills Australia discussion paper centred on the need for mechanisms to be in place “ensuring VET is not only industry led but industry connected” and that “the VET workforce is sourced in many cases from the staff of firms, but industry currency is essential for all VET practitioners” (2010, p. 62).

In contrast, the Productivity Commission report viewed industry leadership as a formal commitment noting that “both employer and employee peak bodies play a key influencing role through Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) which are not-for-profit companies recognised and funded by the Australian Government and governed by industry-led boards” (2011, p. 105). Each state and territory also had formal mechanisms for providing advice to business, or for engaging with business, to ensure sufficient numbers of trained employees were available.

The ISCs have total control of training packages delivered by VET, including criteria for assessment and the assessment tools that are used by teaching staff; control of advice to a range of peak bodies regarding workforce development; and job roles that are available and the skills needed for those roles. The ISCs also develop training products including learning materials and assessment tools.

While Wheelahan and Moodie (2010) acknowledged that industry has a leadership role in the sector, they sought to find a practical way that this role could be harnessed for the benefit of the

sector's teachers. They reported that:

There were mixed views about the extent to which Skills Councils should lead CPD (continuing professional development) in their industry fields. Some argued that the Skills Councils were not an appropriate body because their purpose was to engage with industry and they did not focus on pedagogy. (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 51).

Wheelahan and Moodie cited the example of the Industry Skills Council for the service industries which includes retail, hospitality and tourism. This Industry Skills Council had undertaken a large study of the "role of VET teachers and trainers in workforce development in their industries and how VET teachers and trainers could be supported to develop the industry and pedagogic knowledge skills they need" (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 54). From this study, Service Skills Australia (SSA) developed a quality process which endorsed facilities, trainers and assessors for teaching in this industry area. Wheelahan and Moodie (2011a) saw this as an example of industry leadership which could assist teachers to maintain vocational currency.

While the Industry Skills Councils are a formal mechanism for engagement with the VET sector, there are other ways, both formal and informal, that both industry and VET initiate to engage with each other. The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper suggested that VET should be more involved and more innovative in enterprises in the capacity of workforce development. To do this VET would need to extend the practitioner role to include services other than teaching.

A broader role for VET – particularly in developing new services for working with enterprises and supporting enterprise workforce development and innovation – will require registered training organisations and enterprises to expand their role (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 23).

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper maintained that there was an opportunity for the sector to become more engaged with enterprises as a partnership. The paper did, however, agree that improving workplace performance and productivity is not the role of the VET practitioner but primarily the responsibility of the employer, and suggested a new VET role; that of "educational consultant" (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 23).

In contrast, the Productivity Commission (2011) report detailed four formalised ways that the VET sector and industry groups currently interact, and noted that this connectedness occurs across many levels. These methods for connecting industry with VET included enterprises establishing themselves as RTOs. Secondly, Industry can be a consumer of the VET sector products by engaging students or former students of the VET sector as employees even if the firm has no other direct relationship with the sector. The Productivity Commission (2011) reported that this is one key means that employers have for influencing the VET sector, presumably by providing feedback to the VET sector about the quality of the graduates. A third formal mechanism includes industry as a client of the sector by engaging VET teachers in training their employees and purchasing training for their workforce either on-job or on-campus. Lastly, the Productivity Commission report also noted that enterprises "provide a reservoir of labour from which the VET workforce is sourced,

either permanently or temporarily” (2011, p. xxxiii).

Less formal methods of engaging with industry are the formation of partnerships between business and industry, and a RTO. Some of these arrangements are more locally based, particularly in regional areas where business and key industries are represented on boards and committees for the local RTO. There are also larger, more formal partnerships that operate nationally at the request of industry. “At the request of Dairy Australia, the National Centre for Dairy Education Australia (NCDEA) was formed in late 2005 in partnership with Goulburn Ovens TAFE to increase the industry’s involvement in training” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 108).

Wheelahan and Moodie (2010) agreed with the Productivity Commission (2011) report that industry provides labour (teachers) for the VET sector and said that the ability to use business people or industry experts as part time or casual teachers ensures that VET has access to current vocational knowledge and expertise, and the sector needed to safeguard this important method for employment of staff. Mitchell and Ward’s research found that the skills set for a Commercial Specialist teacher could be described thus:

As well as teaching and training in a workplace environment, it includes managing commercial relationships, offering consultancy services, personalising training for commercial purposes and adapting training packages for commercial purposes (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 10).

While Mitchell and Ward (2010) do not specifically refer to partnerships or engagements between VET and industry, it is obvious from the above definition that connecting with industry is critical and intrinsic to the Commercial Specialist’s role.

The reports of both Skills Australia (2010) and the Productivity Commission (2011) saw partnerships between industry and the VET sector as necessary for the delivery of competency-based training. Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) saw that one of the key partnerships between industry and VET is the strategy of using industry experts as casual teachers in the VET sector.

The major focus and expectation for employers as individual enterprises, and industry groups and sectors, is that VET will upskill existing workers and the workforce of the future. Employers have high expectations that VET will deliver graduates who are ready to work. The Skills Australia discussion paper stated that employers want a situation of “better harnessing the sector’s unique characteristics – the close connections between learning, employment, the labour market and the economy – so workplaces develop and use skills more productively” (2010, p. 7). The Productivity Commission (2011) report agreed with the Skills Australia (2010) paper claiming that industry had very high expectations that VET will deliver employees who can immediately demonstrate skills and experience relevant to their specific enterprise. “Employers expect the VET sector to deliver competent and work-ready employees, as well as contribute to generic skills in communication, organisation and technology and to foundation skills” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 87).

The Productivity Commission (2011), in citing the Australian Industry Group (AiGroup), agreed with Skills Australia (2010) that foundation skills were essential skills for all workplaces. Language, literacy and numeracy are foundation skills that underpin learning and affect productivity in the workplace and are required in all job roles and:

employers also expect VET providers to teach foundation skills to students where they do not possess them. Australian Industry Group (Ai Group) found that three quarters of employers were affected by low levels of literacy and numeracy skills amongst their workers (Productivity Commission, 2011, p 101).

The Productivity Commission reported that “employers expect the VET sector and its workforce to deliver relevant high quality education and training, leading to competent and work ready employees” (2011, p. 101). Moodie noted that “vocational education’s close relation with work is its dominant if not sole purpose in Australia” (2010, p. 16). Wheelahan and Moodie (2010) take a different perspective from both the Skills Australia (2010) and the Productivity Commission (2011) reports, preferring to see the issue from the students’ point of view. They stated that “VET must provide students with access to high quality *vocational* education that prepares them for changing workplaces and work” (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 16).

Mitchell and Ward’s (2010) report contended that Australia’s international competitiveness and, therefore, the living standards of everyone were linked to the skills of the workforce. “In turn the quality of our workforce is highly contingent upon the ability of the Australian VET sector to train a vast proportion of the nation’s current and future workers” (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 6).

4.4.1 Summarising characteristics 1 and 2

The analysis of this section demonstrates the political influence of industry groups in that industry has been able to set up an education sector that they control, and that trains both existing staff and potential employees, presumably at taxpayers’ expense. Industry has been able to maintain their power and influence over many years even though, as can be seen in Table 4.1, a significant proportion of VET learners are not employed or are studying in a different field from their work in an effort to gain employment elsewhere. The documents expressing a different perspective are those of the educationalists (Wheelahan & Moodie, and Mitchell & Ward). Wheelahan and Moodie pointed out that, in addition to controlling the content of training packages, ISCs could assist VET teachers with CPD that would enable VET teachers to maintain vocational currency. Mitchell and Ward pointed to the specialist skills of those VET teachers already consulting with industry. The implications for the sector’s teachers are that meeting the workplace training requirements of industry while maintaining a focus on quality teaching and learning for those unemployed students with LLN challenges will often be difficult.

4.5 Unique Characteristic 3: National regulatory framework

At the time the four documents were written (2010-11), the VET sector was regulated by a national framework, the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF). This framework included a set of standards for Registered Training Organisations and these standards were in place to register or re-register training organisations. One of the standards related to teaching and assessing, and specified the qualifications required by VET teachers. These standards were updated in 2015 and were signed off on by the Minister for Trade. Since that time, the VET sector business has been moved to the Education portfolio.

While the AQTF framework has been superseded by the Australian Standards Quality Authority (ASQA), which is the VET Regulator for all activities of RTOs, this document analysis was concluded before the review, and, therefore, is confined to the writings of the documents and their perceptions of the issues around the AQTF. The analysis of the documents describes the purpose of the national quality framework and the challenges inherent in the system

Training packages are nationally recognised with portable qualifications across states and territories, and also between RTOs, regardless of private or public status. For this reason, the regulatory framework is necessarily national in its mandate. Appropriate regulation underpins training delivery and assures the integrity of the qualifications. This regulation provides security and confidence for employers in the assessment of skills and qualifications of existing employees and potential employees. It also provides portability of qualifications for students. This section will describe the analysis of the four documents from the perspective of the purpose of the national quality framework. It should be noted that in 2010-11, this framework was referred to as the 'Quality Framework'. It is now more appropriate to refer to the 'National Regulatory Framework'.

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper stated that "quality in the VET sector is currently regulated under the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF)" and that the AQTF "had limited legal force as a set of guidelines and standards for registering and accrediting authorities and RTOs" (p. 51).

The Productivity Commission report said that the Australian Quality Training Framework was introduced in 2001 and that:

its role is to benchmark and validate the activities of RTOs. At the core of the AQTF are mechanisms that promote the national recognition of qualifications awarded by all providers and seek to assure the quality of VET provision. The National Quality Council (NQC) oversees quality assurance and ensures national consistency in the application of the AQTF standards for the audit and registration of RTOs (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 12).

The report noted that in order to become a RTO, training providers must meet AQTF conditions and standards, and that one of the main purposes of a quality framework was to provide students with security around the quality of the provider and the course they enrolled in.

Wheelahan and Moodie's only comment about the purpose of the national system was to say that "despite the difficulties in implementing external validation and evaluation for VET, it should be considered if it contributes to increasing national consistency and comparability, improving student outcomes and increasing the quality and integrity of the system" (2011a, p. 51). They also made the point that VET is entering a "new period with the establishment of the national VET regulator and national standards council" (2011a, p. 58).

A national system of regulation is important and necessary because it supports the principle of portability of national qualifications. There are, however, significant challenges and difficulties involved with implementing such a national system.

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper claimed that ensuring quality was very challenging because of the size and diversity of the VET sector, and that there were "significant issues affecting quality in the VET sector [and these issues] include inconsistent regulation, variable assessment practices and insufficient transparency in the system" (2010, p. 50). As mentioned above, they also noted the limited legal power of the AQTF, and commented on the "inconsistent interpretation and auditing of the AQTF across state and territory jurisdictions and transparency in the outcomes of auditing" (2010, p. 51).

The Productivity Commission report saw that the amendments to AQTF to strengthen the regulatory requirements underpinning the VET sector in general were necessary to correct "the emergence of problems in the international education sector" (2011, p. 78).

Wheelahan and Moodie maintained that the VET sector's "increasing diversity makes ensuring quality and evaluating outcomes a challenge" (2011a, p. 58). They also noted a major limitation was that there were no Standards for VET teachers in the AQTF standards. They suggested that this was a major area of omission and should be rectified.

Mitchell and Ward (2010) noted that one of the five skills for foundation practice is that of course organisation and student management. This skills' set is about managing the audit requirements for AQTF audits and includes:

such skills as the ability to apply continuous improvement to the management and delivery of VET courses, to engage stakeholders in the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the course, to ensure that all students receive necessary training assessment and support services and the ability to ensure that all training and assessment materials meet the requirements of the relevant training package or accredited course (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 9)

It is indeed understandable that the rapid growth of the VET sector, from approximately 100 TAFE Institutes nationally to about five thousand RTOs, both public and publicly funded privately run organisations, would present challenges in many arenas. Some of these challenges would include the practicalities of communicating to such a large number in a timely manner, implementing a

consistent set of regulations and correcting variable assessment practices. All of these issues have contributed to a system that has had major limitations. This has engendered a 'culture of compliance' with audit requirements. Add to this the fact that there were inconsistencies in practice of the auditors and it is little wonder that there have been issues with quality of teaching and learning. Strengthening the regulation of VET only contributes to the culture of compliance with audit requirements. Many of the problems that VET has faced have been as much about practitioner skills as they about stronger regulations. Variable assessments were mentioned as a foundation to some of the problems in quality assurance. This can only be rectified by appropriate capability development for teachers and not by adding to the burden at audit time.

4.6 Unique Characteristic 4: Diversity of learners

Analysis of the documents regarding VET learners will be considered under the headings of, firstly, the unique characteristics of the VET learner cohort and, secondly, the important issue of the requirement for language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills needed by this learner cohort. Learner expectations of VET, whether these expectations are employment related skills or opportunities for further study, are also analysed.

This section analyses the different groups of students who make up the VET student cohort and describes the diversity of the student cohort, including diversity of age, employment status, ethnicity and previous educational outcomes.

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper pointed out that there are many 'disadvantaged' learners studying in VET programs.

These learners will include new entrants to the workforce, mature workers seeking to upgrade their skills in line with changing technology and work practices and people who are marginalised in the labour market and need to develop their foundation skills (including language, literacy and numeracy) in order to participate more fully. (Skills Australia, 2010,p.59).

The Productivity Commission report also noted the diversity of the student profile. "The student population enrolled in the publicly-funded VET system ranges from young students from school and post-secondary education, through to 25 to 44 year olds (the largest cohort), as well as 45 to 64 year olds and older" (2011, p. 21). The report also claimed that, in 2009, eighty-six per cent of VET students were part time. Approximately 20% were studying as an apprentice or trainee and 75% of VET students had been employed at the start of their course (Productivity Commission, 2011).

The Productivity Commission reported that as the sector pursues political agendas "to improve rates of educational attainment, increase the provision of foundation LLN skills and broaden its accessibility through more flexible modes of delivery, the sector's student population will become

increasingly diverse” (2011). This diversity will manifest itself in the various groups within the student population. The report detailed a number of categories of VET learners thus:

The VET sector overall will need to cater for a growing number of students with the following characteristics:

- Students enrolled in higher-level qualifications
- ‘second chance’ learners who have not succeeded in secondary school but who undertake school curricula as adult learners
- Students from low socio-economic backgrounds who tend to experience poorer rates of educational attainment and employment outcomes
- Migrants and students from non-English speaking backgrounds
- Indigenous students, many of whom are likely to have had limited prior school education,
- Students from remote areas who might have had poorer prior learning and training opportunities (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 144).

Wheeler and Moodie maintained that “VET will be required to teach a much wider range of students than ever before” (2011a, p. 16). They saw the diversity of the student cohort from the perspective of the skills teachers require for quality teaching and learning. The VET sector was responsible for a wide range of programs and this wide-ranging diversity has implications for the teaching skills and qualifications for teaching staff.

VET learners have included many who come from low socio-economic backgrounds or other forms of disadvantage. The NCVET glossary of terms endorsed for the VET sector defines equity as “A policy or set of strategies that ensure that vocational education and training (VET) is responsive to the needs of all members of the community”. For the purposes of this paper, equity groups include learners who are unemployed, learners with low levels of LLN, migrants, refugees, rural and regional students, women, indigenous students, and any others who have been disadvantaged in their educational outcomes.

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper maintained that poor educational outcomes and low levels of language, literacy and numeracy had implications for employment outcomes and living standards, and that VET had a responsibility to those who find themselves in this predicament.

Learners who experience disadvantage are those who achieve poor outcomes from learning and, as a result, have poor employment opportunities. They may experience multiple features of disadvantage: low language, literacy and numeracy skills; low income; and disability or mental illness. They may live in remote communities, or communities with concentrations of low socio-economic status or they may be offenders in juvenile justice centres or correctional facilities. They may be Indigenous Australians or new arrivals and refugees (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 28)

The issue of learners who experience disadvantage is not just a problem for individual learners but

will impact on the Australian Government's target of workforce participation. Achieving a workforce participation target of 69% by 2025 will require an increased engagement with learners experiencing disadvantage to provide the skills they need to participate in the workforce. The Skills Australia discussion paper noted that "VET providers need to do far more than just teach and assess. Student support strategies such as mentoring and 'individual learning plans' may need to become the norm for many learners in VET" (2010, p. 12).

The Productivity Commission report maintained that, "learners from backgrounds associated with disadvantage are the norm in the VET sector. It is part of the VET mandate to assist such students" (2011, p. 225). In the NSW Government submission to the Commission, it was pointed out that the Technical and Further Education Commission Act 1990 (NSW):

requires TAFE NSW to:... provide educationally or vocationally disadvantaged groups (such as women, Aboriginal people, persons of non-English speaking background, persons with disabilities and persons in rural areas) with access to technical and further education services, including a range of appropriate specialised services (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 225).

The Productivity Commission report went so far as to say that the VET sector is "designed to deliver education to students who have not achieved the standards expected in the school system or cannot be adequately accommodated by that system" (2011, p. 143).

Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) saw this issue in terms of national workforce development and the need to meet the agenda of the changing economy. In order to meet the requirements of the economy, they stated that VET would have to have a more client-based focus that met the needs of a changed student group.

COAG's qualification targets, the need to increase workforce participation to offset the aging population and the need for higher productivity in the workforce to maintain living standards have renewed and increased demands on VET to meet the needs of disadvantaged students and those in the community without foundation skills (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 15).

Mitchell and Ward's (2010) research found that one of the skills required for foundation practice was Foundation Learning Facilitation and that a sub-set of this skills set was competency to deliver "learning among equity groups" (2010, p. 9). Acknowledging that a specific set of teaching skills is required for educating students from equity groups is an important message to the sector.

Three of the documents analysed commented on the unique nature and diversity of VET learners. Wheelahan and Moodie noted that the VET sector now teaches VET in Schools at one end of the continuum and "higher education qualifications at the other end" (2011b, p. 8). Skills Australia reported that "VET learners have a variety of previous experiences, skills levels and motivations for learning" (2010, p. 26). The Productivity Commission report stated that "in addition to catering to the skill needs of industry, the VET sector serves an important role in catering to the education

needs of students who have a higher potential for disadvantage or marginalisation within the broader education system” (2011, p. 145).

The Productivity Commission (2011) and Skills Australia (2010) reports have pointed out that part of the VET teachers’ role is to teach a diverse group of students, many of whom meet more than one criteria for disadvantage. Both reports also maintained that such a diverse group of disadvantaged students will require support and assistance in order to be successfully integrated into the workforce. Many ‘second chance’ learners have little confidence in their ability to be successful students and this is a challenge for teaching staff. Ensuring that VET teachers have the skills and knowledge to assist disadvantaged learners to become successful is an important addition to teacher capability development.

The topic of language, literacy and numeracy skills was described previously as part of industry’s expectations of the VET system. This section describes what the documents reported were VET students’ expectations of the VET system in this regard. The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper clarified that VET has a responsibility to ensure that students not only have work-related skills, but that those students with low LLN skills are assisted to improve their skills and that this is one of VET’s core responsibilities.

The Productivity Commission (2011) report maintained that students should expect that VET teachers would assist with the development of LLN skills where needed. This was a necessary component of VET teaching because it was a necessary foundation for employment. The Productivity Commission report claimed that “it is reasonable to assume that these students also expect the VET sector and its workforce to provide them with adequate language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) support, should they need it” (2011, p. 91).

Wheelahan and Moodie (2011a) argued that beyond the usual employment, personal development and further study expectations for studying VET courses or qualifications, it was reasonable to assume that VET students also expected the VET sector and its workforce to provide them with adequate language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) support should they need it. This report also argued that the challenges of teaching LLN skills required teachers with high level teaching skills. Mitchell and Ward’s (2010) research pointed to the implications for VET teachers in their description of the foundation skills required for VET teaching.

The picture that emerges from the analysis of the various and disparate groups of VET learners is one of complexity of educational backgrounds and levels of prior educational achievement. The expectation that VET teachers will be able to assess LLN gaps in learners’ skills sets implies that RTOs will provide the additional services that are required and resource these services. The implication for teacher skills is also an issue that will need extra resourcing and capability development.

The Productivity Commission pointed out that these disparate learner groups:

“are a teaching challenge for the VET workforce. To achieve satisfactory outcomes, trainers and assessors must be sensitive to the distinctive needs of individuals and also the setting in which the teaching is taking place” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 4).

The document analysis also described learner expectations of VET and gave the major reasons for undertaking VET courses. Employment was the first expectation of learners. The Productivity Commission (2011) maintained that satisfaction with VET was high because of employment outcomes. Skills Australia (2010), however, argued that different approaches to teaching and learning may be needed for more successful outcomes, while Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) stated that there was a need for change in teachers' capability because work was more complex and likely to become even more so.

The Skills Australia (2010), Productivity Commission (2011) and Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) reports agreed that VET was effective in providing learners with the skills for employment opportunities or a pathway to higher education. Skills Australia (2010) pointed out that the transition from VET study to higher education is a challenge, and Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) contended that VET provided effective pathways for further study. The Productivity Commission (2011) report argued that, although VET study enabled learners to engage with formal higher education, VET was a destination in its own right.

4.7 Conclusion

This Chapter has analysed four key documents to determine the key characteristics of VET education and the implications for the acquisition and development of VET teacher skills. The key characteristics of VET sector education are that the sector:

- Operates under a competency-based training and assessment framework;
- Is underpinned by industry control and leadership, and an expectation by industry of engagement with the sector;
- Is governed by a national regulatory framework; and
- Serves diverse learners and many of them, having not experienced success in prior educational experiences, are seeking education, primarily to leverage their employment opportunities.

Each of these key characteristics of VET education has implications for teacher capability required to provide VET education. The following chapter will use the same four key documents to detail a second generation of analysis with the intent of developing teachers' pedagogical capability.

CHAPTER 5 DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

5.1 Skills and knowledge for VET teachers

This Chapter analyses the same four documents to examine the implications from the uniqueness of VET education for teachers' skills and the development of those skills. This Chapter answers the question:

- What are the skills that VET teachers need to teach effectively?

This question is a component of the first main research question: What are the unique characteristics of VET teaching that should be the focus of a professional learning program for VET teachers to enable them to progress from novice to advanced teaching?

Chapter 4 dealt with each document and described the findings of the document analysis regarding the unique characteristics of the VET sector, and the nature of the VET learner cohort and their particular educational needs. These factors have implications for the capability of VET teachers and should guide the skills development program provided for them. The documents were analysed to ascertain the themes on the topic of teacher skills, and this chapter details the results of a meta-analysis of the four documents regarding the necessary skills and knowledge of VET teachers. The following issues emerged:

- The contested nature of VET teacher identity
- VET teachers are 'dual professionals'
- Teaching skills and qualifications
 - Certificate IV in TAE (Training Assessment and Education)
- Vocational skills and qualifications
- The provision of professional development for teachers.

Table 5.1 summarises the key concepts from the documents regarding the role, skills, knowledge and qualifications for VET teachers.

Table 5.1 : Summary of key concepts from the documents: VET Teachers

Characteristics	Skills Australia Discussion Paper (2010)	Productivity Commission Report (2011)	Quality of VET teaching research (Wheelahan & Moodie) (2011)	VET capability report (Mitchell & Ward) (2010)
Identity of VET teacher; teacher or trainer?	VET teachers should have an expanded role, that of workplace consultant, which goes beyond VET teaching. RTOs may need new employees or develop partnerships for this role.	Teachers are a diverse group from full time teacher to industry expert. Lack of data regarding various groups of teachers.	Many terms used to denote VET teacher. Structure of workforce should be re-considered to accommodate professionalisation and diversity.	
Dual professional	Key issues relate to industry currency and a lack of focus on pedagogy. Dual nature should be part of initial training for role and ongoing PD.	VET teachers need to be both industry-current and have sound pedagogical skills.	VET teachers are both current in industry capability and pedagogy. Need for more research on VET pedagogy.	
Teaching skills and qualifications	VET teachers will teach a more diverse group of students in future, meeting these needs will require creative teaching and learning strategies. Linked quality teaching and learning to teacher skills.	Need for enhanced skills for teachers. Shift to higher level qualifications in broader workforce will impact on VET teachers' skills; may privilege teaching skills over technical skills. Some of the tasks for VET teachers are common to teachers in other sectors. The rapid expansion of sector has left penetration of formally acquired educational qualifications lagging.	Teachers/trainers need higher level qualifications as they progress. Need to professionalise further. Strong advocate of higher level qualifications in pedagogy. Will need higher level teaching skills to overcome the LLN deficit in VET learner cohort. May need higher level teaching skills in view of higher qualifications requirements of VET learner cohort.	Research found there were nine skills sets for teachers; From these skills, Model of VET practice developed.

Certificate IV in TAE	Questioned whether the Certificate IV in TAE was adequate for role. Learner cohort is challenging and therefore VET teachers need high level skills.	Is an appropriate entry-level qualification providing it is delivered well. Existence of unqualified or underqualified teachers is due to quality standards. Described 'practicum' as essential for development.	Presented a comprehensive list of basic skills required in order for entry-level teachers to make a start on career as VET teacher. Next review of Certificate IV in TAE should include more focus on teaching pedagogy, learning styles, diversity and include practicum.	
Industry currency	No available evidence about how the standard regarding industry currency is measured or implemented.	Casualisation of VET workforce partly in response to need for industry currency and close partnerships with industry. Industry currency is ill-defined and difficult to measure.	Respondents placed great importance on this issue. Working in industry could result in further PD for other teachers. Standard needs to be raised for effective teaching.	
Continuing professional development	Need to update industry knowledge and educational expertise, especially in assessment. Need to incorporate 'new' skills, LLN and skills to assist disaffected and disengaged students.	Capability gaps need to be assisted including delivery of training to disadvantaged students, RPL and workplace delivery. Lack of evidence-based approach to PD.	Current PD is focused too narrowly on trainers' generic capabilities, events-based rather than sustained program. LLN skills should be incorporated into specialist area. PD is a challenge; may need to further develop 'master practitioner'.	Teachers work in dynamic environments which require support to keep industry skills and teaching skills up to date. Current PD opportunities are inadequate. Programs for novices but paucity of programs for advanced skills teachers.

5.2 VET teacher identity: Teacher or trainer?

VET teachers, trainers and assessors are a very diverse group. They fulfil a multiplicity of roles and work in many different contexts. Some work exclusively on campus while others work exclusively in workplaces. There are others still who work in a combination of contexts. Many are part-time in their teaching commitments and are employed in industry and enterprises for the remainder of their working week. There are full time VET practitioners who both teach and assess, who develop courses and assess recognition of prior learning, and there are industry-based assessors, or industry experts who provide their expertise, on a part-time basis, either within the enterprise or on campus, occasionally, or on a temporary basis (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a).

Highlighting the range of roles and titles of VET practitioners, Wheelahan & Moodie (2011a) noted that the:

“terms ‘teacher’ and ‘trainer’ have been used in the report to include all of the following:

- Teachers
- Trainers
- Lecturers
- Tutors
- Assessors
- Workplace assessors and/or trainers
- VET practitioners
- VET professionals who teach, train, instruct
- or assess
- VET workplace consultants
- Vocational educators
- Sessional, casual, contract and permanent staff
- Those who develop courses and modules and learning and assessment materials (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 19).

The following section details the document analysis with regard to the contested identity of the VET teacher.

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper envisaged an expanded role for VET practitioners to address the goal of increasing workforce participation, skills deepening and workplace productivity. This broader role has a number of dimensions for professional practice in the future. A broader mandate for VET practitioners would require cultural change in VET professional practice. This cultural change goes beyond the traditional boundaries of pedagogy to require the development of entrepreneurial skills among VET workers, which includes working proactively with employers and others to understand industry needs and customise appropriate services. To achieve this change, Skills Australia (2010) reported that VET employers may need to bring in new staff, significantly upskill their existing staff or establish new professional connections with other experts.

The Productivity Commission report agreed that VET teachers are a diverse group. “They range from ongoing, full time VET practitioners who deliver training and assessment, [are responsible] for

course development, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) and Recognition of Current Competency (RCC), to industry experts who provide specific training under supervision, generally on an occasional or temporary basis” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. xxxvii).

The Productivity Commission report identified that there was a lack of data regarding the various groups of teachers in the VET sector. “In practice industry experts are likely to be difficult to locate within most data collections because VET training is not their main job” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 36). This lack of data contributes to a lack of clarity concerning the relative importance of different roles and therefore skills sets required.

Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) made the point that:

the structure of the VET teaching profession needs to be reconsidered to, on the one hand, accommodate requirements for the increasing professionalisation of the VET teaching workforce; and, on the other hand, the diversity of the VET sector and diversity of teachers. Different categories of teaching imply different levels of responsibility and qualifications (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 24).

Wheelahan and Curtin found that the “notion of teachers and teaching contrasted to trainers and training was controversial” (2010, p. 22). Their report has articulated a tension between training and teaching. Some respondents to the research questions objected to the term teacher because they felt it detracted from a workplace focus. There were others, however, who insisted that what they did in VET was teaching in contrast to training which they regarded as minimalist. “The overwhelming emphasis was on teaching and teachers” (Wheelahan & Curtin, 2010, p. 22). They pointed out that teachers are involved in several levels in delivering training for the VET sector and that the different purposes of training determine the required role of the teacher. The levels include teaching that assists students to develop general vocational skills that may be applied across many employment opportunities, to skills and knowledge for a particular industry sector and then more particular employment capabilities for a specific enterprise.

Wheelahan & Curtin (2010) found that these:

differences in emphasis are to do with the purposes of teaching. Different models of teaching emerge, which include ensuring that students develop the:

- knowledge, skills, attributes and competencies they need for their working life and their particular occupation and the capacity to engage in lifelong learning, further study and in their communities;
- knowledge, skills, attributes and competencies for their working life in particular industries;
- skills and competencies to work in a particular job; and
- skills and competencies for the particular enterprise in which they work (Wheelahan & Curtin, 2010, p. 23).

While Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) argued that the many different terms for VET teachers and trainers related to the teaching task, the analysis concluded that the sector needed to rethink the structure of the VET teaching profession and accommodate increasing professionalisation by supporting different qualifications and skills for the varying roles.

The Mitchell and Ward (2010) report focused on the skills of VET practitioners and the respondents to their research did not differentiate between trainers or teachers. Their research provided a model of the continuum of teaching skills from novice practice to advanced levels of capability and practice.

The contested identity of the teacher/trainer is a key factor in establishing a minimalist approach to teacher skills and qualifications. As pointed out previously, using the skills set required for trainers and workplace assessors as the required skills for all VET teachers and trainers has led to a diminished appreciation of the skills required for teachers. This could be overcome by implementing a system-wide policy similar to that of Germany and some other European countries. The German system differentiates between VET teachers in VET institutions and workplace trainers (Wheelahan, 2010, cited in Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 448). The Productivity Commission (2011) report cited Coort et al (2004) when explaining that:

in almost all EU countries to qualify as a teacher of vocational education and training, it is necessary to have a higher education degree followed by teacher training at national level. In some cases, the higher education degree can be replaced by a nationally recognised vocational qualification (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 448).

In the United Kingdom, which has a large and diverse system (over 10,000 providers), there are some differences between the four countries which make up the UK. The English system, which is responsible for the majority of VET delivery, is in “many ways similar to that in Australia” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 441). One major difference is the role of teachers. “VET teachers (sometimes called ‘lecturers’ within Further Education Colleges) are regarded as those working in schools and colleges, whereas trainers are employed mainly in a work-based setting” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 441). These VET lecturers are required to register with the Institute for Learning which is an incorporated independent professional body and are required to obtain, within one year of commencement, a qualification for entry level teachers and, within five years of commencement, obtain full registration which includes mandated qualifications (Productivity Commission, 2011). “The UK system has moved from a system of relatively unregulated teacher standards to much stricter regulatory requirements related to teacher quality” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 441). This followed many complaints about teacher quality as part of the education regulator’s reviews.

The VET system in Australia has certainly had poor reviews, which have been mostly in the press, but are also visible on the ASQA website. While a significant number of RTOs have had their registration revoked, there is still a major gap in the standards with no specific standards for VET teachers. As described in Chapter 4, the sector is industry-led and industry occupied many of the key positions on the National Quality Council (superseded by the National Skills Standards Council). Industry also dominates in the Industry Skills Councils during the period of research for this study. One can question why there is no imperative to have standards for VET teachers,

which might include mandated qualifications similar to the situation in the UK and Germany.

Despite the contested nature of the teaching role and the nature of the complex educational issues that the diverse range of learners raises, VET teachers have a low level of mandated minimum qualifications when compared with the Australian school sector or many of the international equivalent VET providers. The same comment should be made about the need to gain industry related qualifications, as made above, regarding educational qualifications of VET teaching. That is, while the Government's espoused agenda is to raise the qualification level of the Australian workforce, it remains an anomaly that a similar agenda does not appear to apply to VET teaching employees of RTOs. This is particularly problematic in an environment where the Australian Government agenda is to increase the number of employees who are credentialed, and also to raise the level of qualifications held by the Australian workforce generally.

The implications from the analysis of the documents regarding the identity of VET teaching is to acknowledge the many different roles that teachers and trainers currently play in the sector. It follows from this fact that there will need to be a range of skills and qualifications required to perform these various roles. Since the sector does not have data to quantify or distinguish the roles, it is impossible to delineate the skills and qualifications required or the professional learning required to support performance in these roles. Data regarding the various roles for teachers and trainers in VET need to be collected in order to inform a restructure of the VET teaching workforce with a view to matching this workforce with the appropriate qualifications.

5.3 Dual professional

The dual nature of the VET teaching profession is embedded in the National Standards for RTOs. The Standards stipulate that training is delivered by trainers who have:

- Vocational competencies at least to the level being delivered and assessed;
- Current industry skills relevant to the training and assessment being provided; and
- Current knowledge and skills in vocational training and learning that informs their training and assessment (National Skills Standards Council, 2013, p. 16).

All Registered Training Organisations must comply with this standard in order to be registered and to maintain registration. This section details the document analysis with regard to the dual professional nature of VET teaching.

The Skills Australia discussion paper suggested that there needed to be “a renewed focus on quality teaching and learning across the VET sector” (2010, p. 60). The research showed that:

Key issues raised to date in consultations and in the literature, relate to matters of industry currency, an apparent lack of focus on VET pedagogy, the standard of initial teacher training and the need for continuing professional development and performance development (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 60).

The Skills Australia paper indicated that this dual nature of the VET teacher needed to be reflected in the initial training and the ongoing professional development of the teachers. The report cited the observation of the “UK Commission for Employment and Skills [that] the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers” (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 60).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report argued that “VET trainers and assessors are required to be ‘dual professionals’, having both industry currency and educational capabilities” (2011, p. xxx). The report also noted that about half the VET workforce was involved in teaching and that these staff were ‘dual professionals’ and were thus able “to operate in both educational and industry environments. Importantly, their teaching must be based on current industry practices and, hence, meet the needs of those firms that employ their students” (2011, p. xxxv). Hence, skills for VET teachers have been acknowledged as a key factor for consideration in the policy framework of developing higher-level skills and qualifications that contribute to the national economy.

The Productivity Commission (2011) report claimed that these ‘dual professionals’ have:

a range of capabilities variously recognised in either the education or industry spheres. In addition to their educational capabilities, these professionals are expected, if not required, to have strong industry currency — that is, to be in touch with the day-to-day practices, solutions and challenges of industry work. A close relationship with industry is an intrinsic quality of good VET trainers and assessors. It enhances the relevance and value of the competencies that they impart to their students. Moreover, by bridging the gap between education and industry, these trainers and assessors can facilitate the successful integration of their students into the labour force (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 3).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report’s requirements, as outlined in the above quote, are challenging and would require a customised professional development program to enable industry experts to become ‘dual professionals’. Many industry experts who are employed in the VET sector, and who initially need to focus their attention on developing pedagogical skills, become out of touch with their industry sector unless they have professional development plans that include maintenance of vocational currency.

Wheelahan and Moodie agreed that VET teachers were dual professionals, requiring both vocational skills and pedagogic skills and knowledge. They stated that:

the key purpose of the Options paper was to enhance the vocational focus of VET teaching and training and to deepen VET teachers’ and trainers’ pedagogic and industry knowledge. There is broad consensus (with some exceptions) that teachers and trainers need both high level teaching and training skills and high level industry knowledge with the capacity to ensure both remain current (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011b).

Wheelahan and Curtin (2010) also acknowledged that the dual nature of the role was demanding. “A key challenge is to help VET teachers develop a dual identity as an industry /discipline expert and an expert teacher” (Wheelahan & Curtin, 2010, p. 7). Wheelahan and Moodie suggested that Industry Skills Councils could be more involved in assisting VET practitioners to maintain industry currency. Furthermore, Wheelahan and Curtin (2010) maintained that there were “tensions around

models of VET teaching. Theories of teaching and learning and pedagogy in VET have not been subject to extensive critique and research, particularly when compared to schools and higher education” (2010, p. 8). They cited the “Hangzhou Declaration (2004) which emphasised the importance of scholarship and research in improving TVET (Technical and vocational education and training) pedagogy in vocational disciplines” (2010, p. 8).

Wheelahan and Curtin (2010) argued for more research on pedagogy in VET or a specific VET pedagogy. They contended that there was not as much research on teaching and learning in VET compared with other educational sectors. They stated that this was not a problem specific to Australia and referenced the UK Skills Commission which had argued that there was insufficient research on VET pedagogy and that “the growth of vocational and applied curricula – and the related situated and experiential learning- necessitates that a new strategic focus be placed on vocational pedagogy” (Wheelahan & Curtin, 2010, p. 53).

Mitchell and Ward’s (2010) report makes no mention of the dual nature of the VET practitioner. The focus is on the teaching skills of the VET practitioner role. However, a subsequent research project undertaken by Mitchell (2010) concerning the strategies VET teachers use to maintain industry currency is cited by the Productivity Commission (2011).

While the document analysis in this section demonstrated degrees of agreement, the notion of research in a “VET pedagogy” (Wheelahan & Moodie 2011) was a point of difference. Any study of a particular pedagogy applicable to VET teaching would need to invest in understanding the models of good teaching already in practice in VET programs. This study should also take account of the differences between a pedagogy for the teachers in different industry sectors. While there are fundamentals that are common, there are differences between, for example, VET teaching in the agriculture sector and the aged care sector. This is not unlike methodologies for mathematics as distinct from methodologies for history teaching in the high school sector.

5.4 Teaching skills knowledge and qualifications

This section deals with the findings of the document analysis regarding teaching skills and qualifications, and is followed by consideration of the place of the Certificate IV in TAE in developing base-level teaching skills.

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper envisaged an “expanded role for VET practitioners to address the goal of increasing workforce participation, skills deepening and workplace productivity. This broader role has a number of dimensions for professional practice in the future” (Skills Australia, 2010, p.xxx). Skills Australia, while not specifying any qualifications that might be required for VET teaching did, however, note that “meeting the needs and learning styles of such a diverse group will require a VET workforce that is capable of using creative teaching and learning

strategies to support learners whose needs may challenge traditional ways of teaching and learning” (2010, p. 59).

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper also linked quality teaching and learning to teacher skills. It stated that:

Lifting the quality of VET outcomes goes beyond issues of compliance to the skills of VET practitioners. Consideration is needed of the essential requirements for professional practice, as well as the type of mechanisms that will better support ongoing professional development, leadership and excellence (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 59).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report indicated that the Joint TAFE Associations who were participants in their research, said there was a need:

for enhanced skills among trainers and assessors ... The pressure on TAFE (and vocational education) to ‘fix’ broad social and economic problems and the obligation to respond to public policy goals/settings ... requires more flexible and adaptive teachers with a broad range of inclusive teaching skills in addition to specific content knowledge and industry experience (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 227).

Another issue was the move to deliver more qualifications at the higher level; this was seen as an issue that would impact on teaching skills requirements. The Joint TAFE Associations submission to the Productivity Commission research maintained that:

the trend towards higher level qualifications will have an impact on the entry level qualifications of VET practitioners and on their continuing professional development ... A shift to higher level qualifications may also bring with it a move to emphasise teaching skills over technical skills; and with more enterprise-based delivery the technical expertise may largely be sourced from the workplace (particularly in relation to new or emerging industries/technologies) with the VET practitioner providing their specialist skills in education and training (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 234).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report noted the submission from the Minerals Council of Australia which argued that:

the demand for higher level qualifications will drive a need for higher level qualifications within the VET workforce. Serious consideration will need to be given to whether a Certificate IV level minimum qualification is adequate to provide a professional workforce with the capacity to deliver higher level qualifications that meet the needs of industry (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 234).

Wheelahan and Moodie reported that the respondents to their research strongly supported “requiring teachers/trainers to undertake higher level qualifications as they progressed” (2011a, p. 41). They maintained that “if the sector was to fulfil the demands made upon it, it will need to professionalise further and provide flexible pathways for industry experts to enter VET” (2011a, p. 41). With regard to qualifications in teaching they were of the view that:

qualifications are a proxy for knowledge and skills; that's why Australia wants to increase the proportion of Australians with post-school qualifications and higher level qualifications. It is difficult to argue that the qualifications of the workforce must rise, without at the same time increasing the qualifications of the core teaching and training workforce (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 41).

The fact that the qualifications for VET teaching have not been substantially changed would seem to indicate a view that teaching in VET requires a limited pedagogic qualification because the focus is on industry experience and knowledge. Wheelahan and Moodie countered this by saying that:

Teaching and training is complex. It requires teachers and trainers to demonstrate high levels of autonomy, the capacity to solve problems in complex situations and the knowledge and skills needed to understand how people learn and how to teach (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 41).

They strongly advocated for higher level teaching skills and qualifications for VET teachers. The AQF descriptors for qualifications at Levels 4, 5, 6 and 7 all describe the relevant knowledge, skills and applications for that AQF level of skills and knowledge. Wheelahan and Moodie noted that it:

is highly improbable that a core VET workforce with full responsibility for teaching, training and assessing that does not have qualifications at higher levels than the Certificate IV will be able to achieve VET's goals, which will be increasingly characterised by innovation, diversity and complexity (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 42).

While the complexity and diversity of teaching roles in VET is acknowledged, the issue of teaching skills and qualifications is problematic. Mitchell and Ward's (2010) national online survey with over two thousand respondents in 2009 found there was no inclusive, coherent model of VET professional practice. Various accredited training programs showed some "understanding in the sector of the types of skills sets that comprise VET professional practice" (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 8). It was concluded, however, that:

there is no clear model of how these skills sets and qualifications come together to enable VET trainers and assessors to perform their full range of professional duties. This lack of an overarching model further means that there is no comprehensive understanding in the sector of how VET trainers and assessors transition from basic or foundation level to advanced practice (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 8).

Mitchell and Ward's (2010) report gave the sector information about the way VET practitioners viewed their practice and the skills the practitioners believed were pivotal to engaging in quality teaching practices. Furthermore, the analysis of the research results clearly showed the potential progression of skills as VET teachers advanced from novice teacher to experienced practice. The following table indicates a Model of VET practice derived from the statistical analysis of the survey data incorporating the stages of progression for VET teachers, and the skills required at the various stages of personal development. There are three levels of practice and the skills required for each level are cumulative.

Mitchell and Ward suggested that the most common way novice teachers gain the foundation skills

was by completing the requirements of the Certificate IV in TAE and working under supervision of an experienced teacher colleague, and that “the quality of advanced practice is to a large extent contingent upon the quality of foundation practice” (2010, p. 11).

Table 5.2: JMA model of VET practice

Foundation Practice		Skills Sets
Novice	Not yet proficient in five foundation skills sets	
Established	Proficient in foundation skills sets	Learning styles Learning Theories Foundation Learning facilitation Foundation Assessment Course organisation and student management
Specialist Practice		
Commercial	Foundation skills sets plus additional specialist skills sets	Commercial skills including customising training for workplace learning Managing training and industry relationships Sales of VET products
Learning and Assessment	Foundation skills sets plus additional specialist skills sets	Advanced learning facilitation and assessment skills including flexible delivery, off-shore delivery, online delivery.
Advanced VET Practitioner		Competent in all skills sets.

Source: Mitchell & Ward, 2010, pp. 10-11.

Mitchell and Ward found that VET teaching practice comprised nine skills sets. Five of these were foundation skills sets, two were specialist skills sets, and two others, namely, generic skills and educational research, underpin both foundation and advanced practice (2010, p. 10). These skill sets are summarised in the following Table 5.3.

Table 5.3: VET teaching skills

Foundation Skills Sets

1. Learning theories — knowledge that underpins learning, including knowledge of VET pedagogy and andragogy, theories of cognitive, behavioural and experiential learning and learning styles and preferences.
2. Learning styles — a skill set that includes the ability to take into account visual, auditory and kinesthetic learners when teaching/training.
3. Foundation learning facilitation — skills in facilitating individual, group, workplace and equity group learning.
4. Foundation assessment skills — including skills in summative, formative, diagnostic and Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) assessment, the ability to perform such assessments within the context of the classroom and the workplace.
5. Course organisation and student management — including skills such as the ability to: apply continuous improvement to the management and delivery of VET courses; engage stakeholders in the delivery, monitoring and evaluation of courses; ensure that all students receive necessary training and support services; and ensure that all training and assessment materials meet the requirements of the relevant training package or accredited course.

Advanced skill sets

6. Advanced learning facilitation and assessment skills — including skills in facilitating distance- and off-shore learning and online assessment and the ability to facilitate flexible learning.
7. Commercial skills — skills in conducting commercial educational activity, including teaching and training in a workplace environment, managing commercial relationships, offering consultancy services, personalising training for commercial customers and adapting training packages for commercial purposes.

Supporting skill sets

8. Generic skills — including negotiation, communication, decision making and critical thinking skills, along with ethical standards.
9. Educational research — covering skills in the collection and analysis of data to inform educational quality and research skills for the purpose of expanding understanding of VET educational issues.

Source: Mitchell & Ward, 2010, pp. 9-10.

Mitchell and Ward's research commented on the relationship between foundation skills and advanced skills:

Intuitively, one would assume that the progression from foundation to advanced practice is a relatively seamless process. Unfortunately, data collected through the survey does not indicate how this transition is undertaken (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 25).

Mitchell and Ward suggest that this transition is facilitated in two ways: "firstly, through on-the-job

learning and secondly, through various types of formal professional development opportunities” (2010, p. 25). Although their report was not definitive in how a VET teacher transitions from foundation to advanced practice, the Model of VET Practice did advance “a very good understanding of the relationship between foundation and advanced practices, as well as an understanding of the specific skills that might assist in this transition” (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 25). Another finding from the Mitchell and Ward (2010) report related to the paucity of professional development programs available to advanced practitioners in contrast to the emphasis on the Certificate IV in TAE for novices.

Some of the key findings from this section relate to higher level skills and qualifications of the general workforce, and the fact that this impacts on the need for higher level skills and qualifications for VET teachers. The Productivity Commission (2011) claim that this may mean that teaching skills will need to be privileged above vocational skills would imply a radical change of focus in the sector.

5.5 Certificate IV in Training Assessment and Education

This section details the document analysis with regard to the place of the Certificate IV in TAE in VET teacher development because of the place this qualification has in VET compliance for registration of RTOs. The Certificate IV in TAE is the mandated qualification for all VET teachers. No state, however, makes this a condition of employment as a VET teacher. The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper cited the minimum requirements of the AQTF for teachers’ qualifications or demonstrated competencies. They questioned whether the Certificate IV level qualification was adequate for the role, and said that they were aware of the view that it may be adequate as an entry level qualification or for trainers in the workplace, “but inadequate for full-time, continuing teachers” (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 60). The concern was that:

Given that VET practitioners deal with some of the most challenging learners and diverse contexts there is a question about their preparation including sufficient depth of theoretical knowledge and emphasis on the practical skills of teaching and learning practice. As noted in section 2.2, training in language, literacy and numeracy is only an elective unit of the VET practitioner Certificate IV requirement. This may need to be revisited in order to better equip VET trainers and teachers to deliver improved outcomes for learners. (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 60).

The Productivity Commission report asserted that the “Certificate IV in Training and Assessment is an appropriate entry-level qualification for VET practitioners, provided that it is delivered well and that it is seen as the foundation for further capability development” (2011, p. 247). At the time of writing, the standards did not insist on VET teachers acquiring the Certificate IV within a time period and allowed them to teach under supervision by someone who did have the Certificate IV. The Productivity Commission report, however, stated that:

reflecting the views of the VET industry about the competencies that are necessary for

effective training and assessment, VET practitioners should have completed the Certificate IV within two years of commencing employment in the sector. Workplace trainers and assessors working under the supervision of someone with the Certificate IV should have completed the Skill Set relevant to their role; and Industry experts should be encouraged to obtain a Skill Set relevant to their role (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 247).

The issue of employing industry experts as VET teachers has consequences for teaching qualifications. Many come to teaching with excellent skills and knowledge or qualifications in their area of vocational expertise, and limited or no teaching knowledge, skills or qualifications. The Productivity Commission (2011) report argued that there was a large percentage of teaching staff with no teaching qualifications which the report viewed as a concern.

In contrast to the widespread holding of vocational qualifications, a significant proportion of VET trainers and assessors do not possess the Certificate IV in TAA or equivalent formal educational (pedagogic) qualifications. That proportion could be as high as 40 per cent in the TAFE sector and is likely to be higher still in the non-TAFE sector (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. xlii).

(This situation) has left the penetration of formally acquired training and assessment skills within the workforce lagging. ... (The) existence of under- or un-qualified staff is explained by the fact that the AQTF and the National Quality Council (NQC) do not mandate the Certificate IV in TAA (or equivalent) for trainers and assessors, as long as these staff are supervised by someone who holds the Certificate (or equivalent)" (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. xliii).

This situation existed despite the fact that the Certificate IV was originally designed as the minimum qualification "to provide a minimum teaching standard for all trainers and assessors" (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. xliii). The report stated that while the Certificate IV was the minimum necessary for entry-level independent training and assessment:

the Commission is therefore, strongly of the view that all VET practitioners and dedicated workplace trainers and assessors should hold this qualification or be working towards it. Demonstration of equivalent competencies should occur via a formal RPL process. The relevant NQC determination should be amended accordingly (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 255).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report stated that the "paucity of educational skills of VET trainers and assessors might prove to be an impediment to achieving the aims of governments to lift the educational attainment of the population in general and of some equity groups in particular" (2011, p. xliii). The Productivity Commission (2011) report indicated that the VET sector will need better teaching skills to deal with the range of "VET learners who have poor foundation skills but many trainers and assessors might be found wanting in delivering to these groups" (2011, p. xliii).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report suggested that 40% of the teaching staff did not hold the Certificate IV qualification. There are questions about their ability to cite this statistic, however, as there were no records held at the time (2010) for any of the private RTOs and the Productivity Commission (2011) report also claimed that the records held by TAFE were insufficient. Whether the statistics are credible or not does not take away from the fact that VET teachers were entitled

to perform their teaching role without a qualification and, since the review of the standards (2015), must now attain a relatively low qualification.

The minerals Council of Australia was one of the key industry organisations that were invited to make submissions to the Productivity Commission research. In the Minerals Council of Australia submission to the Productivity Commission (2011) report, it was noted that:

the demand for higher level qualifications will drive a need for higher level qualifications within the VET workforce. Serious consideration will need to be given to whether a Certificate IV level minimum qualification is adequate to provide a professional workforce with the capacity to deliver higher level qualifications that meets the needs of industry (Minerals Council of Australia cited in Productivity Commission, 2010, p.236).

The Productivity Commission report proposed a partial solution to this issue by recommending that “no VET practitioner should be able to train or assess for more than two years, including under supervision, without holding a teaching qualification relevant to his or her role” (2011, p. 256) and by advising that VET consider a compulsory practicum for all staff undertaking the Certificate IV. One of the competencies for the Certificate IV in TAE requires a micro teaching project. Practicum is a more organised and ongoing construct than the process of a micro teaching practice within a small unit.

Practicum aims to develop the skills of trainers and assessors through supervision of a number of delivery sessions. There is no explicit practicum requirement in the Certificate IV except for a limited version of practicum for one unit; Plan, Organise and Deliver Group based learning (TAED401A.) (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 264).

Wheelahan & Moodie noted that new teachers:

need at least: some teaching and training and assessing strategies; an understanding of basic lesson planning or how to develop a learning program for individuals or groups in the workplace; how to translate their expert industry knowledge to lesson plans or learning programs and strategies for teaching or training and learning; how to implement and undertake assessment judgements; how to engage students or trainees in learning (particularly incorporating an understanding of inclusiveness); and, an understanding of the RTO or enterprise that employs them and its requirements (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 35).

This list of basic skills required by new teachers concurred with the Mitchell & Ward (2010) findings and is also in principle agreement with the composition of the Certificate IV in TAE. There is a view that the Certificate IV is appropriate as an entry level qualification but that it cannot be expected to deliver to VET teachers all that is required for their practice (Clayton, 2010, cited in Wheelahan, 2010). Clayton found that the Certificate IV in TAE was required to provide a firm foundation for building further knowledge and skills, regardless of whether those skills came from on-the-job-experience, or further learning, or a combination of both. Wheelahan & Moodie (2011) recommended a “nested” model of qualifications that included the following:

- An induction program before starting teaching and training;
- Basic entry level credentialed study upon commencing teaching and training; and

- Higher level credentialed study as teachers and trainers progress in their careers (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 34).

In addition to these qualifications, Wheelahan and Moodie stated that there needed to be changes to the existing Certificate IV in TAE qualification. They recommended that “the next review of the Certificate IV TAE result in a greater focus on teaching, pedagogy, how people learn, diversity and inclusiveness. It should also include a component of supervised practice to ensure the teachers/trainers can be provided with structured feedback and be assisted to integrate their practice and study” (2011a, pp. 35-36). Mitchell and Ward’s (2010) only mention of the relationship between teacher skills and the Certificate IV in TAE is in the definition of the Foundation VET Practitioner – Novice. The definition was:

these practitioners are not yet proficient in using the foundation skills. People at this stage normally possess or are working towards the entry level qualification, the Certificate IV in training and assessment. Most of these practitioners have been working in the sector for less than two years (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 28).

Mitchell and Ward (2010) are therefore indicating that it is possible that someone who has a Certificate IV qualification may not be proficient in all the foundation skills for teaching. The documents are very clear that the Certificate IV in TAE is, at best, an entry-level qualification that should be supported by ongoing professional development. It is difficult to understand why progress on reviewing this qualification to include more educational theory and pedagogy as well as mandating higher level qualifications is so painstakingly slow.

While the qualification was mandated by the standards, the reality is that many VET practitioners had not gained the Certificate IV in TAE and continued to practice under the (nominal) supervision of another teacher who had either the qualification or was deemed to have the skills. The other major issue was that those who teach the teachers were required to have the same qualification (Certificate IV in TAE). After much debate and lobbying prior to publishing the current version of the standards (2015), there were two significant changes introduced. Teachers were required to gain the Certificate IV in TAE rather than demonstrate that they had the skills for the qualification. This applied from 2016. The qualification for teaching the Certificate IV in TAE was raised to Diploma in TAE but this only applied from January 2017.

5.6 Vocational competence of VET teachers

This section concentrates on the findings from the document analysis regarding the vocational competence of the VET teacher.

The Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper stated that there was an issue with how RTOs implemented the Standard relating to vocational currency. The discussion paper noted that:

although there is a requirement that 'training and assessment is delivered by trainers and assessors who ... continue to develop their VET knowledge and skills as well as their industry currency and trainer/assessor competence', there is no clear publicly available evidence about how well this standard is implemented (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 61).

The Skills Australia discussion paper suggested that a system of performance development would contribute to improved teaching practice but that this was not a "well-developed feature of the VET sector" (2010, p. 61). The paper expressed concern that the VET workforce needed renewal and not just because of the imminent retirement of many teachers, but insisted that this may be an opportunity to implement new roles for VET teachers where industry currency was pre-eminent. The paper said that "developing and maintaining industry currency and expertise among the VET workforce is therefore essential" (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 61).

VET employs many industry experts as part time or industry expert teachers in order to ensure that programs are delivering current industry knowledge and skills. The Productivity Commission (2011) report noted that this practice enabled closer engagement between industry and the VET sector.

Casualisation of the VET workforce is partly a response to the sector's emphasis on industry currency and close association with industry more generally. Flexible forms of employment also enhance the ability of the VET sector to respond quickly and adequately to new or varying skills requirements, over time and in different regions. The Productivity Commission supports this flexibility and considers that caps on the engagement or deployment of casuals are likely to be, in most circumstances, detrimental to the responsiveness of the VET sector (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. xxxv).

There are a relatively high number of VET practitioners who are multiple-job holders in the workforce. In addition, there is a high proportion of trainers and assessors who have been in the VET sector for less than five years (Mitchell & Ward, 2010). This suggests that a number use contemporary industry employment to ensure their industry currency. It is acknowledged, however, that "simply working part-time in an industry provides only a very basic level of industry engagement and 'return to industry' programs are not well structured" (Smith cited in Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 242). This would seem to indicate a wide variety of methods for maintaining industry currency but a lack of research on how productive and successful these methods are. The credibility of the VET sector hinges largely on whether the skills of its practitioners match the skills used in contemporary industry. The industry currency of VET practitioners is rarely discussed in public, however, and when it is raised, people normally refer to practitioners undertaking a brief stint in industry. JMA Analytics 2010(cited in Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 243) identified six broad sets of strategies that practitioners use to maintain their currency: contact with personal and professional connections, use of mentors, coaching and benchmarking, industry experiences, training courses, working in VET, and active enquiry. Notwithstanding the citing of these broad strategies, the Productivity Commission (2011) report stated that industry currency is not well-researched or understood, and that there is evidence of currency gaps in the current workforce, particularly among those who have worked full time in the VET sector for more than ten years. The Productivity Commission (2011) report noted that professional development systems needed to

identify and plan to address these gaps.

The Standards (2015) require that competencies are delivered by someone who has the skills or qualification of the unit they are teaching. In practice this may mean someone who has only skills and underpinning knowledge in that particular unit delivers a unit of competency. This is a very limited approach and may not enable the teacher to situate the learning in a deep knowledge of the way the unit contributes to an understanding of the industry sector. The Productivity Commission (2011) report, however, was concerned that industry experts would be detrimentally burdened by a requirement to undertake mandatory qualifications in order to contribute to VET teaching. "Industry currency can also be delivered in a team-teaching environment through the use of industry experts. Regulatory barriers to the activity of these experts – including mandatory qualifications should be kept to a minimum" (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. xlv).

The Productivity Commission (2011) report also identified a problem with the lack of definition and the fact that industry or vocational currency was difficult to measure.

The actual level of industry currency is more difficult to measure and evidence suggests that it is uneven. An estimated 20% of VET trainers and assessors have a second job outside the education industry, which might assist with maintaining currency if that job is relevant to their area of delivery (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. xliii).

Wheelahan and Moodie (2011a) noted that one of the key themes from the consultations and submissions to their research, was the issue of vocational currency and the importance that the respondents placed on this issue. They cited Smith, Brennan, Kemmis, Grace and Payne (2009) who said that "Industry engagement' goes well beyond industry currency to include: updating skills and familiarity with technological systems, understanding of big-picture developments in the industry, understanding the whole industry sector not just one section of it, understanding of developments in ways in which companies organise their business, global trends in the industry and the economy as a whole" (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 49). The respondents to this research project said that industry release did not automatically give a teacher currency in their industry, and nor did the widespread and prevailing assumption that just because a person had a job in industry and undertook sessional teaching they were vocationally current. This is highlighted in the following statement.

"Working in a small company for 20 years does not make you current or engaged with an entire industry. It might not even make your particular skills current. This is only the beginning of currency and can even be counter-productive" (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 50).

Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) asked the respondents to their research for strategies that might ensure the maintenance of vocational currency. Many of the respondents:

proposed a program for teachers and trainers to undertake projects in industry that led to the development of new learning materials and resources, learning programs and lesson plans and contribute to a learning culture in workplaces and support innovation in workplaces (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 50).

While it was also suggested that reports from these projects could form part of seminars and forums, Wheelahan and Moodie were of the opinion that “while this approach may have merit and received support in many submissions and consultations, that it is too narrow an approach and can be only one element of a broader strategy to support industry engagement” (2011a, p. 50). One of the key issues around vocational currency is that the standards only require a VET teacher to demonstrate the skills to the level of the unit being taught and assessed. Moodie (2010) noted that having the qualification or unit that one is teaching is insufficient. He argued that, at the very least, the capability should be one AQF level higher. The Mitchell and Ward (2010) report does not specifically refer to vocational currency. They did however, address this topic in a subsequent report related to a tool they developed for measuring approaches to maintaining currency (Mitchell & Ward, 2011).

5.7 Continuing Professional Development

The discussion above illustrates that as dual professionals, VET teachers need to maintain and continually upskill in both teaching skills and industry currency. Given that many industries have been through a prolonged period of constant change, this has proved a challenge for the VET sector as a whole and for teachers as individuals. This section details the findings from the document analysis concerning professional development for VET teaching.

The Skills Australia discussion paper acknowledged the scope of the professional development task stating:

VET practitioners need the opportunity both to continually update their industry knowledge and educational expertise and to respond to new and emerging challenges, such as incorporating ‘green skills’. Ongoing professional development is especially required in assessment, flexible learning strategies and VET pedagogy. The increased emphasis on foundation skills and language literacy and numeracy requirements of many students requires practitioners to have expertise in supporting students’ individual learning needs, especially disaffected and disengaged students (Skills Australia, 2010, p. 60).

The scale of the task outlined above implies that it can only be achieved with rigorous planning and attention to the needs of individual teachers as well as teams of teaching staff. The Productivity Commission report identified areas of VET practice that might “exacerbate existing capability gaps” (2011, p. LII). These included delivery of training to students who are disadvantaged, delivery of higher level qualifications and using information technology as an integral component in training delivery (Productivity Commission, 2011). In addition, the report commented that there was “evidence of a capability gap in the ability of some VET practitioners and enterprise trainers to assess Recognition of Prior Learning and Recognition of Current Competence” and “evidence of

capability gaps relating to workplace-based delivery” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. lii). The report appeared to be in agreement with Hattie (2009) that “there is little quality empirical evidence about the effects of (Professional Development) PD on student achievement” and that “much of the research is about the effects of PD on teachers” (Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 221). The Productivity Commission (2011) report cites Hattie (2011) again when they concluded that PD is more likely to be effective when:

- Learning opportunities occur over an extended period
- It involves external experts
- Teachers are sufficiently engaged – so that knowledge and skills acquisition happens
- It challenges teachers’ prevailing discourse and conceptions about learning
- It was supported by leaders (Hattie 2009 cited in Productivity Commission, 2011, p. 221).

The Productivity Commission report also maintained “that the lack of an evidence-based approach to skills development is an issue that precludes the sector from measuring professional development effort and outcomes; and that such an approach would be valuable to decision makers” (2011, p. xxviii).

Wheelahan wrote that the Continuing Professional Development (CPD) that is on offer is usually focused “on developing teachers and trainers’ generic capacities. Much CPD that is offered tends to be ‘event’ focused, rather than a sustained program of CPD in particular areas” (2010, p.xxx).

Wheelahan and Moodie also noted that there was a need for CPD:

that helps teachers and trainers incorporate language, literacy and numeracy skills and foundation skills in their specialist area. Such CPD is in addition to providing teachers with access to more systemic, policy and institutional issues and broad pedagogic developmental activities. Deepening teachers’ vocational knowledge and expertise has many components. One is industry currency and engagement. This is an essential and irreplaceable component of CPD, but CPD must also involve teachers and trainers in engaging and extending their understanding of the knowledge base of their occupation/specialisation and how to teach in that specialisation (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 49).

Wheelahan and Moodie (2011a) agreed with the Skills Australia (2010) discussion paper in identifying the scale of the professional learning challenge. As one strategy that might have practical application, Wheelahan and Moodie (2011a) wrote of the concept of ‘master practitioner’. This concept emerged during the research stage of their project from a meeting of industry stakeholders. The master practitioner role would engage highly skilled and experienced employees in industry with the special responsibility for developing the next generation of skilled tradespeople or practitioners, and create new opportunities for industry experts to become engaged with VET. In clarifying the master teaching role, the Steering Committee for their research project suggested that the aim should be to develop master or specialist teachers and trainers in vocational specialisations. The development of master practitioners to support specialist teachers and trainers in language, literacy and numeracy and foundation skills would also be needed.

Wheelahan and Moodie noted the increased demands on the VET sector and reported that there was a high level of support for CPD that included a greater focus on teachers' specialisations, arguing that CPD:

must involve teachers and trainers in engaging and extending their understanding of the knowledge base of their occupation/specialisation and how to teach in that specialisation. Such an approach would help teachers and trainers keep up to date with changing knowledge in their industry or field as well as technological innovations and developments (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a, p. 47).

Wheelahan (2010) proposed a possible industry related approach to CPD that would require Industry Skills Councils (ISCs) to lead CPD in their industry fields. This was not currently the role of ISCs, and Wheelahan noted that they would need time to develop the capability to perform this new role. She proposed that professional bodies, industry skills councils, VET providers and the higher education sector collaborate to develop vocationally specific accredited training programs for VET teachers. "Systemising CPD in industries in this way would help to build the economies of scale needed to incorporate specialist development into VET teaching qualifications" (Wheelahan, 2010, p. xxx).

Mitchell and Ward (2010) agreed with the Productivity Commission (2011) report that VET teachers work in a very dynamic skills market and that this will impact on their ability to maintain currency in both vocational skills and teaching skills. This dynamic skills market will then impact on VET teachers' need for CPD.

Given that VET trainers and assessors, like accountants, work in a dynamic skills market, we can assume that sufficient professional development opportunities could bridge current skill gaps, as well as go a long way to arresting the long term decline in VET trainer and assessor skill levels. The skills shortfall in VET can be reversed (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 19).

The JMA Analytics survey (2010) found that "nationally the current professional development opportunities meet only 55% of teachers' needs" (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 17). However, this was not seen as a surprising finding because:

It is not uncommon for skills to become redundant over time. However, individuals can limit the impact of skills redundancy by engaging in professional development. Unfortunately, Australian VET trainers and assessor believe that current professional development opportunities are less than adequate for their professional requirements (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 8).

Mitchell and Ward's (2010) report indicated that one of the problems for VET staff was that there were programs for novices but a paucity of professional development opportunities for experienced teachers. The lack of a model of VET practice also impacted on the relevance of the available professional development for teachers because it influenced the ability to plan suitable and effective professional learning opportunities. This meant that:

professional development programs are likely to be 'hit-and-miss' and not methodical in terms of specifically catering for participants' changing needs. This lack of a thorough model to guide professional development possibly explains the heavy emphasis on novice level skills in many professional development programs around VET and the paucity of programs for advanced practitioners (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, p. 8).

5.8 Conclusion

Chapters 4 and 5 presented Phase 1 of the research findings from the document analysis of four key documents regarding VET sector teaching. That analysis sought to answer the questions:

1. What are the unique characteristics of VET sector teaching (Chapter 4); and
2. What are the implications for teacher skills? (Chapter 5)

The answers to these questions are summarised as follows:

The unique characteristics of the VET sector are:

1. Competency-based training and assessment is the mandated model for teaching and learning. The CBT philosophy is intrinsically linked to training packages, assessment and learning on the job. There is a contradiction evident in that the majority of students do not learn on-the-job or for the employment role they currently have.
2. The sector is led by industry who have control of the training packages which describe the industry standards for all competencies taught and the qualifications architecture for each training package.
3. The national regulatory framework is responsible for all aspects of the business of a RTO, including the delivery of programs.
4. VET learners are a unique cohort of students with particular educational challenges and teachers need to devise teaching and learning strategies that meet their needs. There are many LLN challenges for students and this is an area of competence that is foundational for employment.

Each of the above factors has implications for VET teacher skills and capability. VET teachers, therefore, need to be assisted to develop their capability to:

1. develop teaching learning and assessment strategies in the CBT framework;
2. engage with industry to inform teaching and learning strategies and to maintain vocational currency;
3. comply with the requirements of the national regulator including implementation of all prescriptions of the training packages; and
4. devise teaching and learning strategies that respect the cultural diversity of the student

group and contribute to the students' educational achievement and employment outcomes.

The key findings from the document analysis regarding VET teacher skills are as follows:

- There was confusion about the difference between the role of teachers in institution-based program delivery and the role of the workplace-based trainer who is usually a team leader or supervisor employed by the industry or enterprise.
- There was agreement that the Certificate IV in TAE may be adequate for entry-level teachers who have limited responsibility and autonomy.
- The notion of the dual professional was endorsed but standards for both educational and vocational skills or qualifications were regarded as inadequate. There is a major gap in policy and practice in that there are no separate standards for teachers.
- These low level requirements will be inadequate for delivery of higher level programs and delivery to a more diverse and complex cohort of students.
- Professional development programs should be evidence-based, ongoing through a teacher's career and include both vocational and educational specialisations.

The evidence from the document analysis is that VET sector teaching is complex and requires a higher level of both pedagogical and vocational capability than that which is currently expected. Both the documents that aimed to provide policy directions to government (Skills Australia and the Productivity Commission) and the writings of the educationalists (Mitchell, 2010, and Wheelahan, 2011) were in agreement that higher level teacher capability is required. There is a major discrepancy, however, between the capability the selected documents describe and the requirements as espoused in the standards for registration of RTOs. Furthermore, it would appear that there is an obstacle to achieving any significant improvement to this situation since the writing of the documents, as evidenced by relatively minor changes made to the standards for teachers' qualifications in 2015. It would appear that there are systemic issues that prevent the VET sector from supporting a higher capability agenda for its teachers that require deliberate attention.

The following chapter, Chapter 6, describes the second phase of the research. It details the results and analysis of semi-structured interviews with TAFE teaching staff and educational managers, and their lived experiences of progressing from novice to advanced practice and the professional learning strategies they used to make this progress. It also describes the improvements these staff would make to those professional learning strategies as they mentor others on this journey.

CHAPTER 6 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS OF SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEWS

6.1 Introduction

In order to generate a grounded understanding of the issues regarding the nature and development of teaching capability in the VET sector, this chapter will focus on the data generated from the semi-structured interviews with experienced TAFE teachers, leaders and managers. As noted in the preceding two chapters, there is a recognition of the importance of: (i) the 'dual professional' nature of VET teaching; (ii) vocational competency at an appropriate level for VET teaching; and (iii) the need for higher level pedagogical skills and knowledge. Following the acknowledgement of these aspects of VET teaching capability, there are then several challenges for teacher professional learning. These challenges can be posed as the following questions addressed in this chapter:

- What should be the focus of a professional learning program for VET teachers?
- How is a professional learning program for VET teachers best delivered for optimal impact?
- How can managers and educational leaders support and enhance capability development?

These challenges are the central focus of this study and assist in answering the research questions.

As already identified in Chapter 3, for the purposes of this research 'experienced' TAFE teachers are considered to be those with at least five years' teaching experience. 'Novice' teachers are those teachers who have just begun their VET teaching career and may not have completed the Certificate IV in TAE; 'early career' teachers may have completed the entry level qualification and may have some teaching experience but will have teaching experience of less than five years. The interviews sought to answer the following questions:

- What professional learning programs should the sector provide in order to transition new lecturers to advanced practice?

This question is a component of the first research question: What are the unique characteristics of VET teaching that should be the focus of a professional learning program for VET teachers to enable them to progress from novice to advanced teaching?

- How can workplace learning and practice-based learning theories be useful in implementing an effective VET teacher development program?

This question is a component of the second research question: How is it (the professional learning program) best delivered for optimal impact?

Table 6.1: Interviewees' details (teachers)

Interviewee	Tom	Julie	Steve	Paul	Peter	John
Current role	Lecturer Level 6	Lecturer/Coordinator	Lecturer I	Lecturer	Lecturer Step 6	Lecturer Step 7
Years of teaching	5 years	16 years	1 year High School 6 years TAFE	11 years	9 years	12 years
Teaching qualifications	Diploma of VET	Certificate IV in TAE, Bachelor of Adult & Vocational Education, Masters of Education & Career Development, Graduate Certificate in Vocational Learning in Schools	Bachelor of Education in Design Technology and Science	Bachelor of Adult & Vocational Education	Certificate IV in TAE, Diploma of VET	Bachelor of Adult & Vocational Education, Certificate IV in TAE
Vocational qualifications	Engineer	Child Care qualifications	Certificate 3 in Electro-technology	Mechanic qualifications	No formal qualifications.	Advanced Diploma in Business area

Table 6.2: Interviewees' details (educational managers)

Interviewee	Helen	Jane	Pam
Current role	Program Educational Manager	Senior Manager Educational Program	Program Education Manager
Years of teaching	5 years	20 years	10 years
Teaching Qualifications	Bachelor of Arts majoring in Education and economics, Diploma of VET	Bachelor of Arts, Diploma of Education, Graduate Diploma in Adult and Further Education, Master of Education	Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAA), Diploma of Teaching (Primary), Diploma of Training Design & Development, Bachelor of Education (In-service – Education & Training of Adults)
Vocational Qualifications	Graduate Diploma Business, Diploma of Government, Certificate IV in Business area	Counselling, Diploma of Business Management	Diploma in Business area

The findings from the semi-structured interviews are detailed in this chapter. Mitchell and Ward's (2010) research, discussed in Chapter 5, found that progression from novice to advanced practice as a VET teacher was a continuum of skills development. For this reason, the research findings in this chapter have been structured to align with that continuum. While all of the participants were currently advanced practice VET teachers or educational managers, they spoke of their personal lived experience of being a novice teacher and developing their skills as they progressed in their careers. They also had experience in assisting other teachers as they fulfilled the role of mentor.

6.2 Interview findings

The interview questions centred on the following stages of development of VET practitioners:

- Section 1: Effective professional development strategies for early career TAFE teachers.
- Section 2: Development of teaching skills from novice to advanced practice.
- Section 3: Effective professional development that assists advanced practitioners to maintain high level teaching skills.

The important role of the educational manager in providing opportunities for workforce development for staff is included as the final section of this chapter:

- Section 4: Leadership that supports and enhances the effective use of workplace learning opportunities to develop capability of teaching staff.

Pseudonyms have been adopted to protect the anonymity of the participants. Each of these sections will now be analysed and interpreted separately.

6.3 Section 1: Skills development for novice teachers

Interviewees were asked to reflect on their own experience as novice teachers and the professional development strategies that had been available to them in this period of their career. Based on this experience, they were asked to describe the strategies they have enacted for the new staff they mentor, or to identify strategies they believed should be in place. The key issues that emerged regarding the skills development of novice teachers were:

1. Mentoring, both informal and formal, was a key factor in system orientation and teacher development, and was acknowledged as having an important role in the 'apprenticeship' of teaching.
2. It was essential to allocate time and resources and to recognise the role of mentoring. These factors enabled reflection and review of practice with a view to improvements in teaching practice.
3. Mentors were relied on to transmit knowledge about the compliance requirements for ASQA audit requirements and quality systems.

4. Deliberate approaches were required in the delivery and content of the Certificate IV in TAE, which is the formal learning requirement for early career VET teachers.

6.3.1 The importance of Mentoring

All of the interviewees were adamant that having a mentor had been the most effective way of enabling them to begin their career as a VET teacher. “Mentoring can be described as a process “whereby one person acts as a counsellor and friend to another usually to support them as they enter an organisation and have to familiarise themselves with the culture and processes, or as they take on new responsibilities” (Harrison, 2009, p. 170) While some interviewees had experienced a formal mentoring arrangement organised by their educational manager, for others, the experience had been a more informal arrangement. They described the benefits of having a mentor and articulated that the function of mentoring contributed to the following two actions:

1. Developing pedagogical capability, and
2. Assisting in the orientation to the organisation and its quality systems.

All of the interviewees identified the benefits of having a mentor as a means of learning the skills and craft of teaching when they were early career TAFE teachers. There was wide variation in the models of mentoring that the interviewees described. Some described good experiences of informal mentoring, either with a particular individual or within a group or team of teachers involved in the same program area.

They identified several issues where the mentor could provide advice. These included providing assistance with assessment strategies and tools and support for enabling student progress. For the mentoring process to be effective, most interviewees described the need to allocate time for reflection and discussion with the mentor, regular analysis of what happened in the prior teaching sessions and organised opportunities to review and make improvements to practice as needed. The interviewees valued the mentor taking the time to come to their class or to workplace assessment visits so that the new staff member could check that their way of teaching and assessing would meet the requirements of the relevant training package. Julie (teacher), for example, described or perceived the team or group she worked with as an important source of knowledge for her.

I think some of the things I found effective was a lot of informal mentoring. I wasn't allocated a specific mentor in any way. There was a handful of staff, in one way or another, I worked closely with them (Julie, teacher).

She spoke of the practicalities of this mentoring arrangement and the fact that regular contact and conversation were important for an effective relationship. Julie emphasised that this informal mentoring would only be effective if both parties made the time to meet regularly and take the requirement seriously.

We would catch up regularly. So, it was how are you are going? Is there an issue with this? And we would talk through a lot of those things. Even for the first couple of times going out to (workplace) visits, she came along with me and we met there (Julie, teacher).

Julie described a particular mentor who enabled her to develop her skills as a teacher by allowing her to explore and learn new things.

...N was an amazing mentor. He had the ability to throw you in at the deep end, but he was always there to catch you. He gave you the capacity to be able to explore and to learn things while knowing you still had someone right alongside you to bounce things off. He would say, well maybe you are trying to put too much into that class, get the students to do some of that, rather than you giving it to them (Julie, teacher).

Some interviewees said that the mentoring that occurred was not sufficient. In particular, they noted that mentoring was not formalised enough to be truly effective in skills formation. In contrast to more informal arrangements, Peter, John and Paul had been engaged in formal mentoring programs, set up by their program educational managers. Remembering his first days as a teacher in TAFE, Peter reported that having a designated mentor was the most effective method for developing and improving his skills as a novice teacher:

Mentoring by far [was the most useful way]. S as a mentor was not the only strategy but the most effective by far.... the real practical stuff of how to teach was learned from someone who was an expert at it. That was really good. When I met with the mentor it was [as follows] I sat in with one class, co-taught the next class with him, third class you are on your own but they would make more comments as well. So that was a really effective way of doing it (Peter, teacher).

Peter John and Paul described this staged approach to their teaching development as a teaching 'apprenticeship'. These 'stages' progressed from watching the mentor teach, to taking the class autonomously over a period. Staff identified challenges associated with this apprentice model, namely, the importance of having time for personal reflection and time to engage in conversation with their mentor following their reflections. Peter, John and Paul described four stages employed in their teaching 'apprenticeship':

- Stage 1 watch their mentor teach,
- Stage 2 team teach with their mentor,
- Stage 3 teach the group with mentor observing,
- Stage 4 take the class autonomously with time for reflection and conversation afterwards with their mentor.

When asked if this could be viewed as a kind of practicum system, Peter replied:

Yes, it's almost like a training thing isn't it? For any skill. But it doesn't happen a lot. [And] it should be automatic [systemic] (Peter, teacher).

John reported that for him this staged approach to learning the craft of teaching was only possible because of a special program set up to fund those who were made redundant from middle

management administrative positions and his decision to make the change to a teaching role. This program does not occur for all new teachers. It would appear, however, to be a valuable and effective addition to a more systematic training approach for early career VET teachers. This program had enabled a gradual approach to meeting productivity targets for new staff.

The most effective thing I had was to be tagged with a mentor X who had been teaching for a while and I was in a fortunate position, which was unusual, because I was in a retraining activity... I would watch. Then I would have a crack at doing it partially and then I would do it under X's guidance. At the end of each of these sessions he would give me feedback on my teaching and the technical information that I had passed on (John, teacher).

These three interviewees argued that this staged approach was essential to capability development. They observed that it mirrored the model of CBT and assessment that was in place in the VET sector for students of VET programs, but was not necessarily the model available for those completing the competencies for VET teaching. The interviewees believed that their work shadowing arrangements had been instrumental in assisting them develop sound pedagogical skills.

Paul also maintained that early career teachers, who were beginning to teach in TAFE, needed the freedom to make mistakes and learn from these mistakes.

I found that the teaching itself was almost like an apprenticeship; like I had the opportunity that [the manager] gave me that was positive, the opportunity to make mistakes and starting off I wouldn't say that I was the best lecturer.... I used to try things and if they failed use my professional judgement to see [what could work]. These were definitely things that were beneficial. I had an official mentor who I could rely on for bouncing ideas off. (Paul, teacher).

John's experience of mentoring had a flow-on effect. Because John had found his formal mentoring system to be of valuable assistance in skills development, he had implemented something similar in an informal program for other novices now that he was a senior lecturer.

And I tried to replicate that with some other people who came through with me, B2 being one of them, but also a couple of others But that practicum notion, that apprenticeship is valuable (John, teacher).

Mentors were also critical for novice teachers in their orientation to the organisation as a whole, and the quality systems for teaching and learning in particular. John and Steve (teachers), and Pam and Helen (managers), identified the importance of new teachers "learning the systems" required. These systems included how to use training packages to develop teaching and learning strategies, meet compliance and audit requirements, and the administrative procedures needed to ensure adherence to the current financial and eligibility requirements for students. Helen (manager) said there were now three required areas of knowledge: pedagogical, vocational and administrative systems. All participants identified that the systems knowledge had become more complex than it was when they started teaching and that it changed frequently as government funding models changed. All three managers had involved new lecturers with formal conversations

with key administration staff in an attempt to assist in this regard. For some new staff there will be more than one mentor; a teacher for pedagogical issues and an administration staff member for the administration systems issues. Helen had found that providing competent administration support was essential to the smooth functioning of the program.

The other thing in our environment is marrying them up with competent administration support. It is really critical because you get them the admin resources they need, because that can turn people off. (Helen, manager).

Helen (manager) said that novice teachers needed access to good quality learning resources for their teaching. Novice teachers regarded advice from a mentor in choosing good quality learning resources as very helpful. Helen gave responsibility for selecting learning resources that were endorsed as compliant for quality audit purposes to the senior lecturers in the team. She saw this as an effective and efficient strategy that assisted early career teachers. Ensuring that the learning materials are effective for delivery of the industry-endorsed competencies is a critical measure of compliance with audit requirements.

Access to well written learning materials is really important. For their teaching absolutely and access to the senior lecturer who is their mentor. Then they don't flounder and they don't waste time (Helen, manager).

In this regard, they are endorsing audit compliant learning resources as good quality. One respondent, who had previously trained and worked in the secondary school sector, said that understanding the audit requirements and the quality assurance processes in the VET sector was very different from his experience in the secondary school sector. He had found it necessary and helpful to seek advice from mentors to check his understanding of the issues around quality and compliance with AQTF requirements. Assessment against the competencies in training packages is also another area that is critical to compliance for quality systems.

[Mentoring] also helped with things like audit requirements, because being a high school trained teacher, that's something that I really struggled with. It took a while for me to grasp the difference between training packages and curriculum and having to be able to decide between the two, there was a need to consider the jump between the two. Yes, and that was another thing for the mentor to make sure that when I was assessing competency, it was done correctly (Steve, teacher).

While mentoring was identified as an important feature for developing the skills of VET teachers, there were some challenges identified in the implementation of effective mentoring relationships. One such complicating factor was that several interviewees largely taught night classes and, as a result, lacked access to faculty members who might have been in a position to assist and mentor. Another factor pertained to those employed at an isolated regional campus where there were few opportunities for formal professional development activities or any kind of mentoring. The issue of professional isolation was one that required intervention from educational managers as Helen (manager) reported.

The worst ones have been the people who are based remotely because you don't give them enough attention. I am now buddying up all the remote people with Z (Helen, manager).

Another challenge was the perceived lack of time allocated to the mentoring process. Four participants, Steve and Julie (teachers) and Pam and Helen (managers), said that both parties needed to allocate time for getting together and making the relationship work. Finding time for reflection and review of practice was a challenge. In response to a question regarding her experience now as a mentor to others, Julie reported that the strategies that were most critical were:

...time and practice. Teaching is different now, to be on the other side of it, developing it, teaching it, marking it, tracking it, all of those things are very different, and it takes time and it takes practice to be able to [develop skills]. At times it is a challenge (Julie, teacher).

Cooper, Orrell and Bowden defined practicum as a process which “involves extended periods of time in an organisation, to develop skills and competencies associated with professional training”. They also stated that “students have theoretical training before commencing their practical experiences” or that “classroom teaching is concurrent with practice” (2010, p. 38). This formal arrangement for practicum is different from the process described by the interviewees. In some cases, formal arrangements were determined by the educational manager. In many instances, however, the arrangements were much more informal. These informal relationships had no focus on assessment of competency and no effective end point. Even the formal mentoring relationships did not contribute to assessment of competency in the Certificate IV in TAE. It appears that in the VET sector, arrangements for developing initial teacher competence are ad hoc and dependant on the personal inclination of educational managers or aspiring early career teachers.

The participants were passionate about their roles and enthusiastic in their commitment to developing both personal skills and the skills of others less experienced than themselves. While some informal strategies were obviously effective, a consideration of a more deliberate approach would lead to more efficient and effective skills uptake.

Skills in leading and managing reflection on practice was another expectation of the role of mentors. Three teachers, Julie, Paul and Peter, and one manager, Helen, argued for the need to spend time reflecting on practice, researching and understanding the training packages and assessments. These discussions could also include analysis of what happened in the class session and then suggestions of changes as needed. One interviewee emphasised the importance of lunch room chat with colleagues:

Particularly if there's a fault. Where are you going? I don't know what this is! Quite often you'll sit with other people and you'll go and have a look and do some diagnoses and a few checks and if it's easy, then done! But if it's not, quite often you'll find around the tea room or around the lunch room, where you're just chatting about [and asking] what did you do? How does this work? How does that work? It's a very useful tool to actually get things done (Paul, teacher).

For some program areas, the learning resources for a training package are developed by the Industry Skills Councils. Teachers are then encouraged or required to use these learning resources so that the scope of the competencies and assessments is more likely to be compliant with the requirements of the training package. Peter (teacher), however, did not have such resources produced by his industry group. Far from seeing this as a negative outcome, Peter described this situation as an opportunity for reflection as the team prepared their own learning resources for teaching. The necessary time that was intrinsic to developing the learning materials and turning the training package competencies into teaching strategies was something that Peter said was valuable for himself and the small team of lecturers in the program.

I suppose another thing is that we have had to develop all our own [learning resource] materials ... which means that you understand what you are doing and the research is going to be a lot higher. Whereas in other programs you come in, here's your class and your materials are done, [you] get specifically told [you] are not to develop or change materials. So [developing your own] is a big advantage. But if you just get given your text book, here's the Power Point, you will teach exactly that. You don't get the reflection time. (Peter, teacher).

In discussing the importance of reflection, the staff were indicating the need for critical review of teaching practice, with a view to embedding improvements in practice. Cooper et al. (2010) argued that reflection is a four-part process which involves describing what has been done, attributing meaning to the activity, asking why the activity was done this way and how might it be done differently. They also recommended that this process be assisted by learning logs, reports on critical incidents, or reflective journals and systematised activities such as mentoring and supervision (Cooper et al., 2010). While some of these factors would appear to be in place for TAFE teachers, it is also obvious that they take a very pragmatic view: what has worked? What did you do that didn't work? How will it be changed so that it does work? Integrating theory and practice requires facilitation from an expert practitioner and opportunities for reflection for all teachers.

6.3.2 Formal learning and qualifications

The Certificate IV in TAE is prescribed by the Standards as previously discussed in Chapter 4. Tom described how he only did the Certificate IV in Training Assessment and Education because it was a requirement for the purposes of complying with quality assurance demands. He inferred that he had not expected to learn to teach from this qualification. Helen (manager) said, in answer to this question, that it was definitely not the Certificate IV in TAE that assisted in developing the skills of new teachers. Tom also claimed that the Diploma of VET, which is a requirement for

progression to Step 6 in the Lecturer classification range for TAFE SA lecturers, gave him “frankly nothing”. Tom’s response to the use of formal qualifications for skills development was unique. He held that his industry qualifications and experience were sufficient for teaching practice purposes. He admitted that the previous evening, however, he had had considerable difficulties justifying his assessment processes to a student of mature age.

I never took up a formal qualification in teaching but then there was the requirement to do the Certificate IV in TAE so I did that. But to be frank I was never interested in that. But if you make me do it I will (Tom, teacher).

When asked what strategies he found useful in his early days as a TAFE teacher, Tom said:

If I am technically sound in my subject, that gives me confidence and then it becomes very easy to deliver and teach the students. ...[My industry skills] were my benchmark (Tom, teacher).

Peter (teacher) cited the example of an employee on the bottling line in a winery who had to spend two hundred and forty hours of on-job training and theoretical knowledge acquisition to pass one of the competencies before being allowed to operate a key piece of machinery. This one competency took more time than most VET teachers would have expended to undertake the Certificate IV in TAE.

They have to have 240 hours of operation before they will sign them off on the filler. The theory of it you can teach a lot quicker than that, but the practical skills of knowing how to operate the equipment is very high end (Peter, teacher).

Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) argued that the next review of the Certificate IV in TAE must include a more theoretical framework for VET learning and teaching. The interviewees, however, did not refer to any theoretical training for understanding the basis of their teaching practice. As novice teachers they were encouraged to copy the mentor’s practice.

6.3.3 Conclusion to Section 1

The analysis of the responses to the interview questions regarding how early career teachers learn to teach, indicated that the TAFE SA system is based on a presumption that novice teachers would substantially learn their craft from other more experienced teachers. Even the formal learning of the Certificate IV in TAE was largely dependent on the expertise of the experienced teacher to assist with teaching practice and particularly to assist in ensuring that practice complied with the ASQA audit requirements. The interviewees worked in several different program areas, so their experience is reflective of the practice of several programs and faculties. All of these different faculties viewed the role and practice of mentors as critically important to the development of skills in their teams but there were some obvious systemic omissions in support of that mentoring role, namely:

- No formal requirements or training for the role of mentor;
- No formal documentation regarding the scope of the role;
- No formal recognition of the role in terms of key performance indicators to judge effectiveness of the role; and
- No systematic evaluation process, to ascertain whether the mentoring relationship contributed to effective orientation and initial development of teaching practice.

Both informal and formal learning strategies were used for developing early career TAFE teachers. Formal qualifications included the compulsory Certificate IV in TAE in order to be compliant with the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) requirements, and the Diploma of VET, which was offered by some faculties particularly to assist with LLN skills teaching.

The informal strategies, because of their ad hoc nature, were not consistent across the programs from which the interviewees were drawn. This is not to say, however, that the managers were not aware of the requirements to support mentors. All three managers, Helen, Jane and Pam, did have strategies to systematise some aspects of teaching and learning development, including the use of mentors. In particular, these strategies had included developing understanding of ASQA audit requirements and 'clustering' competencies for more effective teaching and assessment strategies.

Cox described workplace learning as:

the linkage of learning to a work role. Levy et al. (1989, p. 4) identify three components to work-based learning that they claim provides an essential contribution to the learning, by:

identifying and providing relevant off-the-job learning opportunities;

structuring learning in the workplace;

providing appropriate on-job training/learning opportunities (Cox, 2005, p. 460).

There is evidence of workplace learning occurring for early career teaching skills development. It would appear, however, that it is not adequately structured for effective teacher development and is dependent on the relationships within the team and the skills of the advanced practitioners. Mentors are not trained for the mentoring role, which may result in mentoring being more difficult and potentially less effective. It is reasonable to conclude that any progress from novice teacher stage to Foundation Established stage occurs accidentally rather than by design and relies on the motivation of the individual teacher and their relationships with a mentor and their educational manager.

6.4 Section 2: Developing capability from novice to advanced practice

The previous section focused on strategies that may enable early career teachers to gain the initial skills necessary for VET practice. In this next section, the focus shifts to the strategies that are needed for capability development as teachers progress from novice to advanced practice.

Interviewees identified that both informal learning and formal qualifications were required in order to progress from novice teacher to advanced practice. It appeared from the interviews that advanced practice was not well defined. When asked what strategies he had used to progress to advanced practice, Peter said:

Ooh maybe I haven't, not sure if I am! Makes you wonder how we know whether lecturers are good or not. We get feedback forms from the students, but managers generally and other staff wouldn't know if we were teaching well (Peter, teacher).

When asked if there was a system of peer review, he said:

Not much. There is some peer review and moderation of learning materials, but not of the actual teaching technique and style. (Peter, teacher).

While allocating time for critical peer review of practice was identified as essential for the development of novice skills, it was also seen as necessary for progress to advanced practice.

Peter said he believed that:

constantly reviewing learning materials, that's certainly part of it, and reviewing how the classes went each time and adjusting it. What worked in class, what didn't, what had really good interactions with the students, what you need to spend more time on, adjusting the lesson plan each time (Peter, teacher).

There were several examples given of the importance of informal learning and its place in capability development. Peter argued that there was too much emphasis on meeting audit requirements and not enough on good teaching. As already identified in Chapter 2, the concept of 'good teaching' as applied to VET teaching is not well defined or understood. Peter suggested that team meetings could be a useful forum for discussions about effective teaching practices.

It needs to have more of a focus on teaching skills, not training package knowledge and meeting requirements and stuff. I'm not saying that's not important, but I don't think enough of it focuses on 'are you a good teacher' (Peter, teacher).

Paul said that informal learning was essential for developing skills to advanced level and gave opportunities for review and support for teachers. He also saw it as a chance for advanced skills teachers to practice their mentoring and coaching of others.

When it comes to the end of the day I always put the kettle on and make a cup of coffee and we sit down. I'm sure if a manager walked in, they'd go what are you doing? ...The importance of smokos and the importance of lunches together. We discuss students, we discuss classes and it's an informal place where people can just sit and (talk)! And it's also an informal place where people can go hey it's all right. I've had that problem. I remember a

student when, I remember a class when...have you tried this? what helped me was....and if you don't have those informal times... if you set a formal time and then managers have a set agenda [you miss out on those informal discussions] (Paul, teacher).

Paul is citing here the tensions that may occur between teachers and managers about the time taken for informal reflection strategies.

Every interviewee seemed to hold the view, in theory at least, that the acquisition of formal qualifications was essential to develop capability to an advanced level. When further questioned, however, there were mixed responses to both the Diploma of VET and the undergraduate degree qualifications. Bachelor degrees in Adult and Vocational Education were perceived as necessary if teaching staff were to engage in high level thinking and critical reflection about teaching practice. Julie (teacher) claimed that she had gained a lot from formal study and had completed several qualifications in education. By contrast, Paul (teacher) said that he had only completed the degree program because of the “doors it could open for me”. These ‘doors’ included higher classification and therefore salary, or the opportunity to apply for a promotion position if one became available. Paul also disclosed that he had another motivation for completing the degree program. He wanted to prove something to himself because he had not done well at high school and had left school early. While he was proud of his achievement, he also said that:

it felt like a bit of a sell-out to be honest. I'm not sure what I learned that I hadn't learnt before (Paul, teacher).

Helen (manager) undertook to support all staff to complete the Diploma of VET based on her belief that this program would provide the teaching staff with greater depth of knowledge to guide their reflection on their teaching. Peter (teacher) indicated that the Diploma of VET had been very useful in promoting understanding of language, literacy and numeracy issues as all teachers in his program team had completed that related competency. This is an important consideration given the learning needs of the VET student cohort and that TAFE teachers generally may not be equipped to deal with LLN issues. The Diploma of VET unit is only fifteen hours in duration and would provide teachers with general knowledge and understanding of language, literacy, numeracy and learning difficulty issues. Further knowledge and skills to assess LLN problems and to plan teaching strategies to assist within a specific teaching area would also be required.

There were contradictory remarks about the Diploma of VET and its capacity to develop capability for teaching practice. Helen (manager) and John (teacher) identified that the Diploma of VET forces teaching staff to reflect on their practice and to think beyond their current environment. The lecturer salary scale and classification steps in TAFE SA, which denote progress to advanced practice, are characterised by incremental additions to skills and knowledge, and typically call for the successful acquiring of new qualifications (for example, the Diploma of VET). One teacher claimed, however, that despite the fact that he had passed the Diploma, he did not perceive that he

had learned anything. Another one cited the fact that the Diploma could be gained online with no demonstration of improved practice. These are important issues and may indicate that the assessment of the Diploma of VET needs more emphasis on practice and occurs over an appropriate timeframe. The timeframe is important as it enables learning to occur and is more likely to facilitate the integration of learning with practice. Despite this feedback, however, there were other interviewees who made the opposite claim, namely, that the Diploma had been very useful and led to practice improvements.

Although not everyone required higher education qualifications for their current classification, all of the interviewees argued that a formal qualification, including the Degree in Adult and Vocational Education, was essential for maintaining advanced practice. They also claimed that higher qualifications in their vocational area of expertise were necessary as well. This opinion reflects the dual professional nature of their work as teachers in VET. One interviewee (Tom) believed that a master's program would be an essential component of formal study for anyone wishing to maintain higher level teaching skills. This did seem to contradict his previous contention, however, that he personally only engaged in formal qualifications because of the requirements of the quality system.

The interviewees' personal bias for higher qualifications and the requirements of the TAFE Lecturer classification steps for formal study, may have contributed to this privileging of formal qualifications. The analysis of the interviews identified several motivations driving the acquisition of formal teaching qualifications, namely, improving teaching practice, contributing to a professional identity as a teacher and enabling opportunities for promotion to leadership roles.

Julie, John and Paul (teachers) reported that they expected their degree studies to impact on their teaching practice. When Julie was asked why she had undertaken the undergraduate degree when it was not required of her current Step 6 classification, she emphasised her expectations of what formal qualifications could bring to her teaching role thus:

I think because I wanted to become a better practitioner. Even though Early Childhood as such is my industry, what I teach, I actually wanted to be a better teacher. Rather than be able to spout Vygotsky or Vygotsky theory of early childhood development, I wanted to know why this works better for my adult students (Julie, teacher).

John (teacher) described how he had completed his degree studies part-time while he was teaching and had been able to incorporate some at least of his learning into his teaching practice.

I did the Bachelor studies while I was teaching. And I think that had profound benefit, in being able to go back as you are studying particular units, even though I am not a great fan of the content because a lot of it was piffle in terms of a practical application (John, teacher).

In contrast Paul (teacher) questioned whether formal qualifications impacted on better practice stating:

But I would have to question whether that motivated them and made a better teacher. And encouraged them to continue to build skills (Paul, teacher).

The second reason the interviewees gave for supporting higher level formal qualifications, was their view that it contributed to the development of a professional identity as a teacher. Tom, Julie and Paul (teachers) reported that higher education qualifications in education gave them a profile and identity as a professional educator. Julie said that she got a lot out of formal study because it presented her with opportunities to see the bigger picture of adult education and VET. She had completed the Diploma of VET, the bachelor degree qualification, graduate certificate and now had almost finished a master's course.

In regards to acquiring higher education qualifications Julie noted that:

...for me that ongoing study and looking for not just a very narrow focus. Professionally I get a lot of value from learning out of that. And I think it's important as a practitioner to not just look at your own [area]. You get the complete picture of the VET environment as well (Julie, teacher).

For Paul, higher education studies had helped to cement his identity as a teacher.

It also opens other doors because people aren't then looking at you saying what are your qualifications and you have to say well I'm a 'tradie'. When you come into a world like this that doesn't mean a lot to them. It was a part of opening up what I've got and how I'm perceived, that respect (Paul, teacher).

He also made the point that the trades area, to which he belongs, is constantly updating and changing and so he and his peers need to be constantly learning in order to keep their vocational skills and knowledge relevant.

Pam (manager) made the point that further study was required for some of the Commonwealth Government funded projects, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

...the commonwealth funded projects like the AMEP [Adult Migrant Education Program], the migrant program and the old LLNP program, the requirement for that now is that everybody who teaches in that program, not only has to have the Cert IV [in TAE] but they also have to have a Bachelor, an undergraduate degree of at least 3 years and specialist adult literacy qualifications (Pam, manager).

The funding may still be available to the organisation, but the teachers who deliver the program had to meet the formal study requirements as dictated by the funding bodies. This manager believed that this was a sensible requirement and that anything less devalued the profession of VET teaching. She stated:

I think every lecturer needs to have the Certificate IV [in TAE] as an absolute minimum and not just work under the supervision of someone who has the qualification and I think they need to have a Bachelor of Education. I think it's important. I think we [VET] should have a degree, an education degree (Pam, manager).

The difference between the VET qualifications (Certificate IV in TAE and Diploma of VET) and the Degree program was made explicit by Steve (teacher) who said:

The Bachelor [degree program] is really about the philosophy of teaching and to be honest I walked out of the Bachelor going 'what was that all about?'. But then you are put into a situation and it's almost like second nature. You may not know what to do, but you know the attitude you should have and how to think it through like an educator. That's one thing the Cert IV could work on. It takes time to consider and to work on the philosophy of teaching (Steve, teacher).

Currently, TAFE SA requires a degree in education for all staff who hold leadership positions; that is all staff at Step 7 and Principal Lecturers in the teaching classification and all educational managers. Julie (teacher) described her very large team of approximately sixty teaching staff. About half the group were at level 6 including herself. She said that a couple of staff were completing master's programs.

...there's quite a number doing bachelor either adult education or early childhood, but there's not a lot of opportunity to do something with it. So we're almost in a holding pattern, waiting for someone to fall off the top end before we can step up and take some leadership (Julie, teacher).

Julie's idea that leadership is vested only in those with the appropriate classification would seem to be at odds with concepts of distributed leadership. This may be an opportunity for program teams to explore so that they can harness this knowledge and higher level thinking skills for the benefit of students and the relevant industry sector.

6.4.1 Maintaining advanced practice capability

Interviewees were asked to describe the professional learning strategies that advanced practitioners needed to engage with in order to maintain their high level skills. Teachers wanted challenging workshops and seminars, and the opportunity for higher level studies in both pedagogy and their industry specialisation. In addition to these, the managers believed there were other important aspects in assisting advanced practitioners and these included opportunities for leadership in teaching and opportunities to have the freedom to be creative.

Teachers wanted conferences and seminars which were specifically customised for advanced practice. They cited the example of the assessment workshops that had previously been available for advanced practitioners and said that more of these workshops which challenged their thinking would be useful. Some of them also said that opportunities to see others working on problem areas would be effective ways of maintaining and further developing their skills. Steve (teacher) cited the example of an occupational therapist he knew who worked with a professional online network. Steve posited that setting up something similar could be useful in getting TAFE teachers to see themselves as part of a profession. This concept of TAFE teaching as a profession may be an underlying factor in the interviewees' positive responses to higher qualifications but ambivalence

about the content of the qualifications would appear to be an area for discussion and review.

When asked what kind of professional learning strategies advanced VET practitioners need to maintain high level teaching skills, John said:

It's probably going to be a combination of further study and also the conference type interaction and some form of peer interaction at the higher level in different work settings (John, teacher).

He said that the previously available seminars or conferences for advanced practitioners had been very valuable and that it is:

something that doesn't naturally happen and it does need to be structured (John, teacher).

Advanced practice teachers are often required to provide leadership in areas of innovative practice and new teaching methodologies. Steve and Peter (teachers) and Helen and Jane (managers) attributed their skills development to making changes to their teaching, adapting it to a different student cohort, accepting challenges that managers had given them and watching other more experienced teachers and adapting some of their techniques. Jane (manager) described the process of implementing online learning strategies for her program and the collaborative approach to learning and development that this change to methodology had involved. This same process had been applied for developing teaching and learning strategies for competencies in the training packages.

Paul agreed that making changes to teaching methodologies was imperative if someone was to not only develop the skills of advanced practice, but also maintain that higher level of skills.

I think that continual learning, trying new things even if it didn't work. You can at least say from experience this is a better way of doing it because... You are not saying this is a better way because it's the only way I've ever done it (Paul, teacher).

Paul also said that the difference between novices and advanced practitioners was the ability to test theories about what was better educational practice:

And I guess that's a difference between novices and advanced. You test your theories and you try new things and you find out why it works. I guess that the difference is try it, reflect on it, change it (Paul, teacher).

Helen (manager) stated that teaching a range of AQF levels was essential in developing skills as a teacher and John (teacher) agreed that teaching at diploma or advanced diploma level was necessary for the development of high level skills. They commented that it required more research on the content, more and deeper reflection on how to present the learning and the students were more likely to question what was being delivered. This required deeper consideration on the teachers' part.

John agreed that teaching at the higher levels, diploma and advanced diploma, was different from teaching at lower level certificates stating that:

The intellectual demands of the students, so this is someone who is entering into a university qualification shortly or may already have one.... They will challenge you, they will challenge your interpretations, they will challenge the content of your materials, they will challenge delivery techniques and when you provide them feedback they will want to discuss it (John, teacher).

He identified that the difference between the motivations of the student cohort contributed to the different teaching approach required stating that:

Whereas someone at Certificate 3 level is just happy to pass so they can get their pay-rise and that's as much as they can invest in the process, because the reality is they are busy working the filling machine and if they have their bit of paper that allows them to go up a grade, they will be happy. Whereas someone who comes in at a high level is generally trying to seek a skills set that will advance them in their career (John, teacher).

6.5 The role of the educational manager in capability development

Several of the interviewees commented on the important role of educational managers in contributing to capability development of all teaching staff including novices, those progressing to advanced practice and advanced practitioners. All of the managers interviewed said that engagement in the formal mentoring of staff, particularly new staff, was acknowledged as a required part of a senior lecturer's role. Educational leadership was vested in both the experienced teaching staff and the educational manager. Managers are then describing part of their role as instructing and encouraging advanced skills teachers to fulfil their role as mentors and leaders.

Julie (teacher) said that having an educational manager who understood the teacher's job and the complexities of the changes that had occurred over the last few years was essential. She cited the example of a teacher who was coming back to teaching after a few years away and the expectation that this teacher would be able to resume the teaching job again without professional development. Given the changes that had occurred in those years, particularly with regard to quality requirements and systems changes, this was seen as an unrealistic expectation.

The interview responses which described the expectations that teachers had of their managers and of educational managers themselves could be categorised as follows:

1. Role of educational management and leadership for capability development
 - a. For novice teachers
 - i. Establishing mentoring relationships
 - ii. Encouraging informal learning strategies in teams
 - b. For advanced practitioners
 - i. Providing structured opportunities and challenges to job roles

- ii. Providing opportunities for creativity and leadership in the program
- iii. Supporting formal and informal mentoring strategies.

Helen (manager) said that access to the senior lecturer as a mentor was essential and contributed to good outcomes for the novice teacher. Helen saw that providing this opportunity for access to a mentor and giving the appropriate support to both mentor and novice teacher was a key component of her role as a manager. Jane (manager) described another aspect of inducting a novice teacher into a team of teachers thus:

...having a really good team structure is incredibly important. What we need now because it is very complex and always changing is better team support structure so that there are senior lecturers or more experienced lecturers that people can go to and there is also a team that meets regularly and shares resources or works from the same resources (Jane, manager).

Jane (manager) added that strong team connectedness was very important and contributed to informal learning and mentoring.

What we have worked on over the years and I think something that has always been a part of the Program gets back to that team approach. Making sure people are connected. We have always put time and money into bringing people together and that's where we can promote those things. People get to see the champions and hear from them (Jane, manager).

Pam (manager) said that in her role as a manager, she tried to organise for each novice to have two mentors. This included one from the workgroup who was delivering the same qualifications and units of competence and another from a different program area. Her rationale behind this additional mentor was that sometimes it was easier for the novice teacher to ask questions of the person from outside the program without feeling embarrassed. Pam's practice of providing two mentors showed her concern and empathy for the teachers and her willingness to provide a pragmatic (and potentially costly) solution to a challenge.

I like to get two mentors for people. Someone from within the same environment. So someone teaching the same stuff. But also another lecturer from another program area, mainly because it encourages people to look outside their own workgroup. I have found it helps a new lecturer because sometimes they will talk to the mentor outside their program, rather than the one inside the program for fear they will think I am 'dumb' or whatever (Pam, manager).

Helen said that some lecturers who were asked to observe other teachers, or asked to team teach, felt resentment about it at first.

It's like I am criticising her skills... She doesn't have the confidence to do it and she feels like I'm being critical and I'm not (Helen, manager).

She said that later, however, the teacher had been "grateful for the opportunity and the experience" because she had observed several different teaching styles.

they have their own [teaching] style, but they see how they could do things differently. It's all situational learning really and I think that helps to develop people (Helen, manager).

Both Pam and Helen (managers) said that it is now more difficult in regional areas, because the teaching teams are too small to set up effective mentoring programs locally, and while it is possible to set up a mentor with skype and other technologies from a distant campus, informal mentoring opportunities, such as meeting over a coffee, are less likely to occur. Peter (teacher) made the point that this is not likely to be a problem specific to TAFE in rural areas, but would be an issue for all smaller RTOs in the VET sector as a whole. Steve (teacher) and Helen (manager) agreed that pedagogy and teaching strategies were not the focus they should be. They described a situation where systems issues and audit compliance were the major foci. Creativity in teaching and learner engagement were secondary. Julie noted that audit requirements had constrained flexibility and creativity in teaching.

I think audit requirements have really put a constraint on things as well. You know there used to be some level of flexibility and creativity (Julie, teacher).

Peter viewed student engagement as the mark of 'good' teaching in saying:

[The emphasis is on] compliance when really a good training organisation engages students (Peter, teacher).

All of the examples that have been discussed above show how managers work with teams to provide opportunities and indicate the requirement for sound relationships of trust between managers and teachers. Negotiating for teachers who might think they have attained a level of advanced practice to sit in on other advanced practice teachers to learn new skills requires tact and empathy. Finding the budgetary means to allocate resources for mentoring and working through the issues of personality as well as the nuances of confidence and competence requires skill. Building teams that support and enhance teaching practice across a broad geography, even if within the one faculty field, requires commitment to those teachers and their students.

While the interviewees expected that managers would assist by providing the structured opportunities necessary for skills development to advanced levels, they were well aware that personal responsibility and motivation was also required. The managers stated that there were two critical factors for developing and maintaining the skills for advanced practice. These were access to solid professional development workshops and seminars that were customised for advanced practice and opportunities to demonstrate creativity and leadership within the program.

Helen (manager) was aware that providing these workshops and seminars was essential and needed to be organised and planned systematically.

they need access to solid PD that challenges their thinking and they need time to be able to think strategically and not about when are we doing the timetable for next semester (Helen, manager).

Jane (manager) agreed that skilled staff needed challenges and the opportunity to become expert in new endeavours stating that:

I think they need to be challenged by their job and if they are doing what they have always done and they become expert at it and [then] they become complacent and they stop even looking for the next best thing. You've always got to have the next best thing out there and good people are seeking that and if they get thwarted in their search for that, they get jaded and they undermine. You can't do this for everyone, but for most good people, what I have seen over the years, is that they have moved on to the next best educational thing, or vocational thing in their sector and then they apply all of their skills to that new thing. They are learning still and they are changing and they are moving on to something else and then they are able to re-create themselves and become a leader of that next thing (Jane, manager).

Jane saw that new learnings and the opportunity to pass that on to others was crucial to advanced practice.

I think that you want to keep your high end lecturers being creative and learning new things and handing it on, otherwise they become jaded and leave (Jane, manager).

Pam said that highly skilled teachers:

Need to have opportunities to have higher level conversations, but they need to have a network of other practitioners that can network and share. They need the opportunity to attend conferences and forums about those teaching strategies, because they are the ones who lead other staff. ...they also need to feel like they have a little bit of freedom or opportunity to be innovative, understanding the risks involved, and to formalise their studies (Pam, manager).

The managers who participated in the study did appear to know and understand their role regarding the skills development of their staff. They had embedded systems for mentoring relationships within their teams and identified the difficulties of keeping advanced practitioners interested and at a high level. The systems that the interviewee managers had implemented, however, were not systemic across TAFE SA and depended on the personal inclination of Jane, Pam and Helen. It would appear that educating managers across all program areas regarding these skills development strategies that Jane, Pam and Helen had found effective would be beneficial for all managers. This would seem to be an opportunity for growth in knowledge about professional development systems, systems that have proved to be effective for some programs and could be customised for the whole organisation.

Some of the key factors that the managers and teachers had identified as significant for effective management of workplace learning for advanced practice were also endorsed by Eraut.

the key factors affecting informal learning are appropriate levels of challenge and support, confidence and commitment and personal agency. These factors, in turn, are influenced by

the allocation, structuring and perceived value of the work. Managers should be appraised on their crucial role in developing learning (Eraut, 2010, p. 37).

Eraut (2010) endorsed the role that Jane, Pam and Helen articulated. This role prioritises the affordances that every organisation needs to make available to staff if they are to learn their job role and upgrade their skills from novice to advanced practice.

6.5.1 Ensuring workplace learning strategies are more effective

The three managers particularly expressed a view that a more formalised and planned approach to continuing professional development would be more effective. Helen (manager) and John (teacher) observed that once the lecturing staff had acquired enough pedagogical skills and formal qualifications to get through the salary barriers, their concentration then was on industry knowledge and currency at the expense of enhanced pedagogical capability.

Some of the challenges that had involved very successful workplace learning strategies included the implementation of online learning, clustering competencies so that assessment was more holistic and formalising networks to discuss teaching strategies. Paul (teacher) was keen to understand how these issues were addressed in different programs because he said that programs needed to learn from each other rather than 'silo' the information.

Jane, Pam and Helen (managers) reported that they used team seminars and forums to bring in industry experts to communicate to staff about current trends in industry and innovations that were happening in industry workplaces. Jane said that TAFE was:

...increasingly getting lecturers out of their comfort zone in the classroom and in the institution, into organisations; and the more that happens the less complacent they become as well. They realise we have a lot of people who think they are expert, but as soon as they step outside into a more integrated workplace delivery model, they realise what they don't know. Given that this is the way of the future, the staff have got to keep up with what's new out there and keep on recognising how they fit, where their skills fit (Jane, manager).

The engagement in learning at the individual level is enhanced by the workplace group or faculty learning. Cox analysed workplace learning that is structured and formalised and argued for a formal model of reflective practice that "will give people insights into a wider range of work-based issues and thus further their development" (2005, p. 46).

Using reflective practice techniques began to make students conscious of the potential for learning through their work...Rather than being troubled by change and discord, or being condemned to repeat their mistakes over and over, reflective learners could begin to view each new challenge as a learning opportunity (Cox, 2005, p. 46).

6.6 Conclusion

This chapter has reported the results from the analysis of interviews with experienced TAFE teachers and educational managers regarding their understanding of what constitutes, supports and constrains the journey of novices to advanced practitioners. It reports the lived experience of

proficient teachers and details their experience of 'how' they learned to be teachers in the TAFE environment. This included descriptions of the strategies they employed to progress from novice to advanced practice and the strategies they used to maintain advanced practice.

The following chapter will discuss the research findings from Chapters 4, 5, and 6 using the context of the literature review in Chapter 2 to analyse and understand effective strategies for building capability of VET teachers and to recommend a framework for this skills development.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION

7.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses the key issues derived from the research findings outlined in Chapters 4, 5 and 6 in the context of the literature reviewed in Chapter 2. It seeks to provide an understanding of the main factors that are relevant to the professional learning of VET teachers as they progress from novice to advanced practitioner. Achieving an understanding of the pedagogical knowledge and skills required for TAFE teachers and the means by which they are acquired, maintained and further developed, is central to this research. In order to achieve such an understanding, key themes have been identified from the document analysis detailing the unique characteristics of VET teaching reported in Chapter 4, and the implications from these characteristics for forecasting the professional learning needs for VET teaching detailed in Chapter 5. The data derived from interviews with experienced TAFE leaders and teachers is analysed in Chapter 6. These key themes are that:

- VET teachers' have dual capability requirements: to be knowledgeable and skilled in VET pedagogy and additionally to be vocationally current;
- The required minimum teaching qualification is inadequate to guarantee quality teaching and is completed as a measure of compliance with Quality Standards and not for any contribution to the development of teaching capability
- VET teachers' development did not make use of structured workplace learning strategies; and
- The sector lacked a systematic approach to teacher development, which is left to and reliant upon the individual educational manager to foster and encourage.

There is no doubt that the VET sector is important to the national economy and to employment outcomes for learners. There is, however, significant evidence that a considerable proportion of VET learners have educational challenges, either because of their previous school experience or because they have language, literacy and numeracy (LLN) skills deficiencies (Productivity Commission, 2011). The quality of teaching, therefore, is critical to improving the learning outcomes for VET students. Quality teaching in VET education can only occur when teachers are truly 'dual professionals', namely, experienced and knowledgeable in both their vocational field and in how to teach in that field in ways that meet the needs of the learners.

'Good' teaching is critical to the outcomes for the sector, for workplaces and learners. What is required, therefore, is a long-term, planned and systematic approach to the development, maintenance and enhancement of teachers' skills, knowledge and experience in both education and their vocational specialisations, and their professional learning during the duration of their

career. This research has found that effective outcomes for teacher capability requires a combined strategy of gaining formal qualifications in both education and vocational fields, and a deliberate program of on-the-job learning informed by a theoretical framework. The key issues that arise from the research are the importance of:

1. Generating a shared understanding of what constitutes 'good' teaching in VET.
2. Responding to the challenges of developing 'good' teachers.
3. Identifying and addressing deliberate approaches to capability development and the recognition of the important role that workplace learning has in that process.
4. Adopting an educative narrative that facilitates and supports a professional approach to VET teaching.
5. Addressing the critical role of educational leadership and management in capability development.

An important issue identified in the document analysis and the in depth interviews with experienced VET teachers and educational managers was that 'good' teaching in VET is not well understood, documented or celebrated. The sector needs a more educative narrative that investigates and implements a professionalised approach to VET education and VET teachers. It is important that this narrative should also acknowledge that the role and functions of educational managers and leaders in the VET sector are pivotal to capability development for teachers in their teams. In response to this narrative, the sector needs to employ more deliberate approaches to both capability development and the use of workplace learning strategies as a purposeful methodology for capability development.

7.2 Generating a shared understanding of what constitutes 'good' teaching in VET

All three managers argued that allocating time and resources to bring their program staff together to deliberately pursue the development of pedagogical skills was an essential component of professional learning for developing teachers. Pam (manager) had given half the time allocated for the faculty semester conference to the educational leaders so that the team could focus on good teaching. Jane (manager) said that her faculty was now emphasising the assessment of whether staff had the necessary skills to progress to Step 6. Jane (manager) said that in this situation the focus was on compliance as the first order question. The requirements for progressing from one step to the next in classification stages failed to be mentioned by anyone despite the fact that these stages in teacher development do require extra skills and the acquisition of qualifications. Are these not seen as building skills? Do they not contribute to building the skills for 'good' teaching? It is certainly the supposition that they do and the fact that the role of this documented statement of progression was not mentioned would seem to indicate that this aspect of teacher development was tarnished with the 'compliance' ethos. Steve (teacher) said "well at least we are now

compliant". He seemed to imply that perhaps they could now move on to becoming good teachers.

Peter (teacher) said that he didn't know if he was a good teacher or not. He also said that there was not enough focus on whether people were good teachers or not, but more focus on compliance with audits or other administrative matters. He also stated that there was very little, if any, peer review except for the learning materials that teachers used for their classes or workplace assessments. This area of review would have arisen because learning materials are usually developed for a team of teachers rather than for individuals.

It appeared that there was no definition of what constituted 'good' teaching and that there was no documentation regarding the criteria for good teaching. The problem is that there is no shared understanding of what constitutes good teaching. Apart from those individual staff and educational leaders who provided mentor assistance and were responsible for the teaching advice given at faculty forums and seminars, the emphasis was not on good teaching but almost exclusively on compliance with ASQA audit requirements. As has already been established, compliance is not a guarantee of quality teaching and learning. The audit requirements do have a background in the principles of good teaching, but the philosophy that underpins audits does not emphasise educational theory. Learning to teach by audit requirements is inefficient, ineffective and undermines VET educational theoretical perspectives.

Research on and the subsequent development of documented criteria for VET pedagogy would seem to be an area of study that could prove to be valuable in more effectively developing VET teachers' capability. Incorporating this knowledge of VET pedagogy in formal qualifications for VET teachers would be of practical assistance to those teachers wishing to progress from novice to advanced practice.

7.3 Responding to the challenges of developing 'good' teachers

The two sources of data, namely, the interviewees and the document analysis, argued that developing competence as a 'good' teacher is complex and multi-faceted and requires the adoption of diverse strategies. Enabling teachers to become more proficient in their role as teacher includes ensuring that the programs to support teacher development employ deliberate strategies that encompass both formal qualifications in VET education and informal team-based strategies that support good teaching. The focus in this next section is on the formal qualifications necessary for VET teachers. The interviewees were of the view that higher qualifications to master's level were necessary. Furthermore, even if the theoretical perspectives were not immediately practicable, teachers would be enabled to embed these theories into practice given time for reflection and the experience of further practice.

7.3.1 Formal vocational qualifications

Two of the interviewees began their careers in education as high school teachers. The other seven interviewees began their career in VET as industry experts and have learned their skills for teaching on the job. One teacher was involved in the delivery of the core units for his industry area and had successfully completed many university short courses relating to his teaching, but had not worked in this industry. Maintaining industry currency for the teaching staff is an ongoing issue for the VET sector and the sector's teachers. This is due to teachers with industry backgrounds focusing initially on gaining teaching skills and perhaps relying on their existing industry networks and experience to maintain industry currency. The only interviewee who commented on his personal work experience or vocational currency thought that it was what gave him confidence to teach. Several other interviewees commented that teaching in the workplace and consulting with human resources personnel within enterprises enabled them to maintain currency with their industry and contributed to their ongoing knowledge of their industry field. The experience detailed in the Section 1.4 of this thesis described the results of a deliberate strategy following the implementation of the CURCAT® online survey. The institute results two and a half years later showed that vocational qualifications had risen and staff rated their industry currency more highly than at the earlier survey. The strategies of supporting formal vocational qualifications and funding small-scale action learning projects focused on improving staff engagement with, and knowledge about, their industries contributed to this improvement. These projects demonstrated that teacher development can occur at the local level. Small-scale, but deliberate approaches can make a difference.

7.3.2 Formal education qualifications

Two interviewees did not have a degree in either education or vocational education. These two teachers, however, had completed the Diploma of VET that contributes substantially to a degree course if they wished to undertake the degree. The other interviewees were highly qualified with degrees in vocational education or higher levels of qualification. Teachers and managers concurred that formal higher level qualifications in teaching were necessary for teacher progression to advanced practice. The evidence gathered from the interviewees was unequivocal in its attitude to formal higher qualifications for VET teachers. Three interviewees believed that formal higher qualifications to master's level were necessary for advanced practice as a professional. Perhaps the fact that almost all of the interviewees had gained higher education qualifications in education contributed to their bias towards higher education. They gave credible evidence about the positive impact that higher education had had on their teaching careers and those of other staff.

There was a difference of opinion, however, about the Diploma of VET. This difference may have been due to different motivations for studying this course. Tom (teacher) had completed the diploma for reclassification and salary purposes. In contrast, Peter's (teacher) manager had

organised diploma studies for their team in response to challenges with students regarding LLN issues. Peter reported that the team found the study very useful. In effect, their manager had allocated time and support for the learning and had assumed responsibility for doing so. In contrast, Tom had invested enough personal time to achieve a monetary goal and had not had a practical teaching related goal for his individual initiative. One interviewee cited the fact that the diploma could be gained online without any deliberate practice improvements.

There is compelling evidence, however, that the Certificate IV in TAE is inadequate in current content, form and practice. This qualification has been a source of contention and frustration for a significant part of the VET sector for many years. The managers who were interviewed were emphatic in saying that the Certificate IV was not effective in developing the teaching capability of early career teachers. One manager (Helen) commented that novice teachers found the Certificate IV 'boring' and that it did not provide them with good models of creative teaching and learning practices or harness their enthusiasm for VET teaching.

It appeared that delivery of the Certificate IV did not emphasise the key aspects of CBT sufficiently to enable novices to practice confidently or competently. Steve (teacher) stated that he had difficulty with assessment in CBT because he had been trained initially as a secondary school teacher and the two styles of assessment were so different. Assessment is a small unit in the Certificate IV in TAE, and this critical area of knowledge and capability can only be improved by ongoing workshops and professional learning opportunities that address new and current research and thinking about assessment literacy and practices.

Since the Certificate IV in TAE is compulsory study, a compliance mentality in the delivery of this qualification represents a lost opportunity to demonstrate a model of CBT that incorporates educational theory, training knowledge, practice and mentor involvement. This model could then be taken as a blueprint for novices as they learn how to embed these practices in their own teaching in their vocational area. As described in Appendix 4 (Conference Paper), in my role as Manager for Teaching and Learning, the Certificate IV was deliberately delivered over a period of three terms. In this way, staff had time to theorise and practice what they were learning as part of the classes and in discussion with a formally appointed mentor. This systematic approach was effective in both developing teacher capability and in promoting a learning culture as the results of the second survey demonstrated.

The evidence from the research data was that strategies employed to support progression from novice to advanced practice were not systematic or deliberate. A deliberate systematic approach is dependent upon a number of factors. Firstly, an organisational policy framework is required to support access to learning opportunities for all staff. Other factors include a focus on knowledge and skills development that is targeted to teachers' needs, a plan for capability development that is evidence-based, in line with the knowledge and skills gaps, and a means of measuring

participation and improvements in skills and knowledge. Such analysis of these measurements has the potential to inform the review of the organisation's professional learning program.

The allocation of sufficient resources is a major factor for ensuring an effective system-wide approach. These resources must be available to plan and deliver the program of professional learning and to support the managers and leaders. A systematic approach to professional development for VET teachers will involve both formal study and practice-based learning options, which will be presented as either the development of an individual's capability or that of a team or group learning strategies. The program needs to be deliberate and structured for effective learning regardless of the mix of formal and informal learning.

7.3.3 Summary

The VET sector needs 'good' teachers. This is not only because VET learners present with a number of learning challenges and a deficit educational history, but also because of the Australian Government agenda to increase the skill and qualification level of the national workforce. This high skills agenda should include the national VET teaching workforce. Good teaching is characterised by many different dynamics that have been outlined in the document analysis and the literature review. These characteristics include a sound knowledge base, formal higher qualifications in VET education, a comprehensive understanding of VET learners and their needs, industry currency including vocational qualifications to the level required for teaching and a personal professional approach to the practice of teaching. A systematic and deliberate approach is required if the acquisition of this complex set of skills and knowledge for VET teaching is to be guaranteed. The next section discusses how this deliberate and systematic approach to capability development could be managed and effected.

7.4 Deliberate approaches to capability development and the role of workplace learning.

There was evidence of an apparent over-reliance on informal workplace learning strategies and that these strategies were not systematic or ever evaluated for their effectiveness. These strategies included mentoring, reflection on practice and using team meetings and forums as a platform for advanced practitioners to 'teach' other team members aspects of VET teaching. While it is entirely appropriate that these informal strategies are relied on for skills development, there was no mention made in the documents that were analysed or in the interviews of any guidelines or procedures that would enable assessment of progress, and no mention of how advanced practitioners, for example, might be equipped to facilitate system-wide assessment and evaluation of the workplace learning strategies.

The interviewees represented opinions and program knowledge from six different program areas. It was clear from the interviews that there were common themes from across these program areas.

The areas of conjunction included the importance of mentors, the importance of reflection on review of practice and the requirement for higher qualifications in education. Despite these areas of agreement, there were no common systems for CPD that applied across these different program areas.

Cox, (2005), Boud (2012) and Billett (2008) have all pointed out that people do learn at work without intervention, but what they learn and how effectively they practice what they learn is an important consideration. All of the interviewees claimed that, as novices, they learned by watching their mentor and copying them. Only when they were more confident did they further develop their own set of skills and their own teaching style. For all of the interviewees, the practice components were indeed authentic. They learned their practice as teachers while they engaged in their teaching responsibilities. Little prevailed, however, to assist these novice teachers to subject the teaching observed, and that which they acquired through emulation, to questioning and critical scrutiny. Observation of experienced teachers was viewed as a lifeline to survival as a teacher. The question to be raised here, *is this enough to meet the future workforce educational agenda?*

7.4.1 The role of mentors

The role of mentors was regarded as an important feature of inducting novice teachers in VET, especially in the area of understanding and implementing CBT. All the interviewees argued that a mentor had been the most valuable asset to them in learning how to teach in VET. Interviewees described the strategies that the mentors used to assist them learn the practice of teaching as an 'apprenticeship'. In contrast to the interviewees' description of their 'apprenticeship', apprenticeships in the trade areas are characterised by formal contracts of learning and formal documentation regarding progress and evaluation of progress. Cooper, Orrell and Bowden described a 'cognitive apprenticeship' as referring "to the thinking processes that experts use when handling complex tasks and solving problems in the workplace" (2010, p. 90). The apprenticeship that the interviewees described was not formal at all and had no methodology for evaluating or assessing progress or for staging appropriately the level of skills that needed to be acquired. The model of knowledge transfer was more akin to transmission.

For some staff, the relationship with their mentor was informal, but for others their manager had instigated a more structured formal relationship. Working alongside others and working with peers for specific purposes or on projects inevitably gives rise to learning. The success of such strategies, however, is clearly dependant on the relationships within the group. In recognition of the high level of reliance on informal mentors to 'teach' the novice teachers, a deliberate program of training for mentors and mentees would be an effective addition to the knowledge base of both, and may be a useful means of contributing to ongoing positive relationships. This program would also be more efficient for time poor professionals than continuing with the current largely individualistic and ad hoc approach.

Participants identified that a critical gap in the mentoring in their program was the lack of any mechanism for evaluating or assessing progress in practice. What was obvious was the existence of a culture of informal mentoring in the form of practical assistance, and a general kind of friendly advice that was given not only to novice teachers but also to anyone who was challenged in their practice. While this informal review may have a productive place in skills development, it does not provide staff with the theoretical framework that could contribute to their capacity to adapt others' successful practice in atypical or difficult contexts.

7.4.2 Using reflection and review for improved practice

Reflection was also seen as a more informal undertaking and one not necessarily designed to engender improvements in practice. While the interview participants agreed that reflection on practice was an important tool for determining improvements, some interviewees complained that productivity targets were now so high that there was no time for reflection on practice. Cox (2005) and Harrison (2009) confirmed that reflection and review was an important factor in skills development, but that reflection which promotes learning needs to be structured and time to undertake it effectively needs to be resourced. While the interviewees were positive in their endorsement of their teaching 'apprenticeship' that was supported by mentors, and noted that it could be described as a model of competency-based training, they also complained that there was insufficient time to reflect on and review their practice. Guiding reflection and review should be a critical function for mentors, but they will need support and resources to enable this process to be effective.

Due to the largely informal nature of existing reflective practice amongst novice practitioners, these staff fail to gain adequate assessment of their progress in developing their learning and teaching practice or of their growth in understandings of an explicit theoretical framework of VET pedagogy, in particular CBT. While most interviewees described engaging in informal reflection, which usually occurred at the time of the event or soon after, the managers also described team forums or meetings that occurred each semester and provided opportunities for reflection after the event. These opportunities were largely organised and systematically provided by the educational managers or leaders and were highly valued. They occurred, however, largely due to personal disposition and inclination of the managers, rather than a recognised aspect of their work as managers.

7.4.3 Theoretical framework for practice

This research has identified gaps in the theoretical defence for the Certificate IV in TAE and for a VET pedagogy. Theory that underpins practice is an essential component of learning to practice because it enables the practitioner to make changes to practice as contexts change or atypical situations arise. The participants in this study did not mention or seem to seek a theoretical framework to enable staff to think their way through problems. Largely, they sought a review

process that focused on practical solutions that others had found successful. By contrast, Eraut argued that “learning to practice and learning to use knowledge acquired in education settings do not happen automatically” (2010, p. 51). He argued that there were three main problems around the issue of applying theory to practice. Eraut’s (2010) contention is that learning to practice takes both time and support and that rarely is enough time or support offered or organised. Furthermore, there is often no clarity about the responsibility for providing this support.

Eraut (2010) emphasises that applying theoretical learning to practice is difficult and this challenge was certainly confirmed by the interviewees. The evidence from the interviews would appear to endorse further resources and more practical support for those staff who are enrolled in formal qualifications. Educational managers and leaders would enhance the development of their teaching workforce were they to instigate formal communities of practice comprising those who are studying higher education qualifications. This strategy would assist in supporting applied learning models where theory and practice come together in workplace projects or study groups. John (teacher) did say that although he struggled to see the relevance of some of the degree studies, he had found it helped him further on when he had had time to reflect on the content of the course and apply it to his practice.

Harris (2015) contends that VET has lost its way and that the industry-education pendulum has swung too far towards industry control. VET needs a vision for teacher development established in a work-integrated learning model that has a deliberate purpose. This thesis has demonstrated that, in too many instances, the purpose of VET teacher training would appear to be compliance with the regulations, particularly, but not exclusively, in regard to the completion of the Certificate IV in TAE. This compliance approach in some instances has become the norm rather than learning for quality teaching and learning.

Perhaps the struggle to integrate theory of teaching with practice occurs because there is insufficient educational theory in the Certificate IV in TAE competencies, or because insufficient time and deliberateness has been allocated to develop this capability. The Certificate IV in TAE is completed as quickly as possible for compliance purposes and learning to practice is dominated by the concept of copying the mentor rather than engaging with VET educational theory. Formally constituted communities of practice with an experienced facilitator would enable learners to engage with others and to expose opportunities for the integration of theory and practice.

There is a lack of a curriculum for workplace learning. This well used strategy needs its own curriculum that is integrated with the theoretical knowledge gained in higher level formal qualifications. VET teachers need a curriculum that integrates theory and practice and is assessable against the criteria established via a set of standards for VET teachers. Workplace learning situates learners in a workplace learning context with clearly defined learning objectives and expectations of learning. Without the framework of a curriculum of learning objectives, what is

actually learned is more of following how others, including a mentor, teach, and copying their practice regardless of its effectiveness and its transferability. The analysis of the semi-structured interviews in reference to situational learning identified that any wisdom derived from practice was developed informally and that this learning was rarely shared with colleagues or documented for the use of others. It may be shared at faculty seminars or forums but, as these were only held once each semester, much of the personal learning was lost in that timeframe and in the large agendas for these seminars.

Practice-based learning does not take place in isolation but rather in the company of advanced practitioners who may be mentors. Practice-based learning requires the support of managers and leaders responsible for providing the necessary resources and the guided timetable of learning opportunities. The organisation, which has the responsibility for enabling policies and procedures that contribute to skills growth and the resources for higher level studies, is a major component of practice-based learning. In the case of VET teachers, industry networks and partnerships provide openings for maintaining and expanding vocational currency.

Cooper et al. cite three different models of the integration of work and learning. Their notion of a professional work integrated learning model, which has been applied to many different professions including law, surveying, occupational therapy and engineering, is applicable to the VET sector.

This model has:

A defining feature of professional work integrated learning programs is the existence of regulatory requirements regarding student learning outcomes, expectations regarding learning, length and timing of placements, supervisory requirements and the type and nature of the learning experiences (Cooper et al., 2010, pp. 44-45).

The aim of this model is to provide students with the skills and experience and responsibilities that “develop through engagement in professional workplace activities” (Cooper et al., 2010, p. 45). The features of this model include a strong regulatory environment relating to practicum in a professional setting.

The interviewees in this study did not describe this set of activities as part of their lived experience of mentoring or early career teaching practice. The deficits that were described in the research phase, both in the analysis of the documents and in the interviews, included a number of important issues. These were:

- the lack of a vision for teacher development other than a compliance culture,
- a workplace that utilises mentors in an informal manner without training or documented scope for the role,
- a lack of engagement with educational theory which results in the lack of support for the integration of theory and practice, and
- the lack of a curriculum for workplace learning and development which has implications for

the assessment of progress.

The discussion above has pointed to the conclusion drawn in this study that there is a the lack of a systematic approach to teacher development across the sector or even across programs within the one RTO. It also pointed to a need for further resources for the important task of teacher development within the VET sector. While there is a great deal of research about VET and VET educational theory, almost none of it is conducted by VET for its own purposes; it is largely conducted by those outside the VET system. This is a significant deficiency and contributes to VET being seen as the 'poor cousin' among the education sectors in Australia.

All interviewees identified learning how to teach during the experience of teaching as the most important means of learning for novice teachers. This form of learning was seen as practical. In these conversations, practical skills were privileged over theory about pedagogy. In some cases, it was obvious that the interviewees lacked the language to discuss theoretical constructs and frameworks about their teaching or the theoretical frameworks that support informal learning in the workplace.

An over-reliance on informal learning in the workplace was apparent in all interviews. All the teachers spoke of the importance of mentors, either formally engaged or informally, and they were also explicit about the importance of learning from team members and team forums. There are significant gaps and silences amongst the VET practitioners and theorists in regard to teacher development as well as some practical problems with this informal approach. None of the interviewees spoke of the need for a formal approach to teacher training. Small teams, particularly those in regional campuses or employed by small niche-based private RTOs, will not have easy access to good mentors and there was no mention of a training program or a documented procedure for mentoring or supporting the mentors. There was no documented scope for the mentoring relationship and no means of assessing whether it was effective. Mentors' practice was 'copied' in the early stages of a teaching career and teachers developed their own style later, all largely without critique or systematic evaluation. Mere imitation of others' teaching practice is a problem because it lacks a basis of first order principles that allows adaptation of practice to new contexts. These deficiencies can only be remedied at the local level or across the system if they are, first of all, recognised as problematic. The skills and knowledge learned in the practice of teaching should be assessed and recognised in a systematic and deliberate methodology that contributes to teachers gaining formal higher qualifications.

7.5 Adopting an educative narrative that facilitates and supports a professional approach to VET teaching

This research has identified an imbalance between industry leadership, power and engagement with the sector and VET education. As already alluded to in Chapter 4, industry has a different perspective from education regarding 'time'. For industry 'time is money' and so both the

Productivity Commission (2011) and Skills Australia (2010) reported that industry expectations were that CBT would be delivered in the workplace to save time and be more cost effective as employees learned in their own environment. Industry expectations were that apprenticeships would be fast-tracked and no longer be about 'time served', and that training would be more flexible and more targeted to enable students to be 'job ready'. This approach to fast-tracking learning seems to prevail in the training offered to novice teachers. The voice of education has been overwhelmed and diminished under the pressure for industry efficiency. Learning to teach and to acquire the knowledge, skills and experience required for the professional judgement of assessment requires both time and reflection. The application of this knowledge in practice, however, is a challenge that needs both an explicit theoretical framework and a deliberate practical system for developing capability.

The role of the VET teacher is complex, and Harris maintains that the dual nature of pedagogy and industry currency is one that comes together sometimes but not all the time. His view of the VET teacher is an individual:

who as well as their occupational expertise, can decipher and creatively interpret Training Packages, understand the psychology and sociology of learning and curriculum design and evaluation, so as to develop meaningful curricula; know how to teach creatively and imaginatively so as to engage disengaged learners put off by previous educational experiences; assess without defaulting to ticks and flicks on standard checklists; understand how the VET system in which they work is contextually constructed and managed; critically appraise what goes on around them (Harris, 2015, p. 29).

It is the personal attributes and the personal owning of the professional role that contributes to a professional identity. As already noted, two of the interviewees were ambivalent about their dominant role as teacher. Mark joked, that when asked what he did, he didn't always own up to being a TAFE teacher, preferring sometimes to describe himself in terms of his vocational skills as a mechanic. Peter was unsure how he had progressed to advanced practice and thought perhaps he may not have achieved this yet, despite being regarded by his manager and team as an advanced practitioner. Constructing a professional role for one's self "involves long term self-development to enable you to make the role your own" (Steward, 2009, p. 141).

It could be argued that "it is imperative to explore identity when becoming a professional, because it enhances the professional socialisation process and strengthens agency in practice" (Trede & McEwen, 2012, p. 27). Developing an identity as a TAFE or VET teacher presumes the need to identify with an organisation, and with a group or faculty within that wider organisation. "Identity is about knowing what one stands for. This implies a reflexive consciousness and an external identity" (Trede & McEwen, 2012, p. 30). Developing a positive professional role and personal identity as a teacher has been very difficult in the face of several major national issues including almost constant policy changes for the VET sector, a lack of enthusiasm for TAFE within state governments and the negative press for VET.

7.5.1 Professionalisation of VET

Harris (2015) noted that one of the key issues for the VET sector currently is a lack of vision and goals. This research has found that the sector has focused on industry at the expense of education, and that this has negatively impacted the quality of teaching in the sector. The document analysis cited the professionalisation of the system in the UK and other EU countries and provided evidence that VET in the Australian context needed to adopt a professionalised approach particularly to teaching. Both educational theorists and policy advisers agreed that the VET sector needed to be more professional.

Professions are characterised by a specific knowledge base in an area where the profession is entrusted with the responsibility for critical services to the community (Trede & McEwen, 2012). While documenting and sharing a body of knowledge specifically relating to VET teaching is a key component of developing a culture of VET teaching as a profession, there are other factors which also contribute to an educative narrative and vision. These factors include endorsing Teacher Standards including a code of conduct or ethics for VET teaching, a commitment to an annual prescribed professional learning program, a requirement for VET teachers to acquire higher qualifications than is currently prescribed and the formation of an association of VET teachers which could drive awards for excellence in VET teaching.

7.5.2 Teacher Standards

Currently there are no standards for VET teachers in the Australian VET system. The standards that relate to teaching practice are embedded in the Standards for Registered Training Organisations and teaching quality is viewed as compliance with the regulations, particularly those in Standards 1 and 2. These standards make reference to trainers and assessors, never teachers. Teacher Standards have been developed in other countries including the UK. Such an approach to teacher standards in this country would provide criteria to enable assessment of progress for all levels of the profession and would provide managers and advanced practitioners with an effective tool for supporting and assisting staff to become competent and confident. It would also provide the sector with a tool for planning programs of continuing professional development.

The document analysis claimed that the many terms used for VET practice implied equal status and skills and knowledge requisites. The educationalists specified that different terms implied a difference in role and the expectation of teaching capability skills appropriate for these roles (Wheelahan & Moodie, 2011a) but this is not always clear in the current standards for RTOs. The restructuring of VET teaching roles should be more clearly articulated and the implications for capability and practice made more transparent.

Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) argued that an association or professional body for VET teachers would make a significant contribution to developing VET teaching as a profession. Such an

association could also provide advice regarding the qualifications necessary for different categories of VET teaching and the professional development that would be appropriate for each role.

7.6 Addressing the critical role of educational leadership and management in capability development

TAFE SA managers have complex roles that have been made more complex by major restructuring of institutes, budget cuts, loss of experienced staff to retirement and redundancy, changes to student profiles and the introduction of many private competitors. Harrison argued that managers have important roles in communication about work allocation and making explicit performance expectations and progress. She found that these expectations were “weak in some workplace settings and constructive feedback on performance to be less than optimal in the majority” (2009, pp. 270-271). Harrison maintained that there were two major factors that contributed to whether learning on the job was facilitated or constrained “by (1) the organisation and allocation of work and (2) relationships and the social climate of the workplace” (2009, pp. 270-271). Harrison’s study found this was true regardless of whether researching early career or mid-career workers. “The informal role of managers is probably more important for this purpose than their formal role and people’s learning at work is greatly affected by the personality, interpersonal skills and learning orientation of their manager” (2009, pp. 270-271).

The managers who were interviewed were well qualified and experienced both as teachers and as managers. Educational Managers in TAFE SA programs are required to have qualifications both in education and in management and leadership. Knowledge and experience in these key areas is both required and valued. Eraut’s research showed that managers were pivotal in setting the culture in their teams and in the organisation, and that their role in supporting learning and encouraging staff to undertake learning was an “integral part of their working responsibility and includes the facilitation of learning in their management of performance” (2010, p. 56).

The educational manager interviewees were insistent that new staff needed mentoring in VET’s complex environment. The appointment of suitable and well-qualified mentors is sometimes a difficult area because mentors require credibility within the teaching team in order to develop effective relationships. The practicalities of assisting new teachers who come to the faculty with vocational currency, no teaching knowledge, experience or skills, and no knowledge of the administrative requirements should not be underestimated. The practice of engaging new teachers with a formal mentor relied on the personal commitment of the educational manager or leader and often requires tact and courage.

Helen (manager) spoke of teachers who were experienced but perhaps needed more assistance than they were willing to admit.

I know they are competent but they don't have that depth of knowledge for identifying student learning needs or different learning styles (Helen, manager).

To assist in such an instance, Helen (manager) had required one of her staff to team teach with another more experienced teacher. Helen stated that in this way the teacher was becoming more skilled as she watched and participated in a different kind of teaching with a variety of experts and was more focused on the student learning.

They will try something they have seen others do. It is about confidence because otherwise you stick with what you know will work (Helen, manager).

Jane had invested in bringing her state-wide team together each semester so that the educational leaders in the team could assist others with training in teaching and learning strategies.

Until we got back to some of that (how do people learn and therefore how do we teach?) we felt there was a lot of talk about implementing the training package but not a lot of talk about curriculum development and pedagogy.... We went through a stage of thinking the training package was the curriculum.... We needed to set it up in a way that looked at the content and logical progression for learning and skills (Jane, manager).

Jane was describing a stage of teacher development that engages advanced VET practitioners to support and mentor others in the team as they interpret curriculum and concentrate on pedagogy. Advanced practitioners need also to be considered as part of a community of practice that enables them to continue to grow and evolve their skills and enthusiasm as the context for VET learning and teaching changes and evolves. "The value of workplaces is that they can provide sites for learning vocational, professional, disciplinary and service expertise" (Cooper et al., 2010, p. 39).

Erout (2010) found that managers needed to be well informed about the staff they manage and the relationships within the team. "They also need to delegate or work through other people as well as by direct action. Otherwise they will never have enough time to realise their good intentions and those they manage will have less opportunity for self-development" (Erout, 2010, p. 57). Helen (manager) described a situation where a teacher had not wanted to be mentored and had complained to her that the mentor was too dogmatic to be helpful. Helen had persisted with her strategy because of the teaching skills of the mentor. She was clear that they didn't have to be best friends for the mentoring to be effective. Delegation to a mentor demands trust from both the manager and the mentor. Delegation also demands honest feedback and managers need skills and experience to develop a culture that is trusting and welcomes constructive feedback. Managers and leaders saw the resourcing of mentors as a key capability development strategy and spoke of the necessity for trust.

The many changes that have occurred in VET recently have impacted on the way TAFE SA managers and their teachers work in the sector at present. Harrison (2009) stated that managers have the capacity to use periods of change to manage effective learning and cites Senge (1996)

who:

saw corporate leaders as the social architects of their organisations, needing to work with a broad-based group whose membership stretches beyond the traditional elite of senior managers in order to produce innovative policies, strategies and structures for the future (Harrison, 2009, p. 391).

The appointment and further development of managers is most important in VET organisations if learning, including workplace learning, is to be promoted and supported. While approaches to management development, however, normally emphasise motivation, productivity and appraisal, comparatively little attention is given to supporting the learning of subordinates, allocating and organising work and creating a climate that promotes informal learning. “This imbalance may result from ignorance about how much learning does (and how much more learning might) take place on the job” (Harrison, 2009, p. 271). The managers who were interviewed demonstrated an understanding of their role in the development of learning opportunities for staff. The situation where each manager is developing and implementing strategies individually may contribute to a position where access to professional learning is patchy across an organisation, completely lacking in some areas or available to teachers according to the personal philosophy of management in other areas. The lack of a systematic approach does not support managers who are required to be also focused on the business of VET. This deficiency in implementing a systematic approach is also an inefficient and potentially ineffective strategy for both managers and teachers.

7.7 Conclusion

In the light of the findings of this research from both the critical analysis of the selected documents and the semi-structured interviews, this chapter has discussed the importance of generating a shared understanding of what constitutes ‘good’ teaching in VET and the challenges implicit in developing good teachers. The significance of a deliberate program of professional learning that incorporates workplace learning strategies was also discussed. The research findings have demonstrated that facilitating and driving progress from novice to advanced practice involves a combination of higher level formal qualifications in both education and the specific vocational area, assistance to embed theory from these qualifications into practice and workplace learning opportunities that are structured and formally recognised, with the learning shared with peers. It is necessary for VET to adopt an educative narrative that facilitates and supports a professional approach to VET teaching in order that VET regains a former reputation as a sector focused on quality educational and employment outcomes for students. Educational managers and team educational leaders play a key role in the support of capability development of the VET teaching workforce.

The final chapter will propose recommendations for a framework of professional learning strategies to enable teachers in VET to progress as competent confident professionals from novice to

advanced practice. It will also propose recommendations that it is hoped will prompt the sector to embrace a more professional approach to VET teaching.

CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

8.1 Introduction

This chapter presents concluding explanations and recommendations from the research regarding the framework needed for building capabilities and qualifications for VET teachers as they progress from novice teacher to advanced practice. This research has taken a very pragmatic approach to identifying strategies that could be effective at the local level. These strategies have implications for the development of an educative vision at both the national and local level and, as such, these strategies could be implemented at many local VET teaching organisations or campuses and contribute to improvements in teacher capability. Furthermore, this research has identified a need for the VET sector to look beyond persisting with the current compliance culture and generate an educative vision and culture.

Reports authored by Skills Australia (2010), the Productivity Commission (2011) and Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) argued that the VET sector would play a significant role in both the improvement of higher level skills and in providing the economy with 'job ready' employees. This improvement in skills for job ready employees was viewed as achievable given VET's long record of training and education that targets learners who have not successfully engaged in education generally and in particular with post-school education. These key reports argued for the need to develop the teaching capabilities of VET staff if the sector was to meet the challenges of the national skills agenda and the needs of its learners.

8.2 Research findings

Key findings from the document analysis are that the VET sector needs to be far more explicit about what is 'good' VET teaching. It also needs to be more deliberate in the way it enables teachers to develop their capability for good teaching, assessment and educational leadership practices. In line with this, the VET sector must develop systematic strategies that incorporate deliberate approaches to workplace learning as a means to capability development for teachers. It is time the VET sector recognised the importance of articulating an educative vision and narrative that seeks to achieve a balance between educational interests and industry needs. Educational managers and leaders clearly have an important role in implementation and orchestration of the vision, and this role needs to be recognised and supported so that they can execute their responsibilities for the allocation of resources for teacher capability development.

8.3 Responding to the challenges of developing ‘good’ teachers

The development of ‘good’ teachers is a challenge made more difficult by the lack of a definition of good teaching and the absence of deliberate approaches or sector-wide requirements for capability development. The sector also lacks a shared set of standards for VET teachers and teaching. The implication is that as a result of this deficiency there is no system-wide agreed curriculum for teacher capability development.

Recommendation 1: Plan and Implement a deliberate teacher induction, education and development program.

This program should include a revised and improved Certificate IV in TAE for early career teachers. This qualification must include a formal practicum, which involves mentoring for novice teachers focusing both on how to teach and how to assess student progress. The basis for the Certificate IV in TAE studies should include a clear definition of CBT and how it shapes teaching. Additionally, the question of assessment in CBT needs immediate attention. This need is at two levels; introductory for novice teachers, and then ongoing throughout the career of VET teachers to advance their assessment literacy and to contribute to quality outcomes. Since deep learning takes time and learning to teach is a developmental process, the Certificate IV in TAE should be of sufficient duration to enable early career teachers to move beyond compliance for audit purposes. Novice teachers will require support to progress from a situation of not being competent in entry-level skills and knowledge to a position of competence and established practice.

The participants identified a need for more relevant AQF 6 level qualifications in VET pedagogy for those teachers who are expected to practice with autonomy and this program of learning should include further study on assessment practices. Formal higher education qualifications for advanced VET practitioners should be made available to these educational leaders. Both the Productivity Commission report (2011) and Wheelahan and Moodie’s report (2011) argued that it would not be possible to meet the requirements of the Government’s skills agenda if all, or even the majority, of VET teachers had only the Certificate IV in TAE as their highest level of educational qualification. The acquisition of the qualification in education to AQF 6 level should take the opportunity to incorporate capability learned on the job and accredit this learning as part of the qualification. The outcomes of the document analysis stressed the dual professional nature of VET practice and, therefore, the need for formal mechanisms to increase the level of vocational qualifications above the current standard. The interviewees were adamant that practitioners needed formal higher education qualifications in VET pedagogy in order to provide advanced practitioners a theoretical framework for their pedagogy. This theoretical knowledge enables teachers to understand atypical practice issues from first principles rather than relying on a series of tips and hints from peers. Every RTO, no matter how small, needs practitioners who possess higher level thinking skills and pedagogical knowledge in order to establish educational leadership and mentoring for novice

practitioners within the organisation. To this end, there must be funded opportunities for higher education study and qualifications. Funding for action learning projects focused on vocational currency and the development of industry partnerships also needs to be guaranteed.

8.4 CPD for capability development

Mitchell and Ward's report (2010) maintained that VET practitioners did not have access to adequate professional learning opportunities in order to maintain their skill levels as teachers and the interviewees agreed. Apart from the mandated Certificate IV in TAE or its equivalent, there was a dearth of professional learning particularly for mid-career or experienced teachers. The participants reported that there was very little on offer apart from ad hoc 'events'. Wheelahan and Moodie (2011) advocated a continuing professional development (CPD) approach as did the Productivity Commission report (2011). Deliberate strategies and approaches to capability development of teachers encompass such strategies as individual annual plans for professional learning and a systematic assessment of improvements to practice as a result of this professional learning.

Recommendation 2: Develop and resource a targeted CPD program for capability development.

This program will involve the implementation of an annual professional learning plan for each VET teacher according to skills development needs. From these annual plans, it would be possible to develop and plan continuing professional development activities for program teams or the organisation as a whole. These annual plans should include a process for ensuring that the assessment of capability deficits is a transparent process which involves individual teachers, mentors and educational managers.

Harrison defines the role of Learning and Development specialists in an organisation and the purpose of the role thus:

The primary purpose of learning and development as an organisational process is to aid collective progress through the collaborative, expert and ethical stimulation and facilitation of learning and knowledge that support business goals, develop individual potential and respect and build on diversity (Harrison, 2009, p. 8).

Harrison's (2009) description of what an organisation needs to implement in order to benefit from capability development at the individual and organisational level implies that both leadership and resources must be allocated to the task.

8.5 Identifying deliberate approaches to capability development and recognition of workplace learning in the process.

VET sector teachers are assumed to be expert at integrating workplace learning strategies with

learning for practice across many vocational fields for their own students. This same process should also apply in the development of VET teachers. Billett (2006) and Keating (2006) maintain that learning in the workplace and community are valuable assets for everyone in an enterprise. The integration of theory and practice are critical to a more holistic and authentic educational process. “This very positive impact is rarely accidental” (Cooper et al., 2010, p. 33). These two domains of learning in the workplace and theoretical learning are not meant to compete but be synergistic, enhancing each other. Ensuring this occurs for VET teacher capability development will not happen if the current ad hoc approaches are perpetuated.

Recommendation 3: Develop and systematise workplace learning strategies as part of the formal learning program for VET teachers.

Mentors were described as a powerful asset for novice teachers' learning experience. A more formalised approach, however, which included training for both the mentor and the mentee should be incorporated into initial VET teacher preparation and development. In addition, the scope of the mentoring relationship should be documented and the roles and responsibilities of mentor and mentee clarified. Establishing formal relationships between mentors and mentees that assist a novice teacher to establish their teacher identity should be more than merely a friendly relationship. Supervising and assessing emergent teaching knowledge and skills is a critical component of teacher development progress. An important consideration is the appropriate resourcing of this relationship.

Reflection and review of practice was another aspect of workplace learning that was endorsed by the teachers as a valuable tool for improving teaching practice. The interviewees' description of current practice was of a very informal process. Harrison (2009) and Cox (2005) argued that using reflection for review of practice required formal processes that included a written journal and the assistance of a facilitator. There are reflective practice tools that are already in use in other practice settings. It is questionable whether a generic tool would be appropriate for the diverse range of practices that are the focus of VET education, thus, it may be advisable to tailor reflective practice tools for each industry area within the sector. Using a tool for reflective practice effectively requires an experienced facilitator who assists with reflection and review. Resourcing facilitators to undertake this role is another issue for educational managers and leaders to implement as part of a teacher capability development initiative.

Part of the ASQA audit requirements for all VET students is that a formal RPL process is made available to ensure that students' life experience as well as their educational experience is accredited. This process could also be formalised for VET teachers as they progress in their practice. This will necessarily require the adoption of a formal curriculum that focuses on the competencies of VET teaching. Standards for VET teachers will provide a framework for a curriculum of workplace learning and assessment methodologies for evaluating progress towards

achieving the expected standards of practice.

8.6 Adopting an educative narrative that facilitates and supports a professional approach to VET teaching

The VET sector needs to adopt an educative narrative and vision that facilitates and supports a professional approach to VET teaching. Internationally, a more professional approach to VET teaching has contributed to a more educative narrative and quality outcomes that are currently lacking in the Australian VET sector. Wheelahan and Moodie (2010) cited the example of the equivalent system in the UK where VET teaching has adopted such a professional approach. The features of a more professional VET sector would include standards for teachers, a professional association which would determine categories of membership and an overhaul of the qualifications framework for VET teachers in line with the standards.

Recommendation 4: Develop a framework for the professionalisation of VET.

This recommendation will involve the development of standards for VET teachers that clearly delineate the different roles of VET teacher and workplace trainer, and the other roles which are part of the delivery of VET programs. It will also mean the documentation of the qualifications, skills and knowledge required by each role, and the conditions for the delivery of training that pertain to those roles. As one of the peak industry bodies, TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) is the appropriate body to take up the cause of developing teacher standards and providing leadership to the rest of the sector. If the changes were implemented initially in TAFE alone as a pilot, it would make a contribution to the sector as a whole and potentially be an important driver of change.

Another key aspect of a more professional approach to VET teaching would be the formation of a professional association of VET teachers. This association would be expected to contribute to developing the professional learning program for the VET teaching workforce, developing a code of practice and providing advice regarding teacher quality issues. The role and function of such an association could drive the implementation of national awards for VET teachers to recognise and showcase excellence in VET teaching and learning as occurs in both the compulsory education and higher education sectors.

This association for VET teachers must also be responsible for the development of the criteria for individual awards for excellent teaching. There are associations of secondary teachers across all states, and awards at the state level and nationally that recognise and celebrate excellence in teaching. The formation of a separate VET association, however, will assist in the development of an educative culture within VET and contribute to the development of the VET teachers' identity as educators. It will also signal to industry that VET's role in the national economy is focused on education. It is entirely appropriate for VET to implement similar awards from their own association and, thus, contribute to system-wide understanding of what constitutes good teaching and how to

develop this capability.

There are many VET teachers who are familiar with the nature of a profession because, in their vocational capacity, they belong to one representing their field of practice and adhere to its values and requirements for practice. For example, those VET teachers who teach in accounting are often members of the professional body. Accountants aspire to be Certified Practising Accountants. Membership involves a code of ethics; examinations in accounting knowledge either in VET or for higher studies at a university; practicing as a member with a mentor initially; and adherence to accounting probity rules and culture. Information technology teachers belong to the Australian Computer Society, which, according to its website, exists to “advance professional excellence”. The formation of an association of VET teachers could contribute to achieving this same aim, namely, advancing professional excellence and thus contribute to changing the culture in VET from compliance to quality teaching. TAFE Directors Australia (TDA) could take a leadership role in this project and, again, even if the results initially only applied in the TAFE sector, a more professionalised TAFE could be a driver of significant change for the sector as a whole. While TDA would be asked to lead this project, practitioners must be consulted and involved in providing advice to setting up what will be their association.

8.7 Addressing the critical role of educational leadership and management in capability development

The interviewees were of the view that educational managers and leaders have an important role in developing the capability of teachers in the VET sector. Time poor managers would be assisted in their role of promoting learning and supporting capability development if this role were recognised and valued and they were provided with opportunities that support them in the execution of this role. A training program would not only provide a supportive environment for managers but would also send a clear message to those managers who currently don't see this as an essential part of their role. Participation in this training program will also enable the sharing of experiences from among the group involved in management roles.

Recommendation 5: Formalise the role of VET managers and leaders as orchestrators of educational change to enhance the quality of teacher development.

It was pointed out in the analysis of the data from the interviews that there was an inconsistent understanding of the role of managers and leaders in the important task of capability development of teaching staff. A formal program of training, which focuses on this task and systematises good examples of practice, would be of benefit to both managers and the staff they manage. Harrison & Kessels (2004) cite Bath University researchers, Swart et al. (2003), whose research pointed to what they found to be a new model of people management in which there were three critical factors. These factors were developing the skills and knowledge of individuals, sharing this

knowledge within the organisation and sharing this knowledge with clients and partners. In the case of a VET manager, this will include sharing knowledge with industry partners and clients. This cannot be achieved accidentally, but requires a deliberate approach to ensuring all managers are collectively involved and have clear and articulated responsibilities in this regard.

8.8 Further research required

Cooper et al. found that “assessing work integrated learning and beginning professional capabilities is a challenging and complex process imposing educational, ethical and moral responsibilities on workplace guides and their organisations” (2010, p. 99). This study has shown that advanced practitioners do provide a great deal of support for new teachers in the workplace and advanced practitioners believe that they are assisting novices to become more professional. There was no evidence, however, of any assessment of teachers’ pedagogical skills, apart from a micro teaching practice session in one unit of the Certificate IV in TAE. There is also no systematic way of ensuring that all the mentors and advanced practitioners are working collegially to improve practice. If teachers are to develop capability in the critical area of teaching skills and knowledge, assessment of their practice is essential and it would appear that the advanced practitioners as mentors, along with managers and leaders, should be more intentionally involved in this process. There is a need, then, to assist these experienced staff in the process of assessing teaching capability largely learnt in the workplace. This area of assessing skills for teaching learned in the workplace is one that would benefit from further research.

The introduction to this chapter cited the pragmatic local nature of this research and the fact that the research had focused very clearly on what could be done locally to improve the capability of the VET teachers in the workforce of any RTO. There are many other issues concerning the wider VET sector that are worthy of research. Some of these include:

- The political power of industry groups and the implications of this in terms of creating an imbalance for the skills and capability of VET teachers.
- The impact of universities’ movement into VET qualifications and the implications for both students and public perceptions around VET teaching.
- The failure of public policy to protect students and the sector as a whole from a significant roting of the funds allocated to VET.
- The reasons underlying a perception of VET as significantly different from other education sectors such that none of the requirements for teacher education and development applies to VET.

Each one of these issues is significant enough to require a detailed study. While these issues are beyond the scope of this research, a significant improvement in teacher capability can be achieved at the local level by addressing the recommendations in this chapter. Taking this deliberate

approach to capability development at the local level may have the effect of redressing some of the industry-education imbalance, at least locally and for the pertinent student population.

8.9 Conclusion

This research has identified some practical strategies for adopting a more deliberate approach to VET teacher capability development. In the current milieu, while the interviewees, whether as a teacher or a manager, spoke passionately about their roles and the importance of ensuring successful outcomes for VET learners, it would appear that teacher capability development remains accidental rather than deliberate. There is no evidence to be found of a systematic program of teacher development, although some program areas did appear to be better served than others. In these program areas, this appreciation of the need for a systematic program of teacher development was entirely due to personal disposition and not to any VET system requirements. In contrast to the reported ad hoc, accidental nature of teacher development, this study underscores a strong argument for system-wide, effective, intentionally planned and executed teacher development, in terms of both professional knowledge and skills as well as identity formation.

This study also described a situation where industry has more authority and, in effect, has more power in VET than those who have a concern for educational quality and its enhancement. The VET reform agenda of the last few years has seen a proliferation of privately owned and publicly funded RTOs compete with the longstanding TAFE sector across Australia. Concerns regarding teaching and learning have been deemed to be a question of compliance with ASQA audit requirements rather than a longer-term issue of future proofing the Australian VET workforce. Many hundreds of learners have had expensive sorties into VET only to find their qualifications are rescinded or not valued by employers. Teacher qualifications in VET have been maintained at a low level in comparison with other education sectors and it is only from the beginning of this year (2017) that those staff who teach the teachers have been required to hold a Diploma of VET in order to do so. This qualification too, is lower than the requirements for teacher education professionals either in compulsory education nationally or VET equivalent sectors internationally. It could be said that industry has done quite well out of the VET reform agenda which has invested public money in training and retraining existing employees, in developing and reviewing industry training packages and in developing the assessment tools and the teaching and learning resources for the competencies. There is a question of whether providing public funds to private enterprises, who should perhaps expend their own resources for their own specific workforce development, is a fair and reasonable way of using taxpayers' funds.

This research has raised the contentious issue regarding the use of CBT and the lack of deliberate training for novice teachers in how to teach and assess in a CBT framework. There are good reasons, as well as models available, for using CBT. One of the managers interviewed spoke of

the work her program area was doing in clustering competencies so that they could be taught more holistically and make the knowledge components more evident. These discussions with the participants in this research need to be contrasted with the views expressed in the recent Australian Vocational Education and Training Research Association (AVETRA) publication which devoted an entire journal (December 2016) to argue for the abandonment of CBT. In this journal, Hodge cites Wheelahan's ongoing issues with CBT as sanctioning "neglect of the knowledge that sits behind individual competent performances" (Hodge, 2016, p. 171). Wheelahan (2016) dismisses the required knowledge that sits alongside the competencies in the training packages as further contributing to fragmenting knowledge rather than serving coherent conceptual structures. The social aspect of her criticism is that "certain social groups are concentrated among the learners in the VET sector" (Hodge, 2016, p. 175). If the CBT model is flawed, then these learners are disadvantaged further by not having the opportunity to develop the 'powerful knowledge' that is available to those who study in the higher education sector. This is particularly a deficiency in today's employment field where employers are expecting workers with a capability for higher level skills and knowledge.

Hodge (2016) is in fact arguing that VET could be doing a better job and not necessarily that VET was doing a very bad job. Of course there were exceptions that Wheelahan cited of rorts and fraud among some providers and she was able to give examples of students who had acquired worthless qualifications (2016, p. 189).

Pragmatically, this thesis has identified that novice VET teachers are not adequately trained in using CBT for teaching. While there are current arguments for abandoning CBT in favour of what are claimed to be more educationally focused models, VET teachers presently have to work within this legislated format. While this is the case for the VET sector, the sector should ensure that best practice models of teaching are promulgated sector-wide, and providers should not be enabled to employ teachers who are unqualified or underqualified. Obliging VET teachers to upgrade their Certificate IV qualification in VET teaching every time the training package is reviewed only contributes further to a culture of compliance rather than ensuring quality outcomes. It would not be suggested that teachers in the school sector repeat their degrees in education each time the curriculum is reviewed and upgraded. For school teachers it would be assumed that professional learning that was structured to include new knowledge and the knowledge gained from teaching practice would be valued.

I concur with Harris (2015) who contends that the quality of teaching, training and assessment needs to be raised and, unless this happens, quality will continue to be VET's main weakness. He acknowledges that teaching quality is not the only factor leading to the well-publicised quality problems, and this researcher agrees. Harris argues, however, that in his opinion it is the major factor.

The quality of the VET system depends heavily on the quality of those who deliver and assess it and while VET teacher and trainer preparation and professional development are declining (and have been for some time) the quality of VET continues to be an ongoing, serious concern that needs urgent attention (Harris, 2015, p. 31).

In 2015, Harris was reiterating what the documents chosen for analysis in this thesis were saying in 2010 and 2011. An educative narrative and vision, focused on the deliberate development of the skills and knowledge and competence of VET teachers, must be attained soon.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview questions

Project title: Building capability in VET teachers

Interview Questions

What professional development strategies did you find effective in the early stages of your career as a TAFE teacher?

In your experience of assisting or mentoring others who are new to TAFE teaching what strategies do you think are effective for them?

From your experience of professional learning, how have you developed your skills from novice teacher to advanced practice?

What do think are effective strategies in assisting staff to develop teaching skills from novice to advanced practice?

What kinds of professional learning strategies do Advanced VET Practitioners need to maintain high level skills?

How did you use workplace learning opportunities to develop their capability as a VET teacher?

How could workplace learning opportunities be made more effective?

Appendix 2: Excerpts from transcript of interview

Julie, teacher

What professional development strategies do you find are useful and effective for new lecturers in your team?

I think some of the things I found effective was a lot of informal mentoring. I wasn't allocated a specific mentor in any way. There was a handful of staff in one way or another I worked closely with them. So MS is one that when I started Field Lecturing, Field Supervising, I worked very closely with her. We would catch up regularly and we would talk through a lot of those things. Even for the first couple of times going out to visits she came along with me; and we met there and there was a lot of side by side.

From your experience of professional learning how have you developed your skills from novice teacher to advanced practice?

Probably the same way. Time and opportunity. In a lot of ways and having the time to complete my studies as well because I've done the TAA/TAE qualifications and then I went on and did a Bachelor of Adult Education and then a Graduate Certificate. Now I am finishing off my Masters so for me that ongoing study and looking for not just a very narrow focus.

So you feel you get a lot out of formal qualifications?

Professionally I get a lot of value from learning out of that. And I think it's important as a practitioner to not just look at your own. You know today I am teaching this particular subject, or understanding this qualification, you get the complete picture of the VET environment as well.

Steve, teacher

In your role of assisting and mentoring others who are new to TAFE teaching what strategies do you think are effective for them?

The last (new) HPI I kick started him off in the role setting him up with learning resources making sure he was comfortable. So although I don't have a mentor role I did assist him. Having had a little more training in education than a lot of my other counterparts I think that informally I probably have input into the group into delivery and other things like authentic assessment and blending subjects to make them flow better. I'd like to say that I have input into the group in that regard and thinking about training from an educational point of view rather than a training point of view. So there are a few lecturers we probably mentor each other we have a group of people who are pretty comfortable sharing with each other what we are doing and I'm pretty open to anyone stepping into my classroom and giving that feedback and vice versa we can do the same. So yes from the

mentoring side of things I like to think I do have an impact.

Is the Certificate IV a good place to start for Trades teaching?

Certainly. It is a lot different from a bachelor degree. I do like the fact that it is incremental with the Bachelor. But having a practicum and answering a few of the questions having a mentor for a period of time at the start would have to be essential because you would find that a lot of good teachers trades people wouldn't get into (teaching) if you set the bar too high. I guess at the moment at the Diploma level you don't really have to set foot in the classroom to get the diploma you can do it all open learning. So you may not improve your practice. You've got to know more about auditing, that's what the diploma is all about. More about auditing. I mean it's a little bit about developing assessments, developing resources, also developing e-learning assessments. But there wasn't much about efficacy. It was always about the job of creating a document and what that looks like.

Jane, manager

When I came I had a lot of teaching skills but what I didn't have was understanding vocational education and I learnt that through ongoing engagement with industry and listening to what they needed and understanding the sector because it is fairly broad (community services qualifications) so visiting. Going out there then, learning what aged care was about and learning what those workers had to do for example. Then watching VET educators who were nurses or aged care workers operate very differently and they are coming from a different priority.

I always said that the difference for me between VET and what I did in schools is ; in schools you are an advocate for the student; in VET you actually an advocate for the end-user; you are an advocate for the old person or the patient or the young person or the disadvantaged young person, the person with the mental illness; That's what good VET teachers do so it means that all the problems that teachers often come unstuck with, when they are (teaching) VET, when they are trying to push people through a course they will never be able to operate in because they don't have the capability; a really good VET practitioner is going OK You can teach anybody to make a bed but if they don't have the right aptitude they won't do it well anyway.

What do you think are the most effective strategies in assisting staff to develop teaching skills from novice to advanced practice?

We put in a lot of strategies. We used to use Format for staff; and it provided the base of getting back to conversations around how people learn and pedagogy. How do people learn and how do you teach; and understand there is individual difference both from the deliverer and the students' group. Until we got back to some of that we felt there was a lot of talk about implementing the training package but not a lot of talk about curriculum development and pedagogy. We had lost

that and we went through the stage of thinking the training package was the curriculum and everything was just get it out there and tick the box. We needed to set it up in a way that looked at content and logical progression for learning and skills; the way that we did that initially we did use Format as the way to get back to talking about how people learn; and there were various versions of that like the Brain stuff: right brain left brain.

What kind of professional learning strategies do Advanced VET practitioners need to maintain high level teaching skills?

One of the things I think I think they need is to be challenged by their job. If they are doing what they have always done and they become expert at it and they become complacent and they stop even looking for the next best thing. You've always got to have the next best thing out there and good people are seeking that and if they get thwarted in their search for that they get jaded and they undermine I think. You can't do this for everyone but for most good people what I have seen over the years is that they have moved on to the next best educational thing or vocational thing in their sector and then they apply all of their skills to that new thing. They are learning still and they are changing and they are moving on to something else and then they are able to re-create themselves and become a leader of that next thing

Appendix 3: Glossary of Terms

Australian Qualifications Framework

Acronym: AQF

The national policy for regulated qualifications in Australian education and training. It incorporates the qualifications from each education and training sector into a single comprehensive national qualifications framework.

Australian Quality Training Framework

Acronym: AQTF

A set of nationally agreed quality assurance arrangements for the training and assessment services delivered by registered training organisations regulated by state and territory registering and course accrediting bodies.

Australian Skills Quality Authority

Acronym: ASQA

Also called: National VET Regulator

The national regulator for the vocational education and training (VET) sector which became operational in July 2011. Registered training organisations (RTOs) in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, the Northern Territory, Queensland, South Australia and Tasmania come under ASQA's jurisdiction. ASQA is also the regulatory body for some RTOs in Victoria and Western Australia that offer courses to overseas students or to students in states that come under ASQA's jurisdiction.

Competency-based training

Acronym: CBT

A method of training which develops the skills, knowledge and attitudes required to achieve competency.

Industry Skills Councils

Acronym: ISC

A set of 11 national bodies that have replaced the former national Industry Training Advisory Bodies (ITABs). They provide advice to Australian, state and territory governments on the training that is required by industry.

Language, Literacy and Numeracy Program

Acronym: LLNP

A national program which has operated since January 2002 when the Literacy and Numeracy Training Program and the Advanced English for Migrants Program amalgamated to provide a more integrated management approach to addressing language, literacy and numeracy needs among jobseekers.

LLN

Language, literacy and numeracy

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Acronym: NCVER

A national research, evaluation and information organisation for the vocational education and training (VET) sector in Australia, jointly owned by the Commonwealth, state and territory ministers responsible for VET.

National Quality Council

Acronym: NQC

A former Committee of the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE). It was established in December 2005 to oversee quality assurance and to ensure national consistency in the application of the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) standards for the audit and registration of training providers and registration and course accrediting bodies. The NQC was dissolved in June 2011 by MCTEE and many of its functions are now undertaken by the newly established National Skills Standards Council (NSSC).

National Skills Standards Council

Acronym: NSSC

A committee established in July 2011 to provide advice to the Standing Council for Tertiary Education, Skills and Employment (SCOTESE), successor of the Ministerial Council for Tertiary Education and Employment (MCTEE), on national standards for regulation of vocational education and training.

National VET Regulator

Acronym: NVR

Responsible for the registration and audit of registered training organisations (RTOs) and accreditation of courses in the vocational education and training (VET) sector.

Recognition of prior learning

Acronym: RPL

The acknowledgement of a person's skills and knowledge acquired through previous training, work or life experience, which may be used to grant status or credit in a subject or module. It can lead to a full qualification in the VET sector.

Registered training organisation

Acronym: RTO

Training providers registered by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) or in some cases, a state or territory registering and accrediting body to deliver training and/or conduct assessments and issue nationally recognised qualifications in accordance with the Australian Quality Training Framework or the VET Quality Framework. RTOs include TAFE colleges and institutes, adult and community education providers, private providers, community organisations, schools, higher education institutions, commercial and enterprise training providers, industry bodies and other organisations meeting the registration requirements.

Standards for VET accredited courses

Legislated standards that apply to all courses regulated by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA), including those courses that were accredited by referring state and territory course accreditation bodies prior to the introduction of new national arrangements in 2011.

TAFE

(1) Technical and Further Education, a government training provider which provides a range of technical and vocational education and training (TVET) courses and other programs.

Vocational education and training

Acronym: VET

Post-compulsory education and training, excluding degree and higher level programs delivered by further education institutions, which provides people with occupational or work-related knowledge and skills

Work-integrated learning

Acronym: WIL

An umbrella term for a range of approaches and strategies that integrate theory with the practice of work within a purposefully designed curriculum

Appendix 4: Conference paper



Improving VET teachers' skills and their approach to professional learning.

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

CONFERENCE PAPER

Anne Dening

Doctoral Student Flinders University

Abstract

This paper outlines a workforce development approach during the period from early 2010 to late 2012 and discusses the strategies and developmental activities during this period that may have contributed to improving professional capabilities among a large group of VET practitioners at a TAFE Institute. It forms the background to a doctoral study which builds on a range of studies of the VET practitioner in the previous decade including Mitchell 2009 and Wheelahan 2010. In June 2010 the Institute staff participated in two self-rating surveys: VETCAT® which measures 58 teaching skills of VET practitioners; and CURCAT® which measures their use of 27 strategies to remain current with their industry. The surveys were repeated in late 2012 and showed an increase in ratings of around 5% across most items. In both cases the quantitative data generated from the survey was complemented by qualitative data gained from Institute staff, particularly from professional conversations and group discussions designed to gain staff stories and experiences.

Approximately 400 lecturers responded to the surveys in 2010 and 250 in 2012. Many of the 100 who responded from one Faculty in 2010 also completed the survey in 2012. This paper will help to identify which strategies were most effective for improving the skills and currency of VET practitioners over that period. These strategies included a mix of deliberate interventions by the organisation, by faculties and by individuals.

Introduction

In early 2010 the TAFE Institute teaching staff participated in self-assessed online surveys developed by JMA Analytics. These surveys named VETCAT® and CURCAT® provided data about the level of teaching and learning skills of VET Practitioners and their industry currency at an individual level, at Faculty or team level and on a whole of organisation level. Prior to the surveys the Institute embarked on a strong promotional campaign to engage as many staff as possible in order to gain effective data that would form the basis of future planning for workforce development. Staff were assured that the survey results would be used to ensure skills gaps were addressed, that their personal reports were private to them, and that while there was a finite budget for professional development, the available budget would be used to target those skills gaps that were identified in the survey. VET teachers' jobs are complex and changing rapidly and there was no shame in admitting skill gaps; the results from the survey would be used to help respondents improve their skills.

Paunonen and O'Neill (2010) stated that "self-reports have been trusted by psychologists and others as the basis of typical performance since the invention of the personality test item and before" (Paunonen, 2010, p. 203). They also state that self-assessment tools are useful for learning about

people's "beliefs, intentions, aspirations, attitudes" (Paunonen & O'Neill, cited in JMA Analytics, 2012, p.1). However, it is appropriate to challenge the validity of self-assessment, perhaps particularly in the areas of error and bias. The JMA Analytics' surveys took these factors into account and used strategies that mitigated against both error and bias. The two primary methods included: "ensuring a large sample size and ensuring that respondents see it in their best interests to provide an accurate self-rating" (Analytics, 2012b, p. 1). Both of these methods were successfully used in the surveys conducted resulting in a very large response rate. Of the 456 lecturing staff both fulltime and part time in 2010, 92% undertook both VETCAT® and CURCAT®. This response rate was highly prized by the Institute senior management and reflected the trust that staff had showed in the process.

Qualitative data collected from staff after the surveys – from structured professional conversations and group discussions - complemented the quantitative data and this use of two types of data helped confirm that improvements had occurred by late 2012. The usefulness of the 2012 data was evaluated independently by the Psychometrics Institute at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER).

One of the positive outcomes from the surveys was that the teaching staff, in supporting the surveys and the related reports, now had a common language to describe both their practice and the way they wanted to improve those practices.

Following the analysis of the results of the surveys by the author and other senior managers a comprehensive professional development plan was implemented on many levels within the organization in 2010. This plan aimed to counteract the skills gaps identified at the generic or Institute level, to provide Faculty managers with support to address specific Faculty issues and to provide individuals with support to develop personal professional development plans.

Findings and discussion

VETCAT® results 2010

One of the other key findings from the survey related to both educational and vocational qualifications of the staff. About half the teaching staff held the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment as their highest educational qualification. This was significantly above the national figure that Mitchell & Ward (2010) found in their 2009 national survey: in that survey only about 14% had the Certificate IV as their highest qualification in education.

Another key finding related to the skills profile of the teaching staff in 2010 in relation to the VETCAT® model of Foundation Novice practitioners who led onto Foundation Established practitioners, then to Commercial Specialists or Advanced Learning and Assessment Specialists and finally to Advanced VET Practitioners. In the 2010 survey only 8% were categorised as Novices in comparison to the national average of 16%, while almost two thirds of the staff were

Foundation Established teachers and it was felt that with assistance this group could develop specialist skills. The Commercial Specialists (25.8) were highly skilled at delivery in the workplace and this ratio was higher than the national average. The small number of Learning and Assessment Specialists (1.9%) presented an issue that needed addressing and the Advanced Vet Practitioners (5.4%) cohort was slightly higher than national figures and had expertise that was much sought after. (JMAAnalytics, 2010, p. 3)

The 2010 VETCAT® Institute Report showed that there were substantial knowledge and skills gaps in individual teaching skills: in learning styles and learning theories, in delivery and monitoring of training and assessment programs, in diagnostic assessment, in recognition of prior learning, in research and evaluation and in the area of advanced learning and assessment. Advanced Learning and Assessment skills included facilitating distance learning, flexible learning programs and online learning and assessment. There were also skills gaps in the understanding and documentation for the quality system. Most of these skill gaps were general across faculties although there were some unique differences.

Staff believed that they had 80% of the professional skills required for their job and that the available professional learning options met 63% of their needs. While this rating of available learning options obviously needed a response it was still better than the national figure of 55% (Mitchell & Ward, 2010, pp. 17-18).

CURCAT® results 2010

Staff conveyed in the CURCAT® survey that they believed they had an average industry currency rating of just under 70% of optimal level. This very clearly indicated that there was room for improvement. They also rated the Institute significantly less than 80% on four key areas for organizational support. These four areas were:

Cultural support within the institute for maintenance of industry currency	51%
Policy and procedural support within the institute for maintenance of industry currency	48%
Level of institute assistance for maintenance of industry currency	46%
Industry body assistance for maintenance of industry currency	40%

(JMA Analytics CURCAT® Institute Report 2010, p.15)

Regarding practitioners' preferred strategies for maintaining currency there was only a medium level of use of training strategies (that is, participating in structured training programs) by teachers, whereas there was a high level of use of active enquiry strategies such as using industry publications, conducting internet research, general business magazines and government publications. Staff ranked 14 barriers to their maintenance of vocational currency including budget constraints, lack of support for lecturer absence and limited opportunities for real industry release

(Analytics, 2010, p. 14).

About 21% of the participants were concurrently employed in their industry and in the institute. This probably included part time staff who were employed for their industry currency. But there were 52% of respondents who had not worked in their industry for 3-4 years and another 23% who had not worked in their industry for over 10 years. 30% participated annually in industry licensing or registration that required them to undertake compulsory annual professional development (Analytics, 2010, pp. 11-12).

After the analysis; what then?

In a changing workplace employees' skills must adapt and develop; as new ways of working emerge new skills need to be learnt. These rapid changes are the reason that Billett proposes that every workplace needs to have "robust, strongly empirical and conceptual bases for how learning at work should best proceed – a pedagogy for the workplace" (Billett, 2002, p. 28). Billett asserts that learning in the workplace is determined by a reciprocal relationship between the employee and the pedagogy;

- The "intentional structuring of participation in activities and the provision of guided participation to supplement the contributions provided freely through engagement in everyday activities" (Billett, 2002, p. 39).
- Acknowledging that access or not to these activities has consequences both for the individual and the organisation
- Understanding how the acceptance or otherwise of the opportunities provided influences what employees learn and how they use that learning (Billett, 2002, p. 39).

These three factors were central to the strategies enacted over the period 2010-12 and contributed to the success of the professional learning promoted by the Institute.

Following Billett 2002, the findings from both VETCAT® and CURCAT® 2010 surveys informed the planning process for professional learning options at different levels; individual, team, and organisation. A wide range of options was made available for staff and they were encouraged to analyse their personal report from the survey and address their skills gaps. For individuals the professional learning options included:

- Funded places for the Diploma of VET qualification
- Customisation of the program delivery via videoconference and online learning to enable as many staff as possible to access the qualification.

- Financial support to complete the Degree program at University of South Australia
- Several annual scholarships for Masters programs
- Induction to Teaching and Learning Program was compulsory for all new teaching staff
- New staff also were required to have a teaching and learning mentor and training was provided for both the mentor and the mentoree.
- Regular Workshops and seminars for Advanced Skills Lecturers in assessment and educational leadership.

At the team or Faculty level the professional learning options included:

- Workshops to address skill gaps in online pedagogy and meet team strategic plans for more online learning options for their students
- Compulsory mentor programs for Advanced VET Practitioners who were responsible for mentoring Novices in assessment or online pedagogies
- Work-based Projects that enabled teaching staff to participate in industry seminars, industry release, or to test more innovative ways of connecting with industry groups.

The Institute response to the VETCAT® data included some practical on-job training opportunities, access to accredited training, policy initiatives and training programs for educational managers. The Mentor program was a new policy endorsed by the Institute Executive and while it assisted the new staff in gaining teaching skills it also gave many of the Learning and Assessment specialists the opportunity to share their skills and experience. A formal training program for both the mentors and the mentees set out clearly the expectations that each could have of the other. The mentor program introduced the concept of a limited practicum to the Institute as the policy articulated the need for the mentor to observe the practice of the new staff.

Participating staff received a report on their individual skills set; these reports became the focus of the performance appraisal interviews required annually. Staff were assured that while their report was confidential, they were encouraged to use the general findings as a basis for discussion with their manager regarding their personal professional development plan. Training workshops for managers ensured that using the individual report as a tool for personal development was consistently approached across all faculties. These training sessions also ensured consistent implementation of the policy requiring all staff to have personal learning plans negotiated with their manager and annually reviewed.

There were also some very positive results in the VETCAT® reports and it was important to

acknowledge these. For instance, the data pointed to a significant group of Commercial Specialists had expertise that proved invaluable in growing the Institute partnerships with industry and in maintaining strong fee-for-service revenue. They also had the capability to mentor others in developing and designing quality educational programs for off-campus delivery. The large percentage of Foundation Established Lecturers had sound expertise in learning and facilitation skills that could be used to mentor both the Novices and the part time instructors.

One of the strategies that was important in maintaining staff trust in the process was to ensure that professional learning opportunities were promoted as a demonstrated response to skills gaps identified in the 2010 surveys and focused on assisting staff to gain and maintain further skills. The resultant increase in professional development activity was very evident. There was an increase in registrations and enrolments in accredited units and in the number of action learning projects available to staff. Professional learning was seen as everyone's business and responsibility.

Repeat of VETCAT® and CURCAT® in 2012

In late 2012 the organisation repeated the VETCAT® and CURCAT® surveys to gauge whether the targeted professional learning program had been successful and to further analyse skills gaps and perhaps adopt new strategies to assist staff to gain further skills. Changes in Institute Profile and Skills

The analysis of the whole of organisation and Faculty reports for 2012 showed a marked change in the profile of the staff. Whereas the largest number of staff had previously been assessed as Foundation Established many of these staff had now moved into the next level of Commercial Specialists or Advanced VET Practitioners.

Changes in Institute Profile and Skills

Table 1: Comparison of the Regional Institute's VETCAT® results 2010-2012 and with national benchmarks

Regional 2010	National average 2011	Regional 2012	Category
8.1%	6%	7%	Novice practitioners
58.9%	33%	18%	Foundation Established
1.9%	4%	2%	Learning and assessment specialists
25.8%	41%	49%	Commercial specialists

5.4%	15%	24%	Advanced VET practitioners
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Source: Institute VETCAT Reports 2010 & 2012.

The levels of qualifications in both education and vocational areas had increased; and staff now assessed their skills to perform their job at a higher level. Their assessment of the professional development program in 2012 was that it more closely met their needs; it had been rated at 63% in 2010 and the national average in 2011 was 65%. Their assessment in 2012 was that it met 73% of their needs. While this is a significant improvement, there is still work to be done to improve the value of professional development.

The most significant changes had occurred in moving a great proportion of the 2010 Foundation Established staff (58.9%) to the next level of specialization, either as a commercial specialist or a Learning and Assessment specialist or even to the top level of Advanced VET practitioner; with the latter increasing from 5.4% to 24%. (Analytics, 2012a, p. 3) Qualitative evidence collected in 2012 showed that this increase in skills had a significant impact on faculties in terms of staff willingly stepping into mentor roles, assessment leadership roles, leadership roles in online learning and development roles in online programs.

The following table outlines the changes in the level of Foundation teaching skills from 2010-2012. Foundation skills are extremely important as it is not possible to build quality flexible learning or online learning pedagogies without them.

Table 2: Changes in the level of Foundation skills, 2010-2012

Regional 2010	National 2011	Regional 2012	Foundation skills
77%	81%	81%	Learning facilitation
77%	79%	79%	Course organization & student management
73%	77%	78%	Learning styles
77%	79%	81%	Assessment
71%	75%	76%	Learning Theories

Source: Institute VETCAT Reports 2010 & 2012

The Faculties had used their 2010 CURCAT® Reports to generate discussions about team strategies for improvement. Some of these strategies included releasing staff to complete further higher level qualifications in their area of industry specialisation and formalising many of the informal linkages that teams had with industry partners. The Institute's Capacity Building budget supported small scale projects that focused on industry currency and these were publicised through videoconferencing sessions that senior members of executive encouraged and attended.

Individual staff used their CURCAT® report as part of the performance development interview

process to negotiate for further study opportunities or for industry release. One of the most significant results was that the staff assessed their overall level of industry currency had improved from 70% in 2010 to 79% in 2012. The following table may in fact help to explain this improvement.

Table 3: Staff profile in terms of recent paid employment

Regional 2010	National 2011	Regional 2012	Measure of % of employees:
11%	44%	33%	Undertook paid employment over past year
52%	19%	22%	Last undertook paid employment 10 years ago
6%	9%	9%	Last undertook paid employment from 1-2 years ago

Source: Institute CURCAT Reports 2010 & 2012

Other significant statistics in 2012 included: 27% of the staff were concurrently employed by TAFE and within their industry specialisation, (eg Nurses, Children’s Services, Viticulture and Agriculture Lecturers), 37% had been employed by their industry in the past year, and 35% had been involved in an industry licensing or registration scheme which involved compulsory annual professional development managed by the industry (particularly Trades areas, Information Technology, Accounting lecturers). All of these statistics are encouraging for an organization that needs to demonstrate that staff are maintaining their vocational currency and that this is contributing to practical outcomes for students.

Conclusions

VETCAT® and CURCAT® enabled the Institute to develop a strategic framework from 2010 onwards for the delivery of professional development in the Institute for all teaching staff. The program was targeted at addressing skills gaps and enhancing team strategic plans for future development and improvement. Over the period 2010-12, the focus was on improving skills rather than focussing on compliance.

The use of a more strategic and planned approach to professional development had engineered a cultural change within the organisation. Professional learning came to be seen as essential, available equitably to everyone and that it was everyone’s business. Staff understood that the responsibility for learning and improvement was organisational, Faculty-based and individual.

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