

The new VET practitioner

As VET shifts from being supply-driven to demand-driven, a new practitioner is emerging, to satisfy the increasing expectations of industry clients and individual students.

Traditionally, the VET practitioner was supply-driven. This practitioner believed that the best or only learning environment was the classroom – a site for learning far superior to the student's workplace.

In contrast, the new VET practitioner is demand-driven and only provides services that are wanted by enterprises and individuals. This progressive practitioner can customise programs to suit enterprises and personalise learning activities to suit the individual.

The new VET practitioner lets go of the old certainties, like pre-set curriculum and didactic instruction, and develops attributes, attitudes, ideas and techniques that meet the needs of clients. The new practitioner looks outwards at market needs and seeks to meet those needs.

To address the idiosyncratic demands of each and every student and enterprise client, the VET practitioner needs a raft of new skills: so many, in fact, that many practitioners need to be able to draw on the specialist skills and knowledge of colleagues and partners.

FEATURES OF THE NEW PRACTITIONER

- Views individual students as lifelong learners on career pathways
- Respects the business risks and pressures of enterprise clients
- Appreciates that enterprises need skills to achieve business outcomes
- Understands links between training, HR and workforce development
- Functions effectively within supply chains and skill ecosystems
- Exercises professional judgment in delivery and assessment
- Develops and sustains long-term relationships with clients
- Participates within a team to access colleagues' specialist skills
- Taps into wider networks for information and resources
- Understands the value of accessing and applying industry research
- Contributes to the development of innovative products and services
- Commits to achieving and maintaining the quality of the profession
- Improves the tools and frameworks of professional practice
- Updates technical skills and industry-specific knowledge
- Copes with complexities and uncertainties about industry skill demands

New skills are required by the range of VET practitioners, from those employed by RTOs, either part or full time, to workplace trainers and assessors employed either by an enterprise or by an RTO. New skills are needed by all VET personnel, from managers to front-line trainers and support staff, in both public and private RTOs.

This profile of the new VET practitioner began to emerge in research published in the last two-three years, and is summarised in *Critical Issues*, which I co-authored early this year with fellow researchers Dr Clive Chappell, Andrea Bateman and Susan Roy. We have built on that emerging portrait of the VET practitioner by conducting further research both in Australia and the UK, as part of a project called ‘Critical issues in teaching, learning and assessment’.

Our project is one of nine activities in a research program managed by NCVER and funded by the Australian, state and territory governments through DEST. The research program, *Supporting vocational education and training providers in building capability for the future*, is being undertaken by a consortium of researchers in 2005-2006.

In the project on critical issues, our first research question was the following: What do clients want from VET? This question drew us into the minds of clients and showed us that more and more enterprises are beginning to understand better their distinctive training needs – for example, for training that is just in time, or just for me, or just enough.

Our second research question flowed on from the first, as follows: What skills do VET practitioners need to service this multitude of client needs? In currently analysing the data, a picture is beginning to form of a new VET practitioner who has a sophisticated understanding of how adults learn in different ways and in different settings, and of how skill development underpins business outcomes for enterprises and career development for individuals.

Using examples of effective practice, I will expand on this profile of the new VET practitioner in my keynote presentation at the New Ways of Working Forum in Adelaide on 3 November, convened by Reframing the Future.

See <http://consortiumresearchprogram.net.au> and <http://reframingthefuture.net>

Dr John Mitchell is a VET adviser on strategic planning and change management.
Contact johnm@jma.com.au or go to www.jmablog.com