

VET Learner Acquired Social Capital: resonance with the Australian notion of Core Skills for Work, and much more arising from 'educationalist' teacher motivations and practices

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Paper presented at the European Educational Research Association - ECER 2013, Istanbul – conference
10th - 13th September 2013

Abstract

This paper is the third in a series reporting upon vocational education and training (VET) and social capital research-in-progress. In addition to the conventional understanding purpose, this suite of research is encouraging conversation moving VET social capital outcomes from the implicit to the explicitly valued realm. Earlier research found that VET, when well taught, does yield both human and social capital outcomes (Hughes & Hughes 2011). This was followed by a research finding that key stakeholders (particularly employers) do want a VET graduate to possess more than just knowledge and skill. Indeed personal qualities of a VET graduate relating to attitude are high on the list of desired VET outcomes across the range of stakeholders – significantly including employers (Hughes & Hughes 2012). In this instance the research question is – ***What are the motivations and means by which a VET teacher, so predisposed, contributes to a learner's acquisition of attributes beyond technical knowledge and skill?***

In Australia, a new iteration of underpinning key competencies is now poised for inclusion in the delivery of VET. This is identified as the Core Skills for Work (CSfW) Framework, but history indicates that delivery of this intended enrichment of VET learning is problematic. However, there is some resonance with the Hughes and Hughes (2011, 2012) advocacy of overt attention to social capital outcomes from VET; and the CSfW intention is applauded.

Whilst there are numerous aspects to what might aid or hinder integration of CSfW into VET delivery in Australia, previous research (Hughes & Hughes 2011, 2012) points to the role of an educationalist orientated VET teacher as a key factor. Accordingly, from a foundation of research informed defining individual VET learner acquired social capital and what is meant by an educationalist orientated VET teacher, this paper is an overview of the 'why' and 'how' research-in-progress. In this instance, VET teachers who identify as seeking to facilitate outcomes beyond just technical knowledge and skill, are contributing to understanding of what they are seeking to achieve, how they do it, and how they evaluate outcomes.

Given the history of weak attention to foundation skills (by whatever name and configuration) in the delivery of VET in Australia, there is the hope that this time the current intentions will be achieved; and this paper posits relevance to the European Union quest for embracing the Framework of Key Competences. However, the authors suggest that the appearance of EU focus upon community needs (the learner as the object) as compared to the Australian focus upon employer needs (the workplace as the object) is useful to strengthening conversation leading to deeper learning.

Harking back to the Hughes and Hughes (2012) agreeing with the Svendsen and Svendsen (2004) proposition that social capital is the missing link in the productivity debate, there is much to be gained by shared insights as to the 'why' and 'how' of a VET educationalist teacher nurturing social capital attributes of the VET learner; and this is a step beyond what are presently thought of as foundation skills.

Introduction

Firstly, an explanation of what we (Libby and Lewis Hughes) mean by social capital attributes of a VET graduate. Much of the social capital literature draws upon a notion that strength of networks and social cohesion are core planks of social capital; however, there isn't yet definitive agreement as to the elements of what is meant by social capital (ABS 2002). It is for this reason that we are now deliberate in referring to social capital attributes of an individual. By this means we seek to advance the notion that there are personal (individual as may be different to group) attributes which go towards strengthening networks and social cohesion and such other elements as are variously deemed to constitute social capital; and from which a community draws in its sustainability quest.

For us, the social capital attributes of an individual include pride-in-self, justified confidence, commitment to draw upon knowledge and skill, being trustworthy and having appropriate trust in others, contributing to social cohesion in the workplace and beyond, and being a lifelong learner¹. As

¹ We have been tempted to add "purposeful" as a qualifier to lifelong learning - i.e. being a purposeful lifelong learner. However, this could be said to put constraint upon an inquiring mind where the learning may actually precede realisation of the purpose to which expanded knowledge and enhanced confidence-in-self can be applied - as we have found to occur in VET learners under the influence of a **respected-other** such as an 'educationalist' VET teacher.

new nuances emerge in the course of our research, this is not an exhaustive listing, but we trust is adequate to convey the notion of an individual justifiably valuing themselves and being justifiably valued by others. Note: Having a disability is not a barrier to being valued for one's social capital attributes – it is a matter of making the most of what we know and can do according to our means and, thus, enriching of society in our uniqueness as an individual.

With the foregoing in mind, this paper is predicated upon the proposition that a vocational education and training (VET) graduate should bring more than just knowledge and skill to their work; and this has much connection to productivity. An individual's social capital related pride in a job well done is a productivity contributor beyond just possession of knowledge and skill; and, accordingly, there is much merit in coupling attention to this with the current attention to Core Skills for Work (CSfW) as is a newly specified Australian VET value-yielding addition to technical competencies (DIISTRE 2012a).

The Australian VET identified Core Skills for Work (CSfW) are grouped in three clusters –

Cluster 1: Navigate the world of work – Manage career and work life; Work with roles, rights and protocols

Cluster 2: Interact with others – Communicate for work; Connect and work with others; Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives

Cluster 3: GET the work done – Plan and organise; Make decisions; Identify and solve problems; Create and innovate; Work in a digital world (DIISTRE 2012a, pp. 3-4)

How to embed this in VET learning is an issue under circumstances where a VET teacher is disposed to only address knowledge and skill – either by not being educationalist or by delivery constraints (particularly inadequate contact time) imposed upon the teacher.

Accordingly, the coupling argument is: – If possessing CSfW are valued as attributes to yield value from VET generated knowledge and skill, then the social capital related attribute of disposition to actually draw upon what is known and can be done is at least equal in value. What is the point of Australia's investment in VET generated stock of competency if the enthusiasm, and commitment, to draw upon this is not embedded within VET delivery?

For readers not familiar with the Australian VET system, VET competency in Australia is presently defined as “*An individual's demonstrated capacity to perform a task or skill, that is, the possession of knowledge, skills and personal attributes needed to satisfy the special demands or requirements of a particular situation*” (NCVER 2011, p.38). Whilst this is an advance on the earlier focus upon just knowledge and skill (“attitude” having been even earlier deleted), motivation and commitment are silent. Has motivation and commitment, as commonly embedded in workplace training, just slipped from the institutional VET mind or has it been deliberately excluded by VET authority?

Whilst the reference to “special attributes”, in the current definition of VET competency, could be taken to infer motivation and commitment along with CSfW, the fuzziness of meaning invites/enables continuance of shallow attention to knowledge and skill in the delivery of VET in Australia. It is for this reason that Hughes and Cairns (2013) in the *Architecture of Innovative Apprenticeship* (Deitmer et al (eds.) 2013, pp. 143 - 155) advocate the notion of a VET graduate being “capably competent” – i.e. having the capacity and motivation to extrapolate existing knowledge and skill to new and challenging circumstances. In this paper, being capably competent requires a VET graduate to value and act upon their social capital attributes which have intersection with their pallet of CSfW (see Figure 6, page 28). It is this capably competent melding of personal attributes with knowledge and skill which gives rise to a VET graduate having commitment to *quality* contribution at work and in life.

An individual's quality commitment connected to pride in self, justified confidence and regard for others in drawing upon what they know and can do are among the social capital attributes which we argue have resonance with the notionally prescribed embedding of CSfW in the Australian VET learning experience. However, overt attention to CSfW in VET delivery is not the norm – there is a vulnerability to being ignored. Whereas, but overlooked by a narrow human capital focused Australian VET system, nurturing of social capital attributes is inherent in VET delivery by an 'educationalist'² orientated teacher; and, indeed, reaches/influences beyond the scope of CSfW.

Two questions –

How would our society function without members who are the capably competent product of VET?
and

What does an effective VET teacher contribute beyond just attention to knowledge and skill?

We put these questions as VET in Australia is considered, by many, to be a second-best (to university) post-compulsory education choice. Such a shallow regard for VET overlooks the day-to-day drawing upon the services of capably competent tradespeople and the like which has much to do with a sustainable and cohesive society. Importantly, the notion of being capably competent embraces the VET graduate having a high level of ethical (trustworthy and more) standards in effectively drawing upon what they know and can do in both familiar and newly challenging circumstances; and is at the core of cause for the community to value VET learning when well taught. Further, the capably competent VET graduate will exhibit social capital attributes which are connected to a commitment to give service in technologically and other changing times – attributes which are nurtured by 'educationalist' orientated VET teachers (Hughes & Hughes 2011, 2012).

It follows that, upon broad public 'awakening' to the criticality of capably competent VET graduates, the contribution made by effective VET teachers is worthy of high valuing; and this runs deeper than just attention to knowledge and skill. Accordingly, posing the foregoing questions draws attention to the importance of a VET learner graduating as a productive contributor to economic strength and community well-being. In this respect, the VET teacher's 'educationalist' nurturing of social capital attributes within the learner is a significant contribution to the learner's pre-disposition to making the most of what they know and can do.

It is the nurturing role - beyond just attention to knowledge and skill - of the VET teacher which merits focusing upon the 'educationalist' motivations and practices in, this, the third phase of our on-going VET and Social Capital research. The outcome from the first phase was an evidence-based assertion that when VET is well taught there is strengthening of social capital attributes possessed by the VET learner; and this occurs under the influence of an 'educationalist' VET teacher (Hughes & Hughes 2011). The second phase explored the degree of 'want' – across stakeholders – for VET to strengthen social capital; and the outcome indicated a high level of want for a VET graduate to possess more than just knowledge and skill. Indeed, there are employers who employ in the knowledge that productivity accrues as a consequence of commitment and associated personal social capital attributes to draw upon what is known and can be done (Hughes & Hughes 2012).

² For us, an 'educationalist' VET teacher is one who goes beyond just attention to knowledge and skill in their facilitation of VET learning. Such a teacher addresses the "E" in VET and nurtures confidence and enthusiasm in drawing upon knowledge and skill. See Hughes & Hughes (2011, 2012) in addition to later discussion in this paper.

Now, in the third phase, we are exploring the motivations and practices of VET teachers who see themselves as being ‘*educationalist*’ in character. That is, in nurturing social capital attributes within learners, they deliberately go beyond just attention to knowledge and skill in their facilitation of learning. Further, such melding of attention to the human capital components of knowledge and skill with social capital attributes yields a work and community circumstance in which human capital assets (people as units of production) can be productively applied. And now, with the emergence of the Australian VET system declaring valuing of CSfW, there is a foundation inviting (but not commonly recognised) consideration of the relationship between social capital attributes of a VET graduate and CSfW leading to enhanced productivity and a strengthened cohesive society.

The point of our research – Having in mind that the emergence of CSfW, in the Australian VET vocabulary, presents as a pathway to valuing the ‘*educationalist*’ teacher’s nurturing of social capital attributes.

Given the possibility that some might take the view that what we regard as social capital is a human capital inclusion, the point of our research is to inform (and encourage) VET attention to deliberately melding social and human capital outcomes. Therefore, nuances of which separate ‘bucket’ each might be in are of interest but are somewhat irrelevant – our quest is for expanding and better drawing from the larger (combined) bucket. In this spirit, our on-going exploration of VET and Social Capital encourages and supports ***strengthening VET*** conversation regarding the proposition that there is much to be gained by valuing both the “E” (arguably, social capital related) and the “T” (arguably, human capital related) components of VET. In support of this proposition, our research to date gives reason to hold that VET does contribute to social capital when well taught, but this is not explicitly valued (in the main) and is therefore not overtly pursued.

As a foreshadowing of finding (thus far), Mary’s (pseudonym) expressing of motivation to be ‘*educationalist*’ is indicative of VET teacher held professional commitment and passion where the teacher goes beyond just shallow attention to knowledge and skill.

Mary’s motivation - “The hope that we can fill the world with broad minded, connected people who care about what they’re doing and what’s going on around them, so they can apply the knowledge they’ve learned within a broader framework of how they can best contribute to the world to make it a better place.” (Mary – Study Skills Teacher)

Although Mary is in a role which has expectation of commitment to broadening and deepening learning, her *contributing to a better world* is a recurring theme within what drives VET teachers with passion and professional commitment. And if it is thought that Mary (as a nurturing woman) is not representative of VET teachers, Sam’s (pseudonym) expressed motivation gives cause to accept that Mary is not alone.

Sam’s motivation - “I feel it is important to help the student understand the wider benefits and implications the training brings to their life and perhaps their ability to contribute to the wider community as a result of this training.” (Sam - Plumbing Teacher)

Enthused by the Marys and Sams within the VET workforce, we have an objective of encouraging conversation which leads to those VET teachers who may at first reject the notion of being ‘*educationalist*’ coming to overtly valuing such a stance. ‘No! I’m a trainer and the “E” has no place in VET’ is a paraphrasing of some who at first react that being ‘*educationalist*’ is

synonymous with being academic and not (in their mind) part of the VET world – thus leading us to offer the notion of an Instructor / Trainer / Teacher spectrum as shown in Figure 1

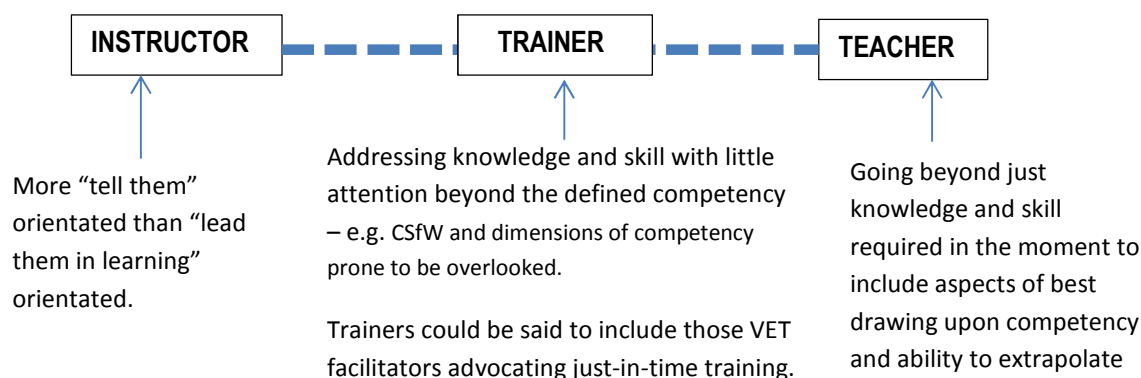


Figure 1 – Learning facilitation spectrum Note: For reflection – not prescriptive and offered as a device to generate debate. It could be that all of these postures manifest in the one person from time-to-time according to circumstance.

Note: Dimensions of Competency are intended to be addressed in Australian VET delivery as are appropriate to the competency. These are – task skills, task management skills, contingency management skills, job/role environment skills. However, the degree to which these are actually universally addressed is questionable

With respect to the European Union (EU), where the key competences focus is upon lifelong learning by the individual, there is merit in reflecting upon where, in the Figure 1 spectrum, attention to learning to learn, social and civic competences, sense of initiative and entrepreneurship, cultural awareness and expression - being 4 of 8 EU Key Competences for Lifelong Learning in Europe (see Figure 7, page 29) - might likely occur.

Given our intent to generate conversation, the target scope of the *Australian VET and Social Capital* conversation includes critical reflection upon “Who are the clients of VET” – i.e.

Is the learner the client?	Is the employer the client?
Is the community the client?	Is the funding authority the client?
or	
Is the client an amalgam of many? (the above and maybe others – e.g. the workmate, the family, the customer)	

In the context of valuing VET through appropriate meeting of needs and wants (Hughes 2010), these questions have particular meaning in the Australian environment where a VET provider’s business model may be to the determinant of delivery and, hence, client focus. For example, a provider might seek to maximise profit via meeting learners’ quests for qualification (not necessarily synonymous with competency) with minimum learning effort as compared to another provider where the competence quality of graduates is the foundation for on-going relationships with employers. And yet another provider may be primarily focused upon meeting community needs through supporting learners in achieving capabilities which would otherwise be denied them.

The research question

Cognisant of a difference in Australian VET teacher views regarding the appropriateness of being ‘*educationalist*’, we sought (and continue to gather) response from those who actually identify with being educationalist. Arising from this quest for the educationalist respondent, the spectrum illustrated in Figure 1 is offered for reflection; and gives cause to hypothesise that the nature of a new VET teacher’s engagement with the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (being the Australian entry level qualification and, on occasions, very shallowly delivered) influences their predisposition to facilitate at a point along the Figure 1 spectrum. That is, a new VET teacher may model their teaching practice upon how they were taught as facilitators – potentially shallow or rich.

Consequent upon outcomes from the earlier research giving cause to value the ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher, notwithstanding not all VET teachers being ‘*educationalist*’ in nature, the overarching question for this phase is -

What are the motivations and means by which a VET teacher, so predisposed, contributes to a learner’s acquisition of attributes beyond technical knowledge and skill?

The specific questions, put to VET teachers who do identify with being ‘*educationalist*’ are - If you identify as being ‘*educationalist*’ in nature – i.e. seeking to facilitate VET learning which goes beyond just narrow attention to knowledge and skill – your responses to the following are earnestly sought.

- What motivates you as an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher – i.e. why do you seek to go beyond just narrow attention to knowledge and skill?
- How do you go about facilitating VET learning which is ‘*educationalist*’ in outcome – i.e. the VET learner acquires more than just knowledge and skill such as pride in self and a commitment to actually drawing upon what they know and can do?
- How do you evaluate or sense the outcomes from facilitating VET learning which is ‘*educationalist*’ in nature – i.e. what is there about the learner which indicates that they have acquired more than just knowledge and skill?

Methodology

Cognisant that the notion of ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher evokes some negative reaction as it is thought (by some) to be synonymous with being academic and therefore not appropriate in a VET context, the research approach is such as to generate VET conversation about being ‘*educationalist*’ and how this relates to nurturing social capital attributes in the VET learner. In time, such conversation leading to strengthening VET through collegiate agreeing clarity of purpose; and informing re-shaping of VET in a world increasingly challenging with respect to drawing upon melded human and social capital.

“You have got us all talking!” (Remark made by a respondent during the 2010 first phase of the VET and Social Capital exploration)

In alignment with its *focus upon people and culture* nature, an ethnography approach is applied to this research. Further, cognisant of socio-political influences in the form of reform agendas (and the

like) shaping VET delivery in Australia, Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) is the prism through which data is viewed and meaning sought in respect to the activity of learning which melds attention to social and human capital. Accordingly, with due regard to interacting activity systems (e.g. the teacher as subject; the learner as subject; stakeholders with varying interests/goals as subjects) in this phase of inquiry the following has applied with respect to **the teacher** as subject particularity.

<u>Subject:</u>	Teacher self-identifying as being ' <i>educationalist</i> '
<u>Object:</u>	Learner acquiring/strengthening social capital attributes in association with knowledge and skills
<u>Objective:</u>	Enhanced productivity and strengthened social cohesion
<u>Rules:</u>	Aids and inhibitors to being ' <i>educationalist</i> ' in practice
<u>Community:</u>	Those engaged in the activity of learning and/or benefitting
<u>Division of labour:</u>	Contributors as determined by the nature and format of the learning
<u>Tool – The focus of this research:</u>	Educationalist VET teacher motivations and practices

Consequent upon the seemingly continuous adjustment to VET in Australia as varying influences gain ascendancy/traction and the complexity of seeking commonality in the European Union circumstance, policy and other documentation (in both environments) is a rich source of data. Accordingly, in all phases of this research, institutional ethnography is included within the methodology. This has informed construction of a matrix (Figure 6) potentially mapping Australian Foundation Skills compared to the Hughes and Hughes (2011, 2012) notion of VET and Social Capital – from which European research and practitioner colleagues may extrapolate. Also, in alignment with the *learner snapshots* component of our 2011/2012 research into the degree of 'want' for VET to contribute to social capital (Hughes and Hughes 2012), *snapshots* of Australian self-identified educationalist orientated VET teachers are core sources of understanding in this '*how/making it happen*' phase of the research. The '*educationalist*' snapshots are 37 in number and across a traditional trade, through arts and technology, to community service spectrum.

Insights accruing from earlier phases of our exploration of VET and Social Capital provided the foundation for asking the questions shown on page 6. As this was a scoping-in-nature inquiry, responses were invited from within 11 teaching environments where there was reason to believe that '*educationalists*' resided. The consequent, highly reflective, responses from 37 Australian VET teachers who regard themselves as being '*educationalist*' in nature, along with triangulating views expressed in four sharing meetings (16 teachers), one Trade Training Centre visit (6 teachers/5 trades) and numerous one-on-one conversations, have extended insight as to motivations and practices of educationalist Australian VET teachers in traditional trade and other contexts – causing expectation of similar responses from wider survey.

With respect to the *generating-conversation* component of our research, seeking response to the questionnaire by email has been a deliberate strategy to enable acknowledging the response and to set up the possibility of further dialogue. In many instances, this led to extended sharing of views by the respondent; and adding to validity of holding that VET in Australia is well served by '*educationalist*' orientated teachers where allowing circumstances exist – worryingly, seemingly, not the norm.

The Vocational Education and Training environment

In Australia, although commonly perceived as of lesser status to higher education (university), vocational education and training (VET) is positioned, along with higher education, within the tertiary band – i.e. subsequent to primary and secondary education; and non-compulsory³.

Consequent upon a position by government(s) that market forces should apply, VET in Australia is delivered by both public providers (typically identified as Technical and Further Education (TAFE) Institutes) and private providers which may operate according to a *for-profit* or *not-for-profit* business model. In some instances, private providers are enterprise located so as to serve the skill development needs of the enterprise. In both public and private cases, providers draw upon government funding⁴ and variously offer fee-for-service programs independent of government funding.

In addition to what may be thought of as main stream VET providers, the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector delivers VET programs as part of its overall wide ranging lifelong learning focus. Also, secondary schools offer a 'VET in Schools' alternative to an academic (leading to university) stream in the later years.

Across the spectrum of providers, Australian VET students are diverse in terms of age, reason for their learning, commencing level of learning achievement and confidence in learning. Young students with learning weaknesses are at the *high level of support need* within the student spectrum; and adult learners already with academic achievement are at the *low level of support need* of the spectrum; and there is a gradient between which variously includes second-chance learners and students for whom learning has not been hitherto challenging – i.e. students come to VET with wide ranging goals and varying confidence in learning. Also, VET is a pathway to university which in some instances is deliberately chosen by the learner so as to provide a more solid grounding than would otherwise be the case.

Although only one of the many values of VET in Australia, the pathway to higher education is a significant (but somewhat invisible) value of VET as exemplified by Carla (below).

"My name is Carla. I graduated from NMIT in September 2009 after completing a certificate IV in Liberal Arts. The certificate IV in Liberal Arts has provided me with the general knowledge, skills and confidence needed to undertake further university study. After completing the course, I acquired strong skills in collaborative research and teamwork, communication, self-management and academic writing. The certificate IV in Liberal Arts also provided me with a pathway into other academic courses, and in 2010 I commenced a Bachelor of Arts degree and a concurrent

³ On the matter of VET status, in the authors' views, VET has critical value to society and is better thought of as an alternative (to university) tertiary education pathway which is taken by learners seeking competency in technical (broadly defined) fields ranging from traditional trades to diverse work careers. Where would our society be without the plumbers, electricians, carpenters, mechanics, IT professionals, medical support personnel, airline pilots, business skilled people, front line managers, transport and logistics personnel, water plant operators, emergency service personnel, police, military personnel, aged care workers, child minding professionals, local government officers, creative arts graduates etc.?

⁴ In 2012 the Victorian government withdrew substantial funding from TAFE Institutes, causing closure of programmes and lay-off of teachers. This was seen by the Victorian TAFE Institutes as an attack upon them favouring private providers and undermining ability to cross subsidise in support of programmes which, in terms of numbers and financial sustainability, would not otherwise be available to meet community needs.

Bachelor of Psychological Science degree at university. Since commencing my studies at university, I have made the Dean's honours list as a top student in 2010, 2011, and 2012. In addition to this, I received a \$10,000 International national university (INU) scholarship for academic merit, allowing me to spend semester one of 2011 at the University of Leicester. I have also won the top student for the history, philosophy and methodology of psychological science at my university. I sincerely believe that these academic achievements are directly attributable to the skills I acquired through undertaking the Liberal Arts course at NMIT. The excellent quality of teaching and the relevant preparatory nature of the course material is most definitely a recipe for academic success and I cannot recommend the course highly enough! "

(Included with agreement from Carla and NMIT)

As an Australian VET teacher may have students from across the spectrum in a learning group, this gives rise to the desirability for an Australian VET teacher being highly pedagogically capable in addition to their vocational competency. In our experience, this is not universally the case; and, whilst alluded to by a number of respondents, it was particularly remarked upon by Terry - 'A teacher may be vocationally competent but lacking the skills to transfer what they know to the student and encourage the student to reach for their full potential' (paraphrasing of Terry – Technology Teacher & Instructional Designer).

Of course being 'pedagogical capable' is not necessarily synonymous with academic achievement with respect to the science of education. In our experience, there are VET teachers with high level qualifications who aren't pedagogically capable and there are others with lesser academic badging who are highly so capable. Rather than academic credentialed, we think of an 'educationalist' VET teacher – with whatever formal pedagogical training, as being at the core of VET nurturing graduate social capital attributes such as:

The VET graduate -

- having pride in self,
- having justified confidence in drawing upon knowledge and skill coupled with being a lifelong learner,
- having commitment to making the most of what is known and can be done,
- being trustworthy and having appropriately grounded trust in others,
- engaged with strengthening personal networks, and
- contributing to the cohesive strength of the team/enterprise/wider community.

Note: This is not a fully defining explanation. It is offered as indicative of a VET graduate with social capital attributes giving productivity meaning to the knowledge and skill which have been acquired. The point being that the VET graduate has much pride in their capacity to productively contribute to a cohesive society through drawing upon their expanding vocational competency.

On the matter of productivity, we refer the reader to Svendsen and Svendsen (2004, p.2) in which the proposition is put that social capital is the missing link in the economic/production debate. This has much merit; and it is central to our exploration of the motivations and practices of 'educationalist' VET teachers in nurturing social capital attributes possessed by VET graduates. For us, there is justification in asserting that VET falls short of its promise if the learning horizon is just the possession of knowledge and skill. Surely, the confidence and commitment to actually draw upon what is known and can be done has much merit as an outcome from the VET learning experience. Or put another way – Does the employer of a VET graduate employ on the basis of knowledge and skill only? OR Is the employment in the expectation that knowledge and skill will be productively drawn

upon? If the latter, it is more than just reasonable to embed within the VET learning attention to nurturing melded work-place and community serving, productivity related, social capital attributes within the VET graduate; and to overtly support and applaud the ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers who so nurture.

In advocating overt strengthening social capital attention by VET, we do acknowledge other pathways to a VET graduate accruing social capital attributes. For example, family and other personal influences have a role to play; and the culture of a workplace has much influence. However, our position is that VET has a role which must be overtly acknowledged and acted upon – to do otherwise is wasteful of public funding and more than just careless in lost opportunity.

Fortuitously, our exploration of VET and Social Capital now coincides with the Australian VET system giving renewed attention to a suite of Foundation Skills made up of Core Skills for Work (CSfW) and the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)⁵. In this respect, there appears to be an awakening to need for attention in VET delivery to wider issues than just knowledge and skill.

We make the comment of ‘awakening need’ notwithstanding a belief that, from the circa 1980s/1990s adoption of competency based training as the modality of Australian VET, there has been intent to reach beyond just attention to knowledge and skill in the delivery of VET. However, possibly as a combination of deliberate (by some) suppressing of educationalist views and ignorance (by others) of what was being eroded from VET learning, we are now hopefully at a point where there is overt attention to the need for richer VET learning – i.e. renewed attention to foundation skills being a combination of CSfW and language, literacy and numeracy (LLN⁶) competency. But, this said, our experience is that there is a big gap between saying that attention should be given to foundation skills and having the means to act upon this. So, in a foreshadowing of what is to come in this paper, the inherent approach by ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers to attend to these matters is worthy of note and overt support. There is urgency as the ‘*educationalist*’ contribution is evaporating under the pressure of provider sustainability in a VET system which is seemingly tolerant of shallow delivery.

In acknowledging (and applauding) the renewed Foundation Skills attention to enriched VET outcomes – beyond just acting upon narrowly defined knowledge and skill - we suggest that there is opportunity to prominently bring ‘social capital’ into the VET dialogue. Accordingly, by associating these findings with Foundation Skills, this paper links reporting upon the ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher motivations and practices to addressing attention to CSfW and, to some degree, their supporting learners’ LLN strengthening needs.

Outcomes arising from the exploration of motivations and practices of ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers

Note: Except where otherwise indicated, pseudonyms are used for respondents

Along with refining what we mean by *social capital attributes* of a VET graduate, we are also working toward better defining what we mean by an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher; however, for the moment, an ‘*educationalist*’ is one who goes beyond just attention to knowledge and skill and seeks to nurture

⁵ The ACSF addresses language, literacy and numeracy as is required in the workplace and more generally in life. The framework addresses performance in five core skills – Learning, Reading, Writing, Oral Communication and Numeracy.

⁶ In recent years, the Australian Government and State education agencies have acknowledged the need for urgent attention to, productivity weakening, low levels of LLN in the Australian workplace. However, the leverage to be gained by valuing ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers appears to have been overlooked.

social capital attributes. In this ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher phase, the teacher sharing of motivations and practices is deepening insight as to what causes a teacher to identify with being ‘*educationalist*’. In this respect, the following offering by Erick regarding his motivation is worthy of reflection.

Motivation - *“Making it easier and more engaging for students to connect with the fabric that links study with work, theory with life, and skill with understanding”*

(Erick – Audio Technology Teacher)

Seemingly, Erick finds much satisfaction in reaching beyond sterile attention to knowledge and skill. His words invite consideration of the learning gain from enmeshing life and work learning contexts. Such enmeshing, moving one closer to valuing the “E” in VET; and having connection to teacher fulfillment when VET is well taught.

The three questions –

- What motivates you as an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher – i.e. Why do you seek to go beyond just narrow attention to knowledge and skill?
- How do you go about facilitating VET learning which is ‘*educationalist*’ in outcome – i.e. the VET learner acquires more than just knowledge and skill such as pride-in-self and a commitment to actually drawing upon what they know and can do?
- How do you evaluate or sense the outcomes from facilitating VET learning which is ‘*educationalist*’ in nature – i.e. What is there about the learner which indicates that they have acquired more than just knowledge and skill?

Respondents to the formal questionnaire were across a range of Australian VET teachers -17 female of whom 4 were overtly in nurturing roles responded along with 20 male of whom 3 were overtly in nurturing roles. In the case of these self-selecting respondents, neither gender or teaching arenas appear to favour the inclination to be an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher. It should be noted that resonating views arose in numerous additional contacts.

What motivates an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher?

In response to the ‘**what motivates you**’ question, 36 (of 37) VET teachers who identified themselves as being ‘*educationalist*’ in nature gave considered response This was frequently accompanied with rich commentary relevant to their context of teaching; and, in some instances, follow-up conversation and/or emailing expansion occurred. Following grouping like-with-like, these individual responses have been assigned within the following categories – noting that individual teachers offered multiple and varying motivations. As for the other (following in this paper) practice and evaluating categorisations, they are offered as indicative of what might universally apply.

- Personal satisfaction – acting upon the passion and professional integrity.
- Making a difference in students’ lives – developing the whole person, nurturing self-reliance.
- Valuing the learning partnership as a contributor to social cohesion.
- Empowering the learner to learn.
- Nurturing confidence leading to extending of learning boundaries – the learner taking risks.
- A deep commitment to my vocational background.

Whilst the foregoing dot points are not listed in order of prevalence, comparing questionnaire responses with sentiments expressed in the group meetings and numerous conversations, there is cause to believe that an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher brings in their facilitation of learning – as a core motivation - passion for their vocational competence and role as a teacher. Indeed, *inspiring and sharing the passion* was a frequently occurring sentiment - giving rise to a sense that an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher has strong commitment to both their teaching and to their vocational identity – categorised as ***Personal satisfaction – acting upon the passion and professional integrity.***

My motivations for being an educator are multi-dimensional; however, one of the main motivations is the reproduction of the professional community services field in a way that builds upon the knowledge and practice base of the past. Clients need practitioners who know their stuff; have a critical reflective approach to practice; and are prepared to challenge oppressive social and organisational practices.”

(John – Community Services Teacher)

In this instance, John is valuing the traditions and practices of those who have influenced him; and he is offering a window into his motivation to likewise contribute to the next generation of community service practitioners. In confirmation (an example of numerous triangulations), consequent upon invitation to visit a Trade Training Centre attached to a regional secondary school, discussions with five teachers (carpentry, sign writing, picture framing, baking and beauty) led to each teacher saying that their commitment, to their respective professions, is high in the order of ‘*educationalist*’ motivation. These teachers were seeking to share with and inspire the next generation; and, by student demeanour as witnessed, it was evident that the students were so influenced.

The ***making a difference*** motivation is exemplified by “*Witnessing gain in confidence, form networks, develop love of learning and ability to negotiate the world around them*” offering by Mary (designated supporting-the-learner role); “*Engagement with “transformation incidents” in learners*” (David – Vocational Pathways Teacher) and “*I am a catalyst for change for better lives.*” (Robert – Workplace Education Teacher)

“I’m fortunate to manage and teach in a very creative environment. We do pay attention to knowledge and skill, but due to the levels of creativity the learners offer to the educationalists and the educationalists [offer] to the learners, the outcomes are rarely the same. This makes the learning and teaching environment, perhaps not unique, but certainly very challenging to all involved. We need to go beyond the knowledge and skill to make it a worthwhile process for all. “ (Ben – Performing Arts Teacher)

“I am motivated by realistic career outcomes for my students – the content we teach as per the Training Package provides the basic theory the students need, but I prefer to add actual life skills into what I teach. Simple things like etiquette, manners and presentation can make the difference between getting a job and not, and I think that’s my role – not to teach, but to prepare for the industry and the real world.” (Olive, Fitness Teacher)

Jean’s (Further Education Teacher) expression of “*Strengthening confidence in taking learning risks and developing social and emotional skills*” as an educationalist motivation, and Frank’s (Broad scope nurturing competence – adolescent learners with special needs - teacher) “*It is fair to say that while other learners may learn in spite of teachers/trainers and training methods, my learners achieve only because of deliberate and carefully planned education interventions and key to*

this is ensuring that, at a basic level, the learner identifies with and feels part of the learning group” example **valuing the learning partnership as a contributor to social cohesion**. In this category, there is particular need and opportunity to support learners in strengthening confidence as learners learning with others; and it may be that VET offers much in this regard across (and because of) the broad spectrum of learners.

Given the broad range of VET learning and learners, Patricia’s (Vocational Pathways Teacher) motivation as an ‘educationalist’ – *“Society will be a better place if we all work together, understand each other and our society, share experience and develop tolerance and empathy for others.”* – has high relevance to social cohesion outcomes of VET. Such strengthening of community outcomes are achieved when learning partnerships give melded attention to human capital and social capital values. This melding is especially beckoning where a learning group is of mixed character in terms of what they bring and seek to acquire. Potentially, participating as a member of a cohesive learning group is a step toward contributing what one knows and can do as a member of a cohesive society.

With linkage between learning and social cohesion in mind, extended contact with VET teachers reaching beyond just attention to knowledge and skill gives reason to suggest that **empowering the learner to learn** is a common ‘educationalist’ motivator – as exemplified by George.

“Empowering the learner to learn is my key motivator as an educationalist My favourite saying relating to this is “if I teach you the answers to today’s problems, what if tomorrow’s problems are different and I’m not there? “ This philosophy totally resonated with me when I undertook my teaching diploma 30 years ago and has stayed at the core of every learning session I have delivered ever since.”

(George – broad scope VET teacher and VET manager)

The supporting VET learners in learning to learn motivation of an ‘educationalist’ has coupling to **nurturing confidence leading to extending of learning boundaries – the learner taking risks** motivation as articulated by Cathy (Business and Retail Teacher) – *“Knowledge and skill are just the beginning....confidence is built ...confidence leads to further learning and taking risks, which in turn takes the person beyond where he/she has set his/her own boundaries.”* This resonates with Bernard’s motivation to expand a learner’s capability – *“One must be able to broaden a narrow subject area. As in my trade area of Plumbing the parameters of any task can be variable in many ways. Expanding the learning for a student is paramount to what may become scenarios in the on the job component of training. If a student becomes a deeper thinker about how to assess the undertaking of a job task given it will make the task more attainable and also give confidence to the Apprentice on his skill and learning.”* (Bernard – Plumbing Teacher)

And, in turn, it could be said that enhancing learner capability has connection to the **deep commitment to my vocational background** motivator as articulated by Angelo (Illustration and Design Teacher) – *“The reason I go beyond the ‘practical’ aspects of teaching the course is simple. I need to. It’s more than just my own personal integrity and the belief that the integrity of the department needs to be upheld. It is also upholding the integrity of the workplace and indeed the industry we seek to respond to.”* Angelo’s position invites questioning the degree to which he and others are motivated to serve the profession more so than employers - see Figure 2 and the associated discussion

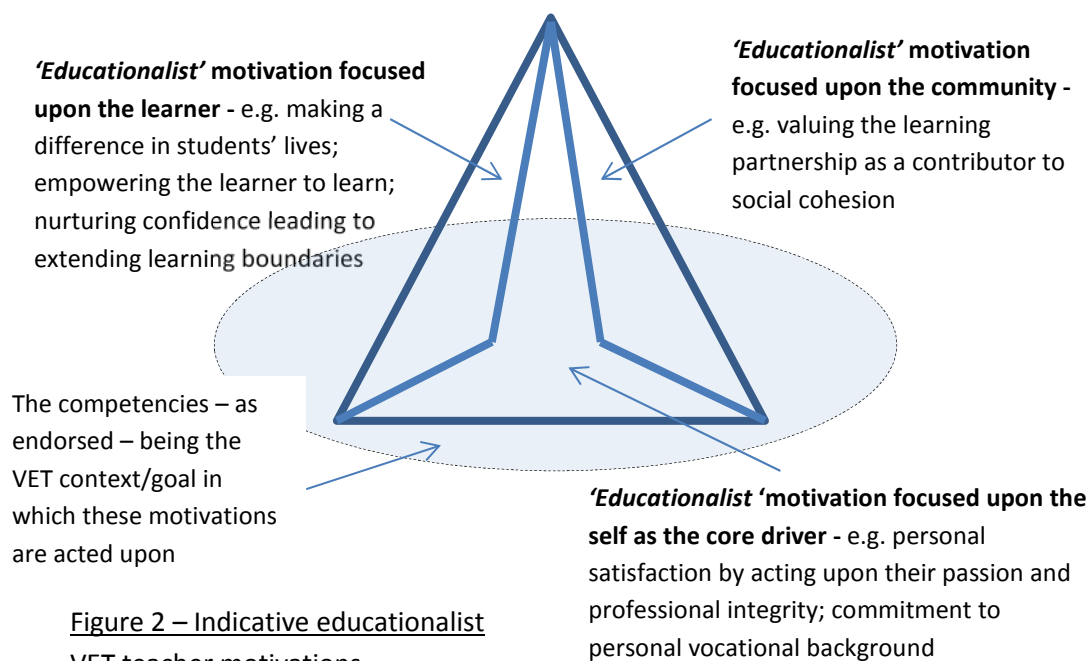


Figure 2 – Indicative educationalist VET teacher motivations

Reflecting upon the '*educationalist*' motivation groupings which have emerged, Figure 2 is offered for consideration. That is, while respondents' motivations are not universally articulated as the same, there is a general pattern of personal passion to teach and to share at the core and serving the learner and the community at the shoulders. However, motivation to directly serve the interests of employers as individual entities has not emerged, but a drive to give back and to sustain the profession/occupation is strong. For us, this beckons as an arena for future investigation.

The foregoing is not to say that an '*educationalist*' VET teacher hasn't got in mind that employers are major stakeholders requiring that VET endorsed knowledge and skill are addressed – the '*educationalist*' VET teacher is clearly responsive to this and more. However, it could be that employers' interests are seen to be met by VET graduating capably competent students (Hughes & Cairns 2013) more so than just competent. In essence, the distinction between *being capable* and *being competent* is that, in the Australian VET context, competencies are (arguably) narrowly defined amalgams of knowledge and skill, whereas capability is a more expansive notion of actually having justified confidence in drawing upon current competencies in new and/or challenging circumstances; and, thereby, throughout life adding to one's stock of competency and pride in capability.

In terms of synergy between VET educationalist motivations and actual attention to Core Skills for Work (CSfW) in the delivery of VET, the '*educationalist*' motivations as exemplified here give cause to hold that navigating the world of work, interacting with others and getting the work done are inherent to educationalist delivery. Accordingly, this invites confirming (or otherwise) inquiry beyond the initial exploration of the utility of a matrix as included in this paper as Figure 6 (page 28).

In comparison to the '*educationalist*', a VET teacher who is only focused upon delivery of knowledge and skill is unlikely to act upon a motivation/passion to facilitate rich learning in which attention to CSfW is an embedded occurrence. Further, the '*educationalist*' motivations to nurture social capital attributes within the learner (as exemplified here) reach beyond just the work environment (as is the

CSfW arena) to whole-of-life contributing to social cohesion across the spectrum of work, relationships, and life – i.e. entwining of knowledge, skills and social capital attribute outcomes.

How does an ‘educationalist’ facilitate VET learning which is ‘educationalist’ in outcome?

In response to the ‘**teaching practice approach to nurturing social capital attributes**’ question, 36 (of 37) VET teachers identifying themselves as *educationalist* in nature responded; and they mostly included commentary upon the entwined competency goals. These individual responses have been grouped within the following categories – noting that these are offered as indicative of what are likely to universally apply if these educationalists were invited to expand upon initial responses.

- Respecting the students as partners in the learning – active learning grounded in valuing what each brings to the learning, nurturing learner pride and positive attitude, bringing out the best in the learner, having empathy with the learner.
- Relevance to the students – building current and potential future knowledge, skill and attitude assets, possessing confidence in a changing world.
- Modeling enthusiasm for learning and the power of positive and affirmative feedback.
- A focus upon self-worth and trust in self – encouraging students to think for themselves, nurturing student ownership of the learning, striving for more than just mere competence, building resilience.
- Encouraging conversation and critical reflection – nurturing and managing a learning environment.
- Constructing a foundation for further learning and aligning to future goals, capability discovery and its connection to expanding career horizons.

Note: In responding to the question, it was apparent that respondents were focussed upon knowledge and skills competency development - as is the VET goal. And, thus, their nurturing of social capital attributes is a value-adding – i.e. the learner equipped and disposed to draw upon acquired knowledge and skill. For these respondents, being an ‘*educationalist*’ is not a diversion from VET objectives; rather, it is pursuit of a commitment to facilitate rich VET learning as is presumably expected of them, but seemingly lost in much VET delivery practice in Australia.

Given the diversity of VET learners, and what this requires as individual acknowledgement and support from the teacher, it is not surprising that ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers place much emphasis upon **respecting the students**. For example Patricia’s (Vocational Pathways Teacher) - “*Valuing what learners bring to the learning and encouraging sharing*” mirrors Anne’s (Child Care & English As A Second Language Teacher) approach - “*Positive attitude in the classroom; satisfaction and pride by encouraging and positive feedback; and learner centred including independent and group learning tasks involving learners as decision makers.*”

Clearly, the act of respecting students has many dimensions and learning partnership nuances.

“I facilitate this [educationalist outcomes] by being overt about my opinion that the students have a lot to be proud about by being in a course at TAFE [public provider] and reminding them that the goals they have set for themselves by enrolling in a TAFE course

are worthwhile and admirable. I often pepper my delivery with phrases such as - You are the people industry needs; Aged Care/Child care/Community Services etc. need people like you because you have so much experience in real life matters; Many of you have already faced adversity and demonstrated your ability to overcome difficulties; These are really important attributes for when you're in the workplace helping others. Students have told me that hearing teachers say such things makes them think about themselves in ways they wouldn't have thought of before. I try to highlight the positives that their mature age or second language background bring to their learning and employment prospects instead of seeing them as deficits. " (Margaret – Learning Skills Teacher)

In large part, nurturing learner pride and respect for others features strongly in 'educationalist' responses regarding their respect for the students, For example, *"Modelling of values and attitudes including respect for others ... Generating pride within the learner"* (Claire – Health and Community Studies Teacher); and *"The focus of the educationalist here is bringing out the best in people and in doing so enabling them to absorb, apply and benefit from their learning"* (Bill – Leadership Teacher); and *"These activities enhance the relationship between learners and trainers and build a sense of community"*. (Frank – Broad scope nurturing competence teacher)

Facilitating learning which is **relevant to the student** is closely connected to respecting students. For example, Robin's (Sports Development Teacher) approach to *"Learning in the workplace and involvement in sporting events as part of the assessment"* is an indicator of what she explained as a sports development program which had hitherto been more classroom based than in-the-field experienced. Robin's facilitating real world learning resonates strongly with Ben's approach as follows.

"The nature of the management and teaching I do in the Performing Arts programs requires student and staff groups to work in 'teams' in order to achieve valuable outcomes. If we take an example of a live music performance we see such players as light and sound designers and operators and event management as well as the performers themselves. Students not only acquire an educationalist outcome – which I am assuming means a gaining of some knowledge or skills – but also the possible abundance of other key skills and importantly, many attributes as well.

I see many students developing skills that can only be achieved, I believe, by committing to and working in small and or large 'teams'. ... In this instance, I see myself as a 'manger of learning'. I don't necessarily 'teach' how to become a team player or team leader for example. I create an environment where the learner is put into a situation where they must learn to be a team player or team leader in order to achieve a positive outcome."

(Ben –Performing Arts Teacher)

Reflecting upon the classification of facilitating learning categories, it could be argued that a hierarchy is beginning to emerge – at least within the nature of responses – see Figure 3. That is, from a grounding of respect for the students, facilitating relevant learning gives rise to the opportunity of modelling **enthusiasm for learning** and beyond as sequentially listed in the six facilitating dot points. In this respect, Susan's modelling approach - 'Positive and affirming feedback on an ongoing basis, celebrating success and demonstrating confidence in the learner' (paraphrasing, Susan – Management/Leadership Teacher with an overall quality of delivery responsibility) – is a step along the way

to a learner being a committed and confident lifelong learner. Indeed, Luke (Visual Arts Teacher), who introduces himself as motivated to empower people as lifelong learners, included “*constant feedback on work in progress*” along with “*students striving beyond mere competence in resolving tasks*” as significant elements of his facilitation of learning. Luke’s, in common with others, nurturing enthusiasm invites the proposition that how one is taught is as important as what one is taught.

Whilst not the only instance of a VET provider (both public and private) laying a foundation of enthusiasm and commitment for learning at the outset of a programme, Olive’s outlining of her provider’s approach gives cause to applaud going beyond just attention to knowledge and skill.

“We foster an environment of personal development through our “Master Trainer Criteria” [being a fitness trainer is the student goal]. From day one we set the students up to aim for perfection in the following areas: Presentation; Punctuality; Attitude; Performance; Experience; Attendance. This gives them set standards to aim for, for which the reward is pride in self. “Experience” and “performance” encourages them to broaden their horizons and seek new experiences which add to their skill set.”

(Olive – Fitness Teacher)

It is difficult to give clear demarcation between the enthusiasm for learning and a **focus upon self-worth and trust-in-self** discussions. However, Sam’s specific mention of building resilience (in the context of plumbing apprenticeship and the inevitability of technological change) points to lifelong connection between motivation/enthusiasm to learn and, well grounded, strong self-image.

“I always try to encourage a genuine interest in the subject by demonstrating that all skills and the related methods and materials used are constantly evolving. Whatever you do should be done to the best of your ability and always with quality, accuracy and precision in mind. It doesn’t matter if you are joining plumbing pipe together or making your bed in the morning. A deeper understanding of these facts can translate to an ability to adapt to change. Independent thought, analysis and the resulting adaptability not only builds confidence in the subject matter but I believe can build resilience in a student’s ability to deal with life” (Sam –Plumbing Teacher)

Sam’s approach echoes the remark of another VET trade teacher, at an earlier phase of our VET and social capital research, along the lines of ‘I teach them to be a proud person beyond being a tradesperson’ (paraphrasing). Closely connected to this is Heidi’s approach to arranging, and supporting, work placement leading to self-worth and commitment to trusting in own ability within the workplace. Also, Heidi takes note of the student’s demonstrated level of capability (beyond just knowledge and skill competency) as a measure of attainment.

“These students are capable of working independently and able to seek guidance where necessary. They have knowledge that facilitates further enquiry. That is, if they don’t know how to do something they are aware of how to find a solution either by communicating with senior staff, trainers or reference material. Each action is supported by knowledge and skills together with practical application.”

(Heidi – Health and Well Being Teacher)

Returning to the appearance of an emerging hierarchy, it could be argued that a student having justified self-worth and trust-in-self is a useful precursor to drawing upon **conversation and critical reflection** as a device employed by an educationalist orientated VET teacher. In this respect, Tracy's approach to supporting learners in making a difference in their lives, and hence in others, merits consideration.

With respect to her motivation, Tracy remarks – “As a teacher who has come from the Community Services Sector I have a very strong commitment to the empowerment of disadvantaged groups. As a teacher I understand that I am in a very privileged position and in my role I have the ability to influence the learners in many ways. I am inspired and motivated by witnessing people change from a position of poor confidence and negativity to someone who believes they can make a positive difference in someone else's life because they have made changes in theirs. This stuff isn't articulated or a requirement in units of competency but are, to me, the fundamental changes required for people to be able to work and live constructively and contribute to the community more broadly.” (Tracy – Community Services Teacher)

With respect to a facilitation aspect, Tracy remarks – “I often will show the students DVDs or Youtube clips which are not necessarily or strictly part of the curriculum but things which I believe will start conversation, debate and discussion. Things that will challenge their view of the world and the way they see themselves and others in it.”

Throughout our three phases (thus far) of VET and Social Capital research the commitment to nurturing and managing a learning environment, in which students actively engage through sharing and constructively challenging, has been a common thread to educationalist facilitation. In this respect, Tracy's approach to holistic learning has much in common with George's view that rich learning is underpinned by the 'art' of teaching being employed as teachers construct and contribute to the arising learning partnership - *“Being an educationalist is an art, a dance to the agreed objectives. The tools I use to achieve the agreed objectives are; inter-personal skills, intra-personal skills, intuition, a sense of humour and drawing on my professional experience. Get this right and the learner learns – what they need to know, not what I think they need to know!”* (George – Broad scope VET teacher and manager). Further, Erick (see below) identifies that, in the circumstances of a sharing and reflecting learning environment, both he and his students bring much life experience and diverse energies to the sharing/learning partnership which they mutually forge and maintain.

“I consider my scope of specialist knowledge regarding the principles and methods of teaching as a conglomeration of theory and life experiences, and similarly, I see in cohorts of learners an abundance of unique life histories, learning and understanding that combine to constitute a diverse yet integral mass of momentum toward the acquisition of knowledge. I believe it is my job to channel that energy and to nurture that momentum toward mutually beneficial outcomes”. (Erick – Audio Technology Teacher)

Whilst there are varying facilitation nuances articulated by respondents, in our many contacts with “educationalist” VET teachers, there is an appearance of a commonality in their facilitation approach. In seeking to go beyond attention to knowledge and skill, the educationalist constructs at the outset

a foundation for engagement with the learning to immediately come and, then, so supports this learning that there is now a broader and deeper **foundation for future learning**. In this respect, Jean's (Further Education Teacher) "*Valuing RPL[Recognition of Prior Learning]⁷ and awakening to a new world of opportunity ... Engage with students in discussing goals and pathways to employment and further learning*" is a building upon what the student brings to the learning which, in turn, expands the foundation for reaching to new learning horizons throughout life. Jean then goes on to describe her facilitation as including "*A flexible approach to learning including projects in the community and using learner interests as a motivation to learn.*" In this later respect, Jean is laying a foundation for further learning through the device of rich and real learning in the "now" which is both motivational and informing with respect to continued learning – a student's disposition to lifelong learning is a significant outcome sought by Jean.

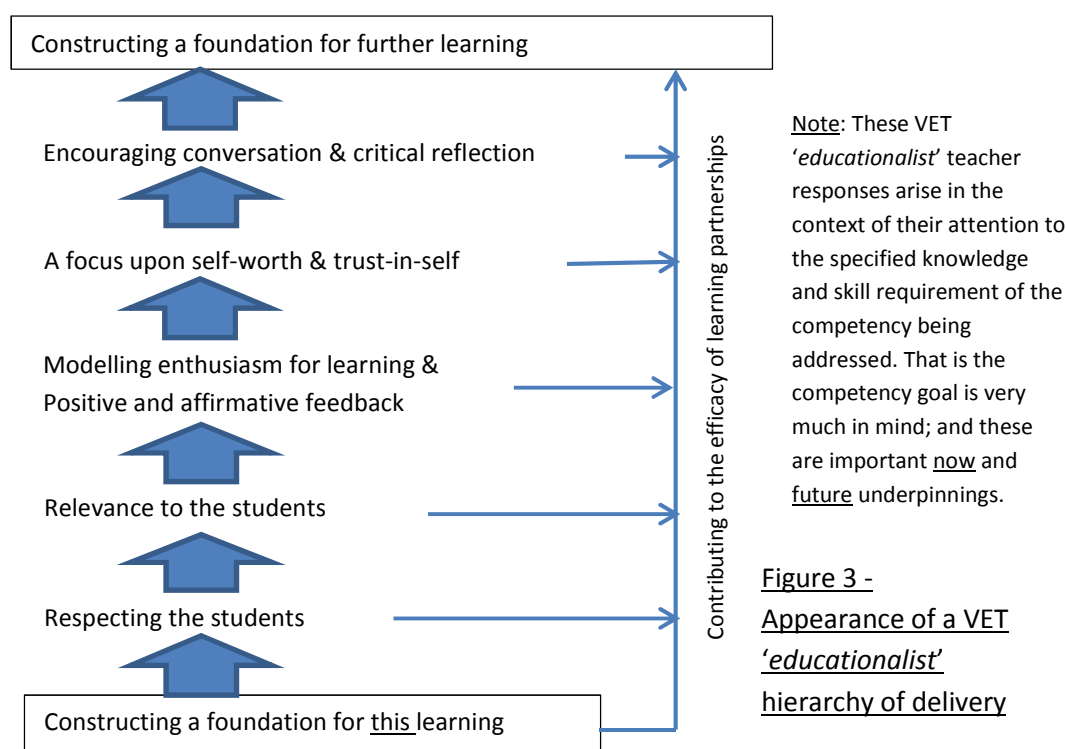
Interestingly, David (Vocational Pathways Teacher) lists "*Approaching the teaching as an introduction to self-teaching*" as an aspect of his educationalist facilitation – i.e. laying the foundation for future self-managed learning. This resonates with supporting students in learning-how-to-learn, as is a common educationalist inclusion; and one nuance, of which, is Angelo's responsiveness to students' feelings regarding current learning challenges and potential future goals "*[I]take the time to speak with students about their fears, ambitions, and ideas about their future learning and future careers.*" (Angelo - Illustration and Design Teacher).

In offering (for consideration) a hierarchy of educationalist approach to facilitation, we suggest that the notion of laying a foundation for further learning permeates throughout the process. In the instance of the provider requiring teachers to be educationalist in nature, supporting students in preparing to engage with the learning is a precursor to the commencement of the formal course of study. Whilst in a different provider setting, Frank's (Broad scope nurturing competence teacher) approach - "*Beginning (early weeks - induction) with attention to self-esteem, and respect for others, etc*" is another example of up-front investment in attention to competency underpinnings. Further - respecting, relevance, modelling enthusiasm, self-worth and trust-in-self, and encouraging conversation and critical reflection all have foundation for further learning implications; and these are elements in nurturing lifelong-learner disposition as illustrated in Figure 3.

As for the synergy between an '*educationalist's*' motivation(s) and the attention to Core Skills for Work (CSfW), nurturing CSfW is seemingly embedded within an '*educationalist's*' facilitation of VET learning. Whilst this isn't explicitly indicated in Figure 3, the indicative scope of each element in the hierarchy, as listed on page 15 of this paper, gives cause to anticipate that an '*educationalist*' VET teacher – upon being so encouraged – will embed specific attention to CSfW if not already inherent in their delivery. In comparison, a VET teacher whose practice is to only address knowledge and skill is possibly not so well predisposed to enrich their delivery by giving more than superficial attention to CSfW. Accordingly, this beckons as an area of further exploration beyond probing conversations (to date) for which the Figure 6 matrix (page 28) is offered as a tool to aid further exploration as it has already served in scoping conversations.

⁷ In our (Libby and Lewis Hughes) view, Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is a strong but under-utilised feature of VET in Australia – maybe, there is also under-utilisation in Europe. Whilst it is encouraged as being an essential offering to a new student, in practice this isn't drawn upon due to perceived logistical barriers, cost, etc. Maybe, '*educationalist*' VET teachers have much to offer in terms of ways and means in realising the RPL intentions and opportunities - worthy of exploration.

Noting that addressing CSfW by an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher is an inclusion within a broader nurturing of VET learner social capital attributes, Figure 3 illustrates a foundation for expanded lifelong learning accrued attributes including strengthening and drawing upon CSfW throughout life.



**Figure 3 -
Appearance of a VET
‘*educationalist*’
hierarchy of delivery**

How do you evaluate or sense the outcomes from facilitating VET learning which is educationalist in nature?

34 of the 37 VET teachers who identified as being ‘*educationalist*’ in nature responded to the ‘**evaluating/sensing outcomes**’ question. As for their other responses, these were set against the circumstances of their teaching; and the following listing is indicative of a generality variously applying.

- Learner demeanour – pride, commitment, enthusiasm, confidence, ethic, trustworthiness and trust in others, belief in self and respect or others, resilience. **Note:** This was the most remarked upon indicator in arising conversations and very likely the principal social capital attribute outcome from learning partnerships.
- Bonding within the class (“bridging” more so than excluding of others sometimes associated with “bonding”)
- Strength of the teacher / learner / learner to learner partnership – exchanging ideas with teacher and peers, breadth and depth of student questions
- Outcomes of a time capsule strategy and the like – i.e. achievement against initial goals
- Learner having enhanced job and life related networks
- Learner having strengthened capability (beyond mere competence)
- Continuing (post programme) ex-learner and teacher connection, initiated by the student
- Learner embracing lifelong learning

At an early stage of this ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher motivations and practices phase of inquiry, Robin, a sports development respondent, spoke of the lift in **learner demeanour** which occurred

upon change in course structure including the students learning much more on the job and being uniformed – i.e. the learning was more real and the students had enhanced identity. Robin commented that ‘Student’s pride in self, work and institution identity were observable outcomes from application of an educationalist approach’ (paraphrasing, Robin – Sports Development Teacher). This shift in manner of learning emphasis, and readily apparent pride in identity (self and with the institution), has much resonance with the view of an educationalist head of department that he could identify the social capital attribute change in a student just by looking at them – ‘They walk erect and with confidence as compared to their earlier (at enrolment) somewhat weak demeanour’ (paraphrasing, Edgar- Trade Head of Department).

And in similar vein: *“... you can tell a lot about a teacher or a learner by the way they walk ... Teachers of TAFE need to notice the gait and walk cycle of their students. More importantly, they need to take notice of their own style of walking and gait”*

(Angelo – Illustration and Design Teacher)

Also, Edgar’s observation of change in students, and Angelo’s extending this to include teachers, were similarly commented upon by trade teachers in earlier phases of this research. Of course, there are influences other than the learning environment in play.

We offer the above examples of observed strengthened demeanour in rebuttal of the position held by some that social capital attributes can’t be assessed. Our response is that if measurement in absolute terms can’t be achieved, then it can at least be evaluated in a sensing manner; and actually seeing it is not beyond reason. Further, there are judgments (beyond seeing) which an ‘educationalist’ teacher makes as indicated, in the following –

Demonstrating commitment: *“Students who have acquired more than just knowledge and skill seem to be more ‘committed’ individuals. They might become committed to certain principles of how to best operate in their field. They may show they value learning by going on to further education or committing to ongoing professional development. To me they are people who are somehow ‘switched on’ to learn, to engage with others in their field, not just students who are happy to throw anything together just so they get a pass; they demonstrate that they really want to get involved, to make an effort, to think, to make a difference. I sense the joy or satisfaction in what they’re doing, in how they’re relating to their context”* (Mary – Study Skills Teacher)

Displaying confidence: *“These kind of things are evaluated in observing a person’s general demeanour. Have a sense of whether the approach I have taken has been beneficial or not by observing what the person says or does. I ask students about their experience at TAFE and many have told me that it is the personal approach and the incidental conversations we teachers have with them that have made them feel OK about themselves, kept them motivated to keep trying even when the course is really heavy,(lots of content in a short time). I evaluate it by seeing [observing outcomes] students who are taught in this manner, i.e. I expect you’ll be able to achieve this outcome (skills and knowledge) because I think you’re a really smart, clever, experienced person who has already achieved much so I’m confident you’ll be able to overcome any obstacles this course might throw at you. When I take this approach I find students feel*

better about themselves, more confident to talk about what they are thinking about their course work and we can have the real conversations to get them on track to successfully complete the nuts and bolts end of TAFE, the assessment tasks.”

(Margaret – Learning Skills Teacher)

Showing enthusiasm: *“Evaluation is a multi-faceted process full of fact and feeling. Pleasure, pride, self-esteem, satisfaction and enthusiasm are derived mostly from the later, although in creative arts, the process of formal reflective reporting can unveil these attributes and allow the learner to express personal and professional outcomes as part of the journey toward skill and knowledge”* (Erick – Audio Technology Teacher)

Demonstrating belief in self and respect for others: *“The learner may become more engaged in the area of study or course as a whole. They learn to work in a team, volunteer for other projects, take on a new role that they may have witnessed others doing and believing that ‘they can do that’, feel confident in offering ideas, supporting others, able to take criticism, listen to others and develop own confidence.”*

(Ben – Performing Arts Teacher)

Displaying a sense of self-worth: *“Throughout the learning journey I observe the student’s confidence levels and watch these grow slowly. “Throughout the journey I sense the person’s self -worth and usually see it flourish, feeling of having achieved something that the person never thought achievable. This in turn makes the person believe that “if I can do this, I might also be able to do that”.....hence, the knowledge and skill have turned into confidence. “* (Cathy – Business and Retail Teacher)

An ‘*educationalist*’ teacher strives for and, when successful, experiences strong **bonding within the class** (Not to be read as excluding of others in a ‘bonding’ versus ‘bridging’ social capital context) which accrues from the amalgam of positive individual learner demeanour. This was typified by Robin (Sports Development Teacher) who coupled growth in self-confidence, strengthened view of career path, dreams realised and future ambition with bonding within the class. Also, the manifestation of strong **learning partnerships** is offered as evidence of strengthening social capital attributes possessed by learners – *“The relationship becoming one of mutual exchange of ideas and respect”* (Victor – Arts and Social Science Teacher); ‘Student display of personal growth – reporting success, venturing opinions’ (paraphrasing, Tina – Children’s Services Teacher).

It is evident that ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers place much value on the strength of learning partnerships between teacher and learner. For example, David (Vocational Pathways Teacher) and William (Screen and Media Teacher) hold that progressive evaluation/feedback against goals throughout the learning is enabled by mutual respect in a learning partnership. Interestingly, there is a cyclic relationship in that learning partnerships require social capital grounded cohesion and have social-capital-attribute building qualities; and include trust building partnerships between learners and self-evaluation by learners with respect to goal achievement. In such a circumstance, and in addition to the experienced accruing of social capital within the partnership, the conventionally assessed strength of learning outcomes is of itself an indicator of educationalist nurtured social capital attributes possessed by learners.

Connecting evaluation of competency with personal social capital attributes: “... *when teachers take the time to validate and acknowledge a person’s worth contribution or input, that same person starts to regain the confidence to accept praise and positive feedback and generally feel better about themselves*”

(Angelo – Illustration and Design Teacher)

On the matter of strength and range of learning outcomes, in the course of this research, we have come to expect that an educationalist VET provider environment is characterised by engaging learners in initial goal setting, preparing the learning ground and with a commitment to the notion that the learning is about change. In this respect, Tracy outlines an embedded-in-the-learning “**Time Capsule**” approach which has similarity to **goal setting strategies** of other educationalist providers and teachers.

Responding to evaluating/sensing social capital attribute outcomes: “*We have one concrete way of achieving this. At the beginning of each course we ask the students to complete a time capsule. On a sheet of paper we ask them to write down how they are feeling about undertaking this study, what are their fears or reservations? Where do they want to be in six months’ time? We also explain that their thoughts are private and they will not have to share them unless they want to. In the time capsules the students often express feelings about a lack of confidence, being failures in many things in their life, nervous about starting a new career, being afraid of groups etc. At the end of the course we hand the time capsules back to the students. More often than not there is a major change from what they wrote earlier. Their confidence has grown and they often can’t recognise the person that wrote the paragraph six months earlier.*”

(Tracy – Community Services Teacher)

Coupled to goal setting and although in a somewhat yet to be tested category, the expanding of learning conversations and activities, which occur in the course of learning partnerships, are said by respondents to this inquiry to lead to **enhanced job and life related networks**. Such outcomes are beyond achieving just mere competence in terms of knowledge and skill. This is related to confidence in the “now” and in the “future” and is connected to having appropriate trust in others as articulated by Jean - ‘Students demonstrate a gain in confidence and self-esteem. They also display having a supporting friendship network, expanded in the process of learning, with connection to feeling valued and looking forward to the future’ (paraphrasing, Jean - Further Education Teacher)

On the matter of a learner **having and demonstrating capability** (beyond mere competence), David observes that – ‘Learners are seen to be confidently engaged through expressing their views, asking questions, positive criticism of others and provide clear evidencing examples of reflecting upon their level of attainment. Personal growth is apparent through a learner’s comments about their course and their progress through it.’ (paraphrasing, David - Vocational Pathways Teacher). Also, similar to other ‘*educationalist*’ teachers, student self-esteem grounded exchanging of ideas with teachers and peers is cited by Luke (Visual Arts Teacher) as evidence of accruing social capital attributes which are beyond just mere competence.

The foregoing, and similar views regarding actual demonstration of social capital attribute(s) grounded capability, have resonance with Sam's differentiating between training and educating.

"It's all about the questions. When a student asks a specific question about what has just been discussed in a classroom or demonstrated in a workshop, I have "trained" them. However, when a student starts asking questions which relate to the subject while interconnecting and reaching out to other aspects of work, community or life, I know I have "educated" them". (Sam – Plumbing Teacher)

Also, beyond Sam's breadth and depth of student questions, Frank's coupling increased resilience with capability – acting confidently in new and challenging situations – is another nuance of what can be observed beyond just possession of knowledge and skill.

'Having the confidence to attempt and persist to acquire a new skill or apply skill or knowledge in a new context is perhaps the most valuable life skill VET learners can acquire. I provide qualitative feedback to my learners about this and their attitude, relating this as an important indicator of work readiness.'

(Frank – Broad scope nurturing competence teacher)

Although after the learning experience, **the continuing** (post programme) **contact initiated by the student** and **the learner embracing lifelong learning** are evidence items relevant to learner acquired social capital attributes. In an earlier phase of this research, traditional trade teachers (in group discussion) remarked upon past apprentices maintaining contact with teachers who were educationalist in nature, but rarely with the non-educationist teachers.

Clearly, continuing contact initiated by VET graduate students is much valued by teachers and, amongst other things, serves as an indicator of educationalist nurtured outcomes.

Describing evidence of outcomes beyond just knowledge and skill – *"Feedback from students who have progressed to higher study, maintaining that they have done very well at that level, largely because of both the skills and love of learning engendered in their earlier course, as well as the confidence acquired."*

(Judy –Professional Writing & Editing Teacher)

"Emails like the one I received this week from an ex-student, saying she remembered me talking about a particular writer working in a remote area of Tasmania but couldn't remember the location. She was going to Tasmania and wanted to visit the place we had discussed some years earlier...kind of nice that even though the detail had been forgotten, the curiosity remained." (Judy –Professional Writing & Editing Teacher)

and

'Students recognising and acting upon their career and learning options'.

(paraphrasing, John – Community Services Teacher)

As for findings in earlier studies by us, Tina's (Children's Services Teacher) indicator of students having a desire to go on to further learning when they never thought they could, and Luke's (Visual Arts Teacher) experience of students envisaging further learning beyond VET, are evidence examples of VET outcomes beyond what is envisaged as achievement of competency. Students taking control of their

own learning is another evidence indicator of educationalist nurtured enriched outcomes as observed by Susan (Management/Leadership Teacher with an overall quality of delivery responsibility).

Also, Olive remarks that - *“One of the most pleasing things I find is when students come to me and ask me to proof-read business plans or CVs. I love to watch the students grow and develop in confidence, and measure this by the manner with which they approach me and other teachers for advice.”* (Olive – Fitness Teacher)

Given the confidence with which educationalist respondents offered examples of how they evaluate/sense social capital outcomes in their VET learners, there is cause to rebut the view held by some that these are qualities which can’t be assessed. Whilst arguably imperfect from a quantifying perspective, we suggest that frequency of observing, experiencing, and sensing has validity. And when quantitatively recorded frequency is coupled with critical/challenged qualitative analysis of recorded events, insight is strengthened which informs enriching feedback as shown in Figure 4.

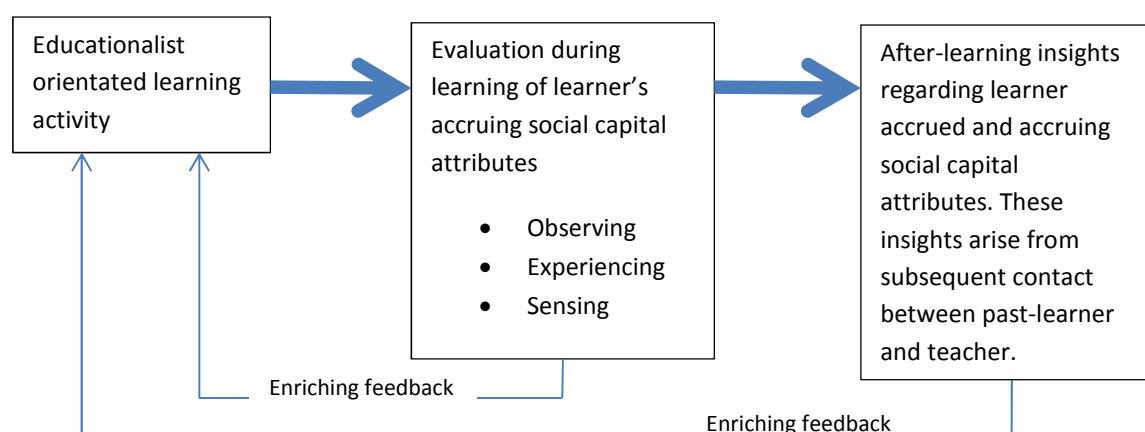


Figure 4 – Evaluating and enhancing *social-capital-attribute* nurturing learning

In the instance of the August 2013 visit to a Trade Training Centre, social capital attributes of students were clearly on display as observed demeanour whilst in a learning activity and when moving around the campus. Class bonding and learning partnership qualities were evident in the learning/working⁸ spaces. The researcher experience was as a welcomed interlocutor on the topic of rich learning beyond just attention to knowledge and skill. Social capital attributes were said by the teachers (on the day - furnishing, signwriting, picture framing, baking, beauty treatment) to be highly valued within the culture of the Centre. There was a strong sense, arising from observed enthusiasm of learners and teachers, that the Trade Training Centre was a learning environment where learners were accruing much in addition to knowledge and skill. This was experienced evidence of alignment with the declared objective of the host secondary college’s mission to develop a lifelong commitment to learning together with a nurturing of personal maturity and social responsibility.

Whilst the Trade Training Centre ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers’ responses to the formal questionnaire had close alignment to the generality of other responses, in the case of evaluating outcomes, both the bakery teacher and the music teacher made particular mention of generated evidence in respect of student co-operations. In respect of baking – ‘As a bakery cannot operate with one person, the

⁸ Some of student’s learning effort is associated with the production of real product of value to others.

finished product, along with observing individual work ethic and respect for others, is evidence of transformation to being job ready and maturing attitude’ (paraphrasing, Edgar, Baking VET Programme Teacher). In respect of Music – Debbie (Music VET Programme Teacher) offered as evidence ‘All 15 students working together, largely independent of teacher guidance, making informed decisions so as to perform the Bohemian Rhapsody. The performance was of high quality and demonstrated meeting a challenge which the students may have previously avoided’ (paraphrasing, Debbie). On reflection, on the occasion of the visit to the Centre, it was the observed culture of co-operation which largely influenced the sense of it being a high nurturing of social-capital-attributes environment.

The question arises – Does evaluation of social-capital-attribute outcome(s) require quantifying measurement? This posed, whilst having the view that quantifying is not a necessity, we suggest that there is merit in seeking better understanding with a view to identifying quantifiable indicators – having in mind the European Commission (2012, p. 9) urging that assessment of key competences for lifelong learning should not be so narrowly defined that it leads to narrow teaching and learning.

Overview of the revealed activity of ‘educationalist’ orientated learning

As illustrated in Figure 5, passion and commitment to go beyond just attention to knowledge and skill is asserted and displayed by the self-identified ‘*educationalists*’ VET teachers - being the subject of this exploration. This gives rise to facilitating and evaluating practices which engage with learners in learning partnerships which are respectful of all in the partnership and, importantly, are the foundation for enthusiasm and confidence in drawing upon what is *known-and-can-be-done*. Significantly, the ‘*educationalist*’ teacher has inherent propensity to nurture lifelong learner as an accrued social capital attribute of students; and thus look to graduates being capably-competent rather than just competent in terms of possessing knowledge and skill.

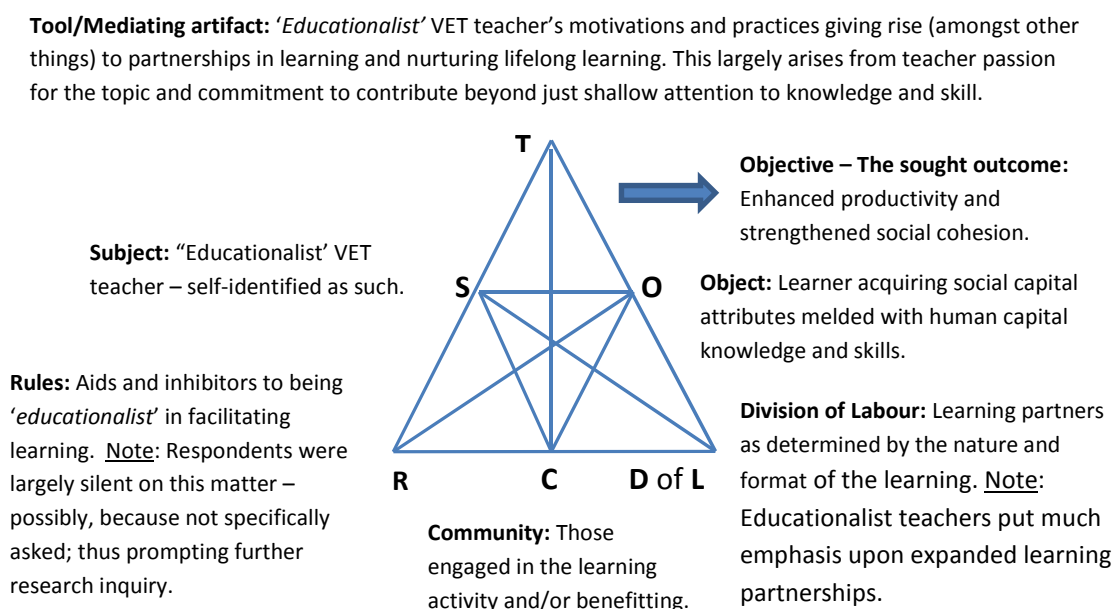


Figure 5 – Activity system for ‘*educationalist*’ nurtured learning – Teacher as the subject

Intriguingly, whilst governing rules which define the delivery of VET (including the Australian Quality Training Framework (AQTF) and the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) along with business model determined provider rules) have pivotal impact upon the mode of facilitator practice, these

did not feature largely in the ‘*educationalist*’ responses to the questionnaire or in the arising conversations. This silence prompts the question – Why is it so?

Whilst it is evident that the ‘*educationalist*’ responders are cognisant of and responsive to the rules which shape the delivery of VET, it may be that being ‘*educationalist*’ is so inherent to their practice that they act in a manner which accommodates to governing rules - even though these rules have, in some circumstances, inhibiting aspects. For example, going beyond addressing the defined scope of a competency is discouraged, but yet the educationalist does this. Accordingly, in Figure 5 “Rules” is flagged as an activity system element inviting exploration and, possibly, at the hinge⁹.

Mapping social capital attributes to Core Skills for Work (CSfW) and a step beyond

Informed by findings thus far, we intend on-going exploration of the intersection between an educationalist VET teacher’s inherent nurturing of social capital attributes possessed by a VET graduate and the deliberate attention to Core Skills for Work (CSfW). Also, the application to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF - see below) is a matter of interest; and adds to the prospect of bringing implicit valuing, by some, of VET nurtured social capital into the explicit realm of many.

The generation of conversation, and action, strengthening valuing of the “E” in VET is at the heart of our exploring VET and Social Capital. We hold that there is validity in the proposition that the “E” has much connection to CSfW. With this in mind, Figure 6 serves to prompt conversations taking leverage from current interest in embracing attention to Key Foundation Skills in the delivery of VET in Australia. In this respect, it should be noted that CSfW are coupled with the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) skills of learning, reading, writing, oral communication and numeracy to comprise the Key Foundation Skills.

The Core Skills for Work Framework complements the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)¹⁰ and together the two frameworks describe the Key Foundation Skills.

(DIISTRE 2012b)

Beyond CSfW, the “*educationalist*” nurtured VET learner/graduate social capital attributes have ‘whole-of-life’ meaning in such a way as reaches beyond work to broader aspects of participating in, and contributing to, a cohesive society; for example, as foreshadowed in the European Key Competences for Lifelong Learning (see Figure 7). This gives rise to urging acknowledging, and valuing, educationalists nurturing social capital attributes within VET students. Also, completing coverage of foundation skills, there is prospect of an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher expanding their support of students with ACSF Core Skills needs; hence intended inclusion in our on-going research.

Consequent upon the proposition that social capital attributes are inherently nurtured by ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers, and this does include foundation skills, Figure 6 serves as a reflective matrix to map potential intersection between social capital attributes and Key Foundation Skills. This

⁹ In exploring interacting activity systems, we are honing an approach, in circumstances of a shared object, where an informed selection is made of which of **rules**, **community** or **division of labour** has the most common pivotal influence upon each of the systems. Having made this choice, the choice is positioned at the hinge. The hinge therefore is comprised of the choice, shared object (so constructed), and tool having shared object utility. See Hughes (2007, pp. 238-239) for an example of this approach.

¹⁰ It is unfortunate that the two components of the FSK Foundation Skills Training Package (see next footnote) have such similar naming. However, they are markedly different as outlined in this paper.

is done noting that the *educationalist* may be planting a ‘seed’ more so than giving full attention. In this respect, our research arena is broader than the Australian Key Foundation Skills; however, the key foundation skills are a current – VET in Australia - base from which to cast a larger net.

‘Educationalist’ VET teacher nurturing within a VET graduate Social capital attributes as suggested by Libby and Lewis Hughes	Core Skills for Work										ACSF - Core Skills				
	Navigate the world of work		Interact with others			Get the work done					Learning	Reading	Writing	Oral Communication	Numeracy
	Manage career and work life	Work with roles, rights and protocols	Communicate for work	Connect and work with others	Recognise and utilise diverse perspectives	Plan and organise	Make decisions	Identify and solve problems	Create and innovate	Work in a digital world					
Pride in self															
Confidence in drawing upon knowledge and skill															
Being a lifelong learner															
Commitment to making the most of what is known and can be done															
Being trustworthy															
Having appropriately grounded trust in others															
Strengthening personal networks aiding application of competency															
Contributing to the cohesiveness of workplace team(s)/communities (Other)															

Figure 6 – Reflective mapping tool: Social Capital attributes to CSfW and ACSF

Notes:

1. Core Skills for Work and ACSF Core Skills comprise the Australian Core Skills Framework. This framework has informed development of the FSK Foundation Skills Training Package¹¹ which presently includes 91 units of competency.
2. The 91 units of the FSK Foundation Skills Training Package, thus far endorsed, are overwhelmingly addressing ACSF Core Skills. However, CSfW units are anticipated to be progressively developed.
3. The listed social capital attributes are as we (Libby and Lewis Hughes) example them; and indicative provision is made to include other aspects as a user might identify and choose to map.

Taking the lead from ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers inherently nurturing social capital attributes in their students, reflecting upon educationalist influence beyond CSfW has merit. Accordingly, Figure 7 is offered as a companion reflection template to Figure 6. Such companion reflection is suggested as a step in Australian VET expanding the social capital *knowing-and-valuing* horizon. Similarly, it may be the case that a European ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher (maybe in partnership with a workplace trainer where a dual system is operative – see footnote 12) nurtures social capital attributes in a

¹¹ An Australian Training Package is an endorsed specification of competency standards, qualifications arising from the packaging of these standards’ and guidance regarding assessment of competency. The FSK Training Package is a departure from the norm in that it is not tied to a particular industry and is of a generic nature.

manner paralleling the Australian 'educationalist' VET teacher; however, the respective systems have differences influencing educationalist propensities.

Note: We reiterate our agreement with the Svendsen and Svendsen (2004) proposition that social capital is connected to productivity. Svendsen and Svendsen hold that social capital is the missing link in the productivity debate. It is curious that this is overlooked, as at least a point of view, in the design and implementation of VET in Australia; and, seemingly, not overtly stated (but implied within the key competences) in the European VET case.

AUSTRALIAN REFLECTION		EUROPEAN REFLECTION
<p>From an Australian perspective - Is it probable that an educationalist VET teacher inherently nurtures some aspects of the European key competences? If so, which and with what potential effect upon productivity?</p>	<p>Key competences for lifelong learning: European Reference Framework (European Commission 2007)</p> <p><u>Note:</u> These are 2006 recommendations arising from the European Parliament; and subsequently articulated in the European Commission and Member States within the Education and Training 2010 Work Programme. In comparing with the Australian approach to CSfW delivery, it should be kept in mind that, whereas Australian VET is positioned in the tertiary education band, much of European VET delivery is at the secondary level – hence, attention to key competences for lifelong learning is largely in school settings with teenage pupils.</p> <p>For the Australian reflector ←</p> <p>For the European reflector →</p>	<p>From a European perspective – Is it probable that an educationalist VET teacher, and/or VET trainer¹², inherently nurtures these key competences? If so, which and with what potential effect upon productivity?</p>
	<p><u>1.Communication in the mother tongue</u> "Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing), and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts; in education and training, work, home and leisure." (European Commission 2007, p. 4)</p>	
	<p><u>2. Communication in foreign languages</u> "Communication in foreign languages broadly shares the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue. It is based on the ability to understand, express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) in an appropriate range of societal and cultural contexts (in education and training, work, home and leisure) according to one's wants or needs. Communication in foreign languages also calls for skills such as mediation and intercultural understanding. An individual's level of proficiency will vary between the four dimensions (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and between the different languages, and according to that individual's social and cultural background, environment, needs and/or interests. (European Commission 2007, p. 5)</p>	
	<p><u>3.Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology</u> "Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations. Building on a sound mastery of numeracy, the emphasis is on process and activity, as well as knowledge. Mathematical competence involves, to different degrees, the ability and willingness to use mathematical modes of thought (logical and spatial thinking) and presentation (formulas, models, constructs, graphs, charts)." Competence in science refers to the ability and willingness to use the body of knowledge and methodology employed to explain the natural world, in order to identify questions and to draw evidence-based conclusions. Competence in technology is viewed as the application of that knowledge and methodology in response to perceived human wants and needs. Competence in science and technology involves an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and responsibility as an individual citizen." (European Commission 2007, p. 6)</p>	
	<p><u>4.Digital competence</u> "Digital competence involves the confident and critical use of Information Society Technology (IST) for work, leisure and communication. It is underpinned by basic skills in ICT: the use of computers to retrieve, assess, store, produce, present and exchange</p>	

¹² The inclusion of reference to the VET trainer has been included in the European reflection column, consequent upon VET dual system approach (when and where in place) including workplace trainers in the delivery of VET in a way which is not common in the Australian context. This may also prompt Australian reflection on potential partnerships between VET teacher and workplace trainer.

	information, and to communicate and participate in collaborative networks via the Internet.” (European Commission 2007 p. 7)	
	<u>Learning to learn</u> “Learning to learn is the ability to pursue and persist in learning, to organise one’s own learning, including through effective management of time and information, both individually and in groups. This competence includes awareness of one’s learning process and needs, identifying available opportunities, and the ability to overcome obstacles in order to learn successfully. This competence means gaining, processing and assimilating new knowledge and skills as well as seeking and making use of guidance. Learning to learn engages learners to build on prior learning and life experiences in order to use and apply knowledge and skills in a variety of contexts: at home, at work, in education and training. Motivation and confidence are crucial to an individual’s competence.” (European Commission 2007, p. 8)	
	<u>6. Social and Civic competences</u> “These include personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and cover all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life, and particularly in increasingly diverse societies, and to resolve conflict where necessary. Civic competence equips individuals to fully participate in civic life, based on knowledge of social and political concepts and structures and a commitment to active and democratic participation.” (European Commission 2007, p. 9)	
	<u>7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship</u> “Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship refers to an individual’s ability turn ideas into action. It includes creativity, innovation and risk-taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. This supports individuals , not only in their everyday lives at home and in society, but also in the workplace in being aware of the context of their work and being able to seize opportunities, and is a foundation for more specific skills and knowledge needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity.” This should include awareness of ethical values and promote good governance. (European Commission 2007, p. 11)	
	<u>8. Cultural awareness and expression</u> “Appreciation of the importance of the creative expression of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media, including music, performing arts, literature and the visual arts.” (European Commission 2007 p. 12)	

Figure 7 – European key competences for lifelong learning: template to aid reflection upon Australian and European ‘educationalist’ propensities

Taken together, Figures 6 and 7 serve as a device to reflect upon comparison between the Australian and European approach to foundation Skills. Are they – the Australian and the European frameworks - serving the same stakeholders with the same emphasis? We suggest “NO”, but there is a degree of intersection to be found. However, the following – in comparison – gives cause to suggest that there is a more, advocated, holistic approach to EU VET learning than is the case for Australia.

EU focus – *KEY competences for lifelong learning are a combination of knowledge, skills and attitudes appropriate to the context. They are particularly necessary for personal fulfillment and development, social inclusion, active citizenship and employment (EUROPA 2013)* – i.e. as we see it - focus upon the individual as a lifelong learner. Does this imply European VET as a servant of the individual more so than the workplace?

Australian focus – *The Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework (CSfW) describes a set of non-technical skills, knowledge and understandings that underpin successful participation in work (DIISTRE 2012a)* – i.e. as we see it - focus upon the workplace expectations of the individual. Does this imply Australian VET as a servant of the workplace more so than the individual?

The question arises – **Is there potential for productivity strengthening in Europe and Australia by drawing upon an amalgam – in part - of the Australian approach to foundation skills and the European approach to key competences?** In response to this question, the motivations and

practices of Australian ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers suggests that their inherent attention to matters beyond just knowledge and skill does bridge between the Australian foundation skills and the European key competences; and does so in such a way that ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers should be acknowledged and applauded as agents of productivity.

Whilst requiring further exploration, we have a sense that the European focus upon key competences (being a lifelong learning pillar) looks to the future needs of a cohesive society more so than is the case for the Australian CSfW and the coupled skills and knowledge which are perceived to be required in the moment –i.e. looking to *the now* more so than to *the future*. However, this said, the Australian ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher is nurturing a student’s present and future capability which is more incidental than system specified; although, there is a sense of an *in-the-background* desire to graduate capably competent Australian VET students, but there is ambiguity in how and when this is to occur¹³.

Where are we at and where to from here?

In the Australian context where Core Skills for Work (CSfW) are acknowledged by the VET system, but the expanded notion of social capital attributes are not so acknowledged, the focus upon CSfW is a pathway to broader horizons. With this in mind, we submit that the motivations and practices of ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers yield rich learning outcomes – inclusive of CSfW and much more.

Across the three research phases, thus far, the evidence is that an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher inherently nurtures social capital attributes within their learners; and thus adds much strengthened capability as a learning outcome. Such value-adding is across the VET spectrum of learners in terms of age, prior learning, commitment to learning purpose and confidence as learners, etc. This is an inherently conscious act arising from motivations to embed the “E” in VET within the delivery of their attention to the “T” in VET; and, importantly, this is a learning facilitation productivity bonus to the system prone to be largely un-noticed and hence un-rewarded. Indeed, in Australian VET, there is a sense that the competence/capability outcome bonus from ‘being educationalist’ is discouraged on the evidence of seeming systemic accepting of shallow learning¹⁴ in the delivery of VET.

Notwithstanding the seemingly under-valuing and sometimes inhibiting factors, the degree to which being educationalist is so embedded within the very being of an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher is such that it is inherent in their facilitation practices. However, there are presumably limits to which this embedded disposition can be drawn upon – as a society we may be at risk of driving this asset away.

On a more positive note, hopeful of continuance, the outcomes to date are that Australian ‘*educationalist*’ orientated VET teachers – inspiring and sharing the passion - are to be found across

¹³ In the Australian case, if competency outcomes beyond just knowledge and skill are to be under the influence of a VET teacher, then it should be clearly stated as an expectation, embedded in the training of an Australian VET teacher, and the provider required to support what we identify as the ‘*educationalist*’ component of VET delivery. If this is not an expectation of the Australian VET teacher, then who, when and how is this to be addressed?

¹⁴ Whilst this is a somewhat ‘inviting challenge’ statement, we have concern that shortness of time in training appears to have traction in the Australian VET marketplace; and there is doubt that the VET requirement (as we understand) of competency being demonstrated over time and in different circumstance can be applied under such circumstances. As a consequence, learning is shallow and the opportunity for nurturing social capital attributes is very restricted.

the range of VET delivery. They are not just practitioners in targeted nurturing roles such as return to study and return to work programmes. ‘*Educationalist*’ VET teachers are to be found in the traditional trades and do express such sentiments as –

‘My contribution is in developing the person as much as it is in facilitating technical competency’ (a paraphrasing of generality).

Importantly, the ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher is firmly focused upon competency outcomes as is the VET goal; however, as an actually ***making the most of what is known and can be done*** bonus, attention to social capital attribute(s) development is an embedded additional component. Thus giving rise to the question – Is the VET objective to train or is it to educate and train?

With the foregoing question in mind, from a cultural historical activity theory (CHAT) perspective, we posit that the motivations and practices of an ‘*educationalist*’ VET teacher are a core component of the assembly of tools to be applied to achieving enhanced productivity and strengthened community cohesion. This contribution to productivity and cohesion being the product of VET melded attention to human capital and social capital assets which supports the learner in acquiring the personal asset of being capably competent. However, the nature of a provider’s business model – favouring or inhibiting going beyond attention to knowledge and skill – is, likely, a significant influencing rule; and inviting further exploration. And the associated propensity (or otherwise) to construct and draw upon learning partnerships has much to do with sharing the division of labour load and benefits. Accordingly, as there is a milieu of key participants, exploration of provider, student, employer and teacher (educationalist and other) interacting activity systems beckons.

In looking now to deepen understanding of interacting educationalist orientated activity systems, we have a sense that, notwithstanding silences in this inquiry, inhibiting and generating rules are at the hinge and it is these which influence the positioning within the three dimensional environment shaped by –

- The VET teacher being ‘educationalist’ or ‘not educationalist’ in nature
- The VET provider being ‘educationalist’ or ‘not educationalist’ as inherent in their business model
- The VET system pursuing ‘educationalist’ or ‘not educationalist’ outcomes

In the belief that a community is best served by an educated and trained workforce, rather than just a trained workforce, the foregoing description of potential variation in VET delivery environment is a foreshadowing of a hypothesis informing our next phase of VET and Social Capital inquiry. This hypothesis being that ***VET is best delivered where there is educationalist accord between system, provider and teacher.*** Whilst this might be said to be self-evident, it is our experience that the enthusiasm and commitment of ‘*educationalist*’ VET teachers is not universally manifest across the Australian VET system and its milieu of stakeholders; and this productivity lapse may be more as a consequence of being out of mind more so than systemically determined intent. With respect to the European Union, the programmes and extensive literature on lifelong learning – having connection (but not exclusively so) to educationalist VET orientations - give cause to anticipate stronger in-principle accord with the hypothesis, but not uniformly across the diversity of the European Union.

About the authors

Libby Hughes has recently retired from her position as Head of Department-Access in the Faculty of Further Education, Northern Melbourne Institute of Technical and Further Education (NMIT). This has been a role in which the passion and commitment of educationalist colleagues – within and beyond the faculty – have energised her in her VET journey. Libby is now a Director of Enviro-sys and joining with Lewis in contributing to strengthening VET in Australia through research fueling conversation and action. Libby holds Masters Degrees in Educational Leadership & Management (RMIT University, 2000) and Training and Development (University of Melbourne, 2005).

Dr Lewis Hughes is a Director of Enviro-sys, a consultancy focused upon ‘*Sustainability through nurturing and making best use of knowledge*’. From a background in mathematics and science teaching and subsequent diverse industry roles, Lewis has had long engagement with VET – particularly with respect to quality assurance. Lewis is presently an Executive Committee Member of the VISTA Association of VET Professionals. Lewis is also a past National President, and Life Member, of the Australian Institute of Training and Development. Lewis’ PhD (Deakin University, 2008) candidacy was focused upon the relationship between lifelong learning and organisational achievement.

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