Developmental research for promotion of the Vocational Education and Training sector

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The issue

• Vocational education and training (VET) is critical to ensuring Australia has the skilled and flexible workforce it needs to:
  – adapt to rapid technological change in the workplace
  – maintain and improve our economic position in the face of increasing global competition

• Australia needs more people to undertake VET qualifications...and complete.
University v VET

Around 40% of school leavers go straight onto university.

Around 21% of school leavers proceed automatically into some form of vocational education.
Current landscape

- The vast majority knows little about VET
- What they do know tends to be based on negative perceptions

The school environment encourages students to go to university
- Assumption that to get a good job you need to go to university
- Parents just want their children to be happy and going to university is going to make them happy
Research Objective

• Ascertain the current attitudes to work oriented training (vocational education and training and apprenticeships) and relevant messages to encourage further engagement.
Target Audience

• Young people
• Mature students
• Parents
• Employers
• Career Advisors
• Community
TAFE
For people who want to improve career / job prospects
It suits some people better than University
Further education / training
Apprenticeships / traineeships
Nationally recognised / Transferrable skills / employable / certifications
It's good for some people / kids / those just out of school
**Key Drivers - Community**

**Career related (total)**

- To get a good job/career afterwards: YOUTH 69%, ADULT 78%
- To get a well-paid job afterwards: YOUTH 52%, ADULT 63%
- Higher education is a minimum requirement for a job nowadays: YOUTH 31%, ADULT 39%
- To help me change jobs: YOUTH 16%, ADULT 41%
- Employers / potential employers recommend it: YOUTH 17%, ADULT 35%
- To help me get promoted: YOUTH 9%, ADULT 15%
- Recommended (total): YOUTH 12%, ADULT 27%

**Parents / guardians recommended it**: YOUTH 13%, ADULT 22%

**Friends recommended it**: YOUTH 4%, ADULT 17%

**School/ teachers/ counsellors recommended it**: YOUTH 3%, ADULT 6%

**My parents / guardians did it**: YOUTH 3%, ADULT 8%

**To meet new people**: YOUTH 9%, ADULT 18%

**Wasn’t sure what I wanted / what else to do**: YOUTH 6%, ADULT 6%

Base: Community current or prospective students (n=1127)

Q8. What are the three most important reasons for you deciding to undertake (or consider undertaking) higher education?
Key drivers - employers

- To address changing work and job requirements: 88%
- They need the skills to better do their job: 87%
- To train them for possible future promotions: 84%
- They are very keen to do it: 79%
- Concern they may leave if you don’t provide or support it: 23%

Base: Employers (n=201)
Q17. When your employees do undertake further education or training, what are some of the reasons that typically lead to the decision to go ahead with this
Preference of providers

Preference of providers (currently attending or considering)

- University: Total 70%, Youths 48%, Adults 81%
- TAFE: Total 21%, Youths 13%, Adults 36%
- Private college: Total 5%, Youths 3%, Adults 9%
- Somewhere else: Total 4%, Youths 2%, Adults 8%

Base: Community current or prospective students (n=1127)
Q3: Where are you currently enrolled as a higher education student? or Q4. You indicated earlier that you're considering enrolling in further education. Ideally, where would you like to enrol?
Advantages - Community

- Being well trained for the job you need to do / job ready
- It's good way for young people to start their career
- On-the-job experience
- It's taught by people who've worked in the industry
- It's shorter than other options
- It's cheap
- The government support/incentives
- The quality of teaching/teachers
- None / nothing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Advantage</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>YOUTH</th>
<th>ADULT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Being well trained for the job you need to do / job ready</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's good way for young people to start their career</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On-the-job experience</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's taught by people who've worked in the industry</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's shorter than other options</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's cheap</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The government support/incentives</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The quality of teaching/teachers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None / nothing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Disadvantages - Community

- Only relevant for some jobs / not useful for all jobs: 48% (Total), 39% (Youth), 45% (Adult)
- Doesn't compare favourably with University qualifications: 45% (Total), 32% (Youth), 58% (Adult)
- TAFEs are low quality education institutions: 22% (Total), 15% (Youth), 22% (Adult)
- TAFE / off-the-job training is not flexible for what's needed nowadays: 15% (Total), 12% (Youth), 15% (Adult)
- You don't get the skills / qualifications you need: 12% (Total), 12% (Youth), 9% (Adult)
- TAFE syllabus is old school, out-dated: 9% (Total), 9% (Youth), 9% (Adult)
- You don't learn much at TAFEs: 10% (Total), 9% (Youth), 10% (Adult)
- None / nothing: 32% (Total), 21% (Youth), 32% (Adult)
Advantages - Employers

Q11. What are the main advantages of employing people with VET/TAFE qualifications in a business such as yours?

- They are well trained for the job they need to do / job ready (51)
- It develops / adds skills for / to our industry (14)
- You develop skilled workers for yourself / business (10)
- It's a good way of finding / recruiting new workers / employees you can further train (6)
- It's good way to offer young people a start (4)
- They're hard working (4)
- It's good for the industry / sector to employ them (3)
- Would never employ them (2)
- They help get things done / achieved / are productive (2)
- They bring new / fresh ideas to the workplace (2)
- The government incentives (2)
- I / We have had positive experiences in the past (0)
- Other (7)
- None / nothing (13)

Base: Employers (n=201)
Q11. What are the main advantages of employing people with VET/TAFE qualifications in a business such as yours?
Disadvantages - Employers

- None / nothing: 54%
- They just don’t have the skills / qualifications we need: 16%
- They just don’t have the smarts / intelligence we need: 2%
- Their general bad attitude to work: 2%
- TAFEs are low quality education institutions: 2%

Only 22% felt TAFE or VET qualifications were of less value than university (64% disagreed)

Base: Employers (n=201)
Q12. What are the disadvantages/barriers of employing people with VET/TAFE qualifications in a business such as yours? Showing 2% and above
Factors driving choice

The qualification
Reputation / prestige of the institution
The cost
The location
The qualification is not available elsewhere
The course offered is not available elsewhere
Parents / guardians recommend it
It will be the right duration (no. of years/months)
To help me change jobs

Total
YOUTH
ADULT
# Key motivators and inhibitors - youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consideration factor</th>
<th>University</th>
<th>VET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Opportunities</td>
<td>A university degree is a versatile and useful qualification</td>
<td>VET offers good job options but in very limited job areas – it limits your options</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provider reputation</td>
<td>Provider reputation is important when choosing a university</td>
<td>Difficult to know/quantify an VET provider’s reputation – especially in comparison to University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer value</td>
<td>Employers will always value staff with a university degree</td>
<td>Perception that employers will value university over VET (unless in the trades)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Variety of courses on offer</td>
<td>Wide range of courses available – more option</td>
<td>Very low awareness of the wide variety of courses and qualifications available – key barrier to current consideration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>A key issue for those needing to travel/move from home</td>
<td>Perception that it is ‘cheap’ – but this serves to reaffirm position as ‘second rate”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Skills</td>
<td>University does not offer practical skills but it is not supposed to – provides broad academic base</td>
<td>It provides practical ‘hands on’ skills but these are job specific and therefore limiting</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
# Key motivators and inhibitors - adults

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<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Career Opportunities</td>
<td>A degree is perceived as a ‘basic requirement’ these days – but no longer enough on its own to set you apart from the rest</td>
<td>Positive perceptions but uncertain where VET can take you and how it could help to progress you in current role</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer relevance</td>
<td>Perception that a degree is always valuable – a basic requirement recognised by employers</td>
<td>Uncertainty over the recognition and value of VET qualifications - especially outside ‘traditional’ courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility</td>
<td>For mature students – university courses are inflexible and time consuming</td>
<td>Perceived to be very flexible and adaptable – can fit around your life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Often not as accessible for mature students – especially those in rural areas</td>
<td>Wide range of locations - metro, regional and rural – accessible for most</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>Is prohibitive – especially for ‘upskilling’</td>
<td>Very cost effective option especially when compared to university</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Skills</td>
<td>University does not set you up for the ‘real world’ - it doesn’t provide any skills!</td>
<td>Highly effective route for learning practical skills to progress personally or within your career.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Key motivators and inhibitors – Career Advisors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>University</th>
<th>VET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course length</td>
<td>A long term commitment</td>
<td>Relatively short in duration – provides a quick and effective route to the workplace</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course leader/teacher</td>
<td>Lecturers who are not really in touch with what’s really needed by industry</td>
<td>Taught by people who have relevant and recent trade/industry experience</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td>Only available in major regional centres or metro locations</td>
<td>Greater accessibility through a range of RTOs. However in some regions, there are limited options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Opportunities</td>
<td>Networking opportunities Perception students more likely to find work</td>
<td>Perception limited to only the specific job of industry the student has qualifications for.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to receive higher pay scales</td>
<td>Some VET qualifications are not rewarded with higher pay scales.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Faced with competition as lots of people now have a degree</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost</td>
<td>An expensive option that creates debt</td>
<td>Even though it can be expensive it is a more affordable option.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Practical Skills</td>
<td>A ‘broader’ focus of study that encourages critical thinking</td>
<td>Skills relevant to the workplace. Assist to engage with workplace more efficiently. Greater understanding of expectations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusion

To
• promote the benefits of trades and skills as equally valued alternatives to a university degree
• boost the status of VET amongst families, students and employers, industry and community.

We need
• Consistent terminology
• Consistent key messages

Which is the focus of the next phase of market research