



Bridging life transitions: Role of VET in supporting lifelong learning

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Vocational education across working life

Technical and Further Education (TAFE), which been the mainstay of vocational education in Australia was established to provide for both initial occupational preparation and adults' further education(Kangan, 1974)

However, VET, for the most part it has become a provision of occupational preparation for mostly for young people when transitioning from school to working life(Billett, 2004)

However, less noted, but important has been its contributions to the ongoing development of working age Australians across their working lives.

Here, we illuminate and elaborate the extent and kinds of these contributions to highlight the key role of vocational education for key transitions in and across working life.

These contributions are made through addressing the questions:

How does VET support learning for the development of those capacities across working life?

How can the VET sector continue supporting lifelong education and learning?

Ordering of case

Imperatives for lifelong vocational education

Transitions across working lives

Role of vocational education and training (VET) in lifelong learning for transitions

Forms of VET

CVET in practice

The project

Ways that VET can support lifelong education

Imperatives for lifelong vocational education

Constantly changing work practices and emerging work requirements and exhaustion of some existing competencies

Upskilling and/or reskilling essential to navigate the transitions across working lives

Sustaining the development of current, relevant and transferable skills and be responsive to the world of work and economic cycles

Responding to planned as well as unplanned transitions during working lives

Provisions needing to address emerging skills demands, be current, accessible and aligned with working age adults' lives

Preparing individuals for worklife transitions

Forms and purposes of VET

Initial VET - prepare for entry into working life; pathway to further education and social inclusion; entry into new occupations.

Continuing VET (CVET) - designed to upskill and reskill for workers' professional and personal development (Circelli & Stanwick, 2020) to transition into new occupations or careers, and into new phases of life.

CVET facilitates responses to emerging changes in technologies, job market changes

More elaborate/nuanced and sophisticated CVET that privileges workplace learning (Billett et al., 2015; Circelli & Stanwick, 2020).

VET makes a substantial contribution to lifelong learning through provisions for initial skilling, upskilling and reskilling to better personal and work-related goals (Chesters, Fu, Cuervo & Syn, 2018).

Practices and policies for sustaining employability through work-life learning (Billett, Salling-Olesen & Filliattez)

Aim – to understand how lifelong learning can most effectively arise through work and educational activities

Worklife history interviews with 59 working age Australians, followed by a survey to verify and elaborate the interview findings to a larger population (n=678)

Interview data reported and discussed in this presentation

Features life history procedures

Life history approach

Involves an open narrative interviews starting with open questioning then, possibly moving to more structured questions

Captures narratives on the subjective experiences of interviewees through story telling which reflects their social reality from an 'inside perspective' (Salling Olesen, 2016)

From the stories of the interviewees, examples of experiences in education, work and work identities were analysed

Adults' transitions and changes (Billett, Le, Choy & Smith 2021)

From the life history interviews the changes comprising transitions that need to be confronted are of six kinds with some sub-categories:

1. Stages of life changes (i.e., maturation)
2. Changes of employment status
3. Change in occupations
 - 3a Change in occupations or occupational focus
 - 3b Change in skills and capacities
 - 3c Changes in employment through restructuring or change
4. Changes in location (i.e., geographical and or societal)
5. Changes in physical and psychological health changes –
 - 5a Changes in personal health and well-being
 - 5b Changes in family health and well-being
6. Change in personal/lifestyle (i.e., personal facts)
 - 6a Change in personal preferences and values
 - 6b Change in subjectivity



Sample for interviews (n=59)

Variable	Value	N
Gender	Female	27
	Male	32
Age	20-29	4
	30-39	10
	40-49	12
	50-59	12
	60+	21
Identified as	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	3
	Australian born (non-Indigenous)	37
	English background migrant	8
	Non-English background migrant	10

Contribution of VET across individuals' worklife

Possible to identify three purposes of VET, and how it was enacted through the worklife history interviews

Access to VET for	Forms of VET	No. of Informants
Entry into employment	Apprenticeship	10 (Alex, Bob, Damien, Dylan, Jimmy, Joe, Harry, Paul, Maree, Migay)
	Short courses	1 (Shirley)
	In-house training	4 (James, John, Matt, Tiana)
	Cert IV/diploma	7 (Andy, Annita, Beau, Erika, Marcy, Sarah, Sofia)
Upskilling	Short courses	1 (Migay)
	Cert IV/diploma	4 (Carson, Erika, Salim, Tim)
Reskilling	Apprenticeship	2 (Alex, James)
	Short courses	2 (Ingrid, Shirley)
	In-house training	1 (Carson)
	Cert IV/diploma	1 (Linda, Veronica)

Example 1 – as a pathway to further education

Continuum across working life							
Informants	Entry into working life		Preparing for an occupation		Changing occupations		Ongoing career development
	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i> <i>Job</i>
Sofia	Retail traineeship	Woolworths worker	Diploma in Nursing	Enrolled nurse			Nursing degree Registered clinical nurse
Paul			Apprenticeship	Tool maker Pattern maker for car Forklift maintenance Fitter in mining	Mine engineer	Engineering degree	Chief Mechanical engineer Mechanical underground consultancy

Example 2 – to change occupation

Continuum across working life								
Informants	Entry into working life		Preparing for an occupation		Changing occupations		Ongoing career development	
	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>
Shirley		Retail worker	Private training course	Beauty therapist	Private training course	Receptionist		Correspondence writer
					Diploma and BEd	Teacher		
Damien			Apprenticeship	Manual arts worker	Training course in manual arts teaching	Teacher		Teacher in different secondary schools

Example 3 – for worklife

Continuum across working life								
Informants	Entry into working life		Preparing for an occupation		Changing occupations		Ongoing career development	
	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Job</i>
Salim		Labouring jobs on building site	Cert IV		Builder			Construction project manager
Annita		Mailroom clerk	Cert III & IV	Disability support worker				Contractor in Aged care

Ways that VET can support lifelong education

- Courses and programs accessible to working age Australians in accessible locations and with flexible modes
- Short and low-cost online courses to improve occupational skills
- Re-training opportunities for occupationally displaced working age adults
- Education and training aligned with needs at different life stages
- Job preparation programs for working age Australians
- Guidance and counselling to working age Australians about CVET
- Processes to engage learners in developing courses and programs
- Employability support during transitions