



Developing the educator mindset in VET

Practice guide

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Purpose

This practice guide explores what an educator mindset is, why it is important, and how to develop and sustain it. It is targeted at both VET teachers and training providers.

A one-page *Quick reference guide* based on this document is also available from the NCVER website.



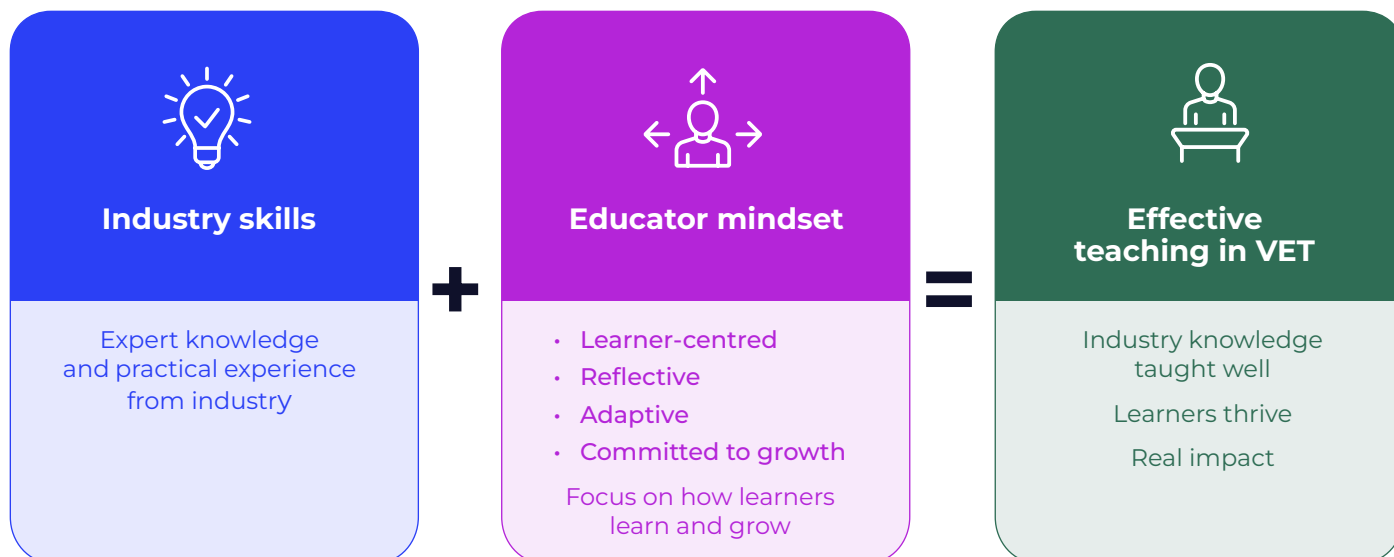
What is an educator mindset?

An educator mindset recognises that teaching is a professional, learner-centred, reflective and adaptive practice.

It involves understanding that effective teaching is a skill, one that can be developed. For VET teachers, developing teaching capability is just as important as maintaining vocational knowledge and skills. While industry expertise provides the content to be taught, teaching expertise enables that knowledge and those skills to be shared effectively with learners.

Many VET teachers enter the profession after working in industry and often identify strongly as industry experts. While this expertise remains important, developing an educator mindset helps teachers shift their focus from what they know to how they can effectively support learners to develop knowledge and skills.

Shifting the balance so that 'teacher identity' resonates as strongly as 'industry expert'



Industry skills + Educator mindset = Effective teaching in VET



What are the benefits of an educator mindset?

An educator mindset builds confident and effective VET teachers

Teaching in the VET sector is a complex role involving a range of interconnected responsibilities, including selecting effective teaching approaches, engaging learners, responding to diverse learning and support needs, conducting assessment, developing learning materials and meeting compliance requirements (Griffin & Davidson 2025¹). Adding to this complexity, teachers report increasing diversity in learner support needs, including psychosocial challenges. Initial teacher training may not fully prepare teachers for the realities of these responsibilities.

Teaching is a professional skill that can be developed and refined over time. Recognising teaching expertise as a capability supports the development of confidence, professional identity and effectiveness as an educator.

... we understand that you've got 15, 20, 30 years as a trade professional, but as a teacher, we need you to understand the practices, the requirements of a teacher and you can bring your trade with you in these new professions.

(Education Manager, Victoria)

It was a given that if you're an industry expert, you're going to land on your feet, and you'll know how to teach because you've got the knowledge... But that's not true. We have knowledge around our industry, but that doesn't mean we know how to impart that knowledge. (Teacher Development Coordinator, Victoria)

Developing an educator mindset encourages teachers to view teaching as a professional practice that requires ongoing growth and reflection—it changes what they prioritise in their own professional development. It highlights the importance of continually building teaching capability to improve learner engagement, participation and outcomes.



¹ Griffin, T & Davidson, N 2025, Effective teaching and learning: teacher perspectives on what works best for whom, NCVER, viewed May 2026, <<https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/publications/all-publications/effective-teaching-and-learning-teacher-perspectives-on-what-works-best-for-whom>>.

What are the benefits of an educator mindset? (cont)

A strong educator mindset supports...



Ongoing development of teaching capability



Professional development that focuses on teaching skills as well as industry currency

Building teaching capability enables...



Understanding how students learn

- A deeper understanding of learning theories and engagement strategies that support more learner-centred teaching.
- An appreciation that learning is an active process involving participation, practice and reflection, rather than simply the transfer of knowledge.
- Greater awareness of the diverse experiences, motivations, strengths and ways of learning that shape learner engagement and success.



More engaging, inclusive and high-impact teaching strategies

- Greater confidence in creating safe, inclusive and effective learning environments that encourage participation and success.
- Enhanced ability to break down industry knowledge and skills into meaningful learning experiences for diverse groups of learners.
- A broader collection of questioning, examples, practice and feedback strategies to check understanding and support learner progress.



Better responses to learning challenges and psychosocial impacts

- Increased awareness of the factors that shape learner engagement, participation and achievement.
- Improved understanding of how personal and psychosocial challenges can present in the classroom and influence learning.
- Greater confidence in choosing teaching and support strategies that guide, encourage and assist learners.
- Improved ability to recognise when additional support may be required and connect learners with appropriate specialised services.
- A more holistic view of what learners are struggling with, why they may be experiencing difficulties and how these challenges affect learning.



Supporting learner success beyond the classroom

- An appreciation that VET teaching sometimes extends beyond imparting vocational knowledge and skills to supporting learner development more broadly.
- Greater capacity to foster learner confidence, motivation and participation to support successful transitions into work and society.
- A stronger focus on developing the capabilities and attitudes needed for lifelong learning and ongoing career development.



How is an educator mindset developed?

The right support lays the foundation for an educator mindset

For some VET teachers, an educator mindset is present from the outset and may be one of the factors that motivates their transition into teaching.

For others, developing an educator identity is a gradual process that evolves through experience, reflection and professional learning. While this development can be self-driven, training providers also play an important role in supporting and encouraging it.

With the right support, culture and opportunities for growth, training providers can help teachers develop an educator mindset and strengthen their teaching capability. Ideally, this begins during onboarding, recognising that becoming a VET teacher often involves navigating multiple transitions simultaneously — including a new role, a new workplace, new skills and a new professional identity.

We're trying to shift that identity, but without that being a real drive from the college, or from policy, or something else, these teachers are always going to see themselves as industry experts and never see themselves as an educator. ([Manager, Western Australia](#))

The same principles apply to experienced teachers. A supportive environment that values teaching expertise and ongoing development can help longer-serving VET teachers further strengthen their educator identity and continue to grow their teaching practice. Hence, the mechanisms below for developing an educator mindset are relevant to teachers of all experience levels.



How is an educator mindset developed? (cont)

Educator mindsets develop through...			
 Structured induction and onboarding - Ensuring teachers, regardless of their prior experience, understand the training provider's systems, practices, expectations and culture. - Introducing teaching as a professional identity that complements industry expertise and develops over time through experience and learning. - Connecting new teachers with the people, resources and support networks that help build confidence, capability and a sense of belonging from the outset.	 Supported classroom exposure - Building confidence through guided teaching experiences before teachers move to independent practice. - Providing authentic and supported opportunities to manage classrooms, work with diverse learners and apply different teaching approaches. - Encouraging observation of experienced educators who demonstrate strong teaching practice and an educator mindset.	 Mentoring, coaching and peer learning - Pairing new teachers with experienced educators who model effective teaching practice and a strong educator mindset. - Creating formal and informal opportunities for reflection, discussion and shared problem-solving with colleagues. - Fostering supportive relationships that normalise feedback, learning and continuous improvement as part of becoming an effective educator.	 A culture of growth and professional learning - Providing time and space within work hours for activities that build teaching capability, including peer learning, mentoring and professional development. - Working collaboratively with teachers to identify teaching skill needs and support targeted professional learning opportunities. - Creating a supportive environment where teachers feel safe to experiment, reflect on their practice and discuss classroom challenges with colleagues. - Ensuring novice casual teachers have access to the same development opportunities and support as other teachers. - Reinforcing the broader role of educators in supporting learner development, engagement and success, alongside the development of vocational skills and knowledge.



How to sustain an educator mindset?

Practice shapes educators as they grow into the role

Balancing educator identity with industry expertise is an ongoing process that develops through experience, reflection and continued practice. An educator mindset is more likely to be sustained when training providers recognise that effective VET teaching requires both strong industry expertise and a commitment to developing teaching capability.

Supportive organisational cultures play a critical role in reinforcing this mindset. By valuing teaching expertise, encouraging professional growth and creating opportunities for ongoing learning, training providers can strengthen teacher confidence, enhance teaching practice and contribute to a more sustainable VET workforce.



How to sustain an educator mindset? (cont)

Educator mindsets rely on organisations to ...



Continually develop teaching skills across careers

- Provide ongoing opportunities to strengthen teaching practice through mentoring, peer learning and professional development.
- Foster communities of practice where educators share experiences, insights and effective teaching strategies.
- Reinforce that teaching expertise develops over time through experience, reflection, practice and support.
- Encourage regular reflection, feedback and continuous improvement as part of professional practice.



Help teachers see their impact beyond industry skills

- Reinforce that success as an educator is reflected in learner growth, achievement and success.
- Value teaching expertise alongside vocational and industry expertise.
- Encourage teachers to focus on facilitating learning rather than simply transmitting knowledge or demonstrating technical skills.
- Highlight the lasting influence educators can have on learners' confidence, career pathways and future opportunities.



Encourage teachers to support students on their learning journeys

- Minimise competing demands where possible so teachers can focus on developing their teaching practice.
- Provide time and support to trial, reflect on and refine new teaching approaches and strategies.
- Encourage teachers to consider how adults learn and develop, not just how work is performed in industry.
- Promote learner-centred approaches that guide, coach and support learners with diverse backgrounds, needs and aspirations.



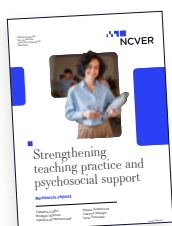
Reinforce teaching as a professional identity and provide practical support in this transition

- Recognise that becoming an educator involves developing a new professional identity alongside existing industry expertise.
- Set realistic expectations that teaching expertise develops over time and provide opportunities for professional learning, reflection and confidence building.
- Encourage teachers to see themselves as facilitators of learning who support learner growth and achievement.
- Share examples of successful transitions from industry expert to educator to strengthen professional identity and confidence.
- Demonstrate organisational commitment to supporting the transition into teaching through targeted resources, guidance and support.

Information and additional resources

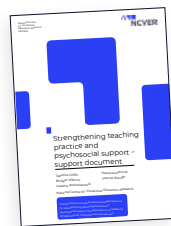
This practice guide is one of several resources developed through the research project *Strengthening Teaching Practice and Psychosocial Support*. The project involved extensive consultation with VET teachers and other VET professionals through a national survey, semi-structured interviews, and workshops conducted across Australia.

These activities informed a suite of practical resources for VET teachers and training providers.



Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support: Research report

Research findings on teaching practice and psychosocial challenges in the VET sector.



Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support: Support document

Includes some additional supporting evidence related to professional development and the importance of psychosocial support for teachers, as well as the initial literature review.



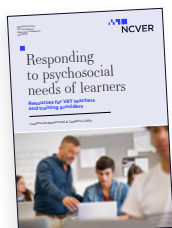
Strengthening teaching practices in VET: Research summary

Summarises the research related to strengthening teaching practices in VET.



Understanding psychosocial challenges and support in VET: Research summary

Summarises the research related to the teacher experience of psychosocial challenges and how teachers can support psychosocial needs.



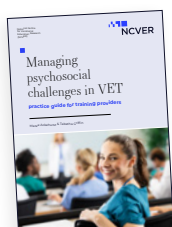
Responding to psychosocial needs of learners: Resources for VET teachers and training providers

Resources to support VET teachers in recognising, responding to and referring learners for specialised support.



From competence to confidence: Practice guide for supporting novice teachers in VET + Quick reference guide

Key conditions and strategies for supporting novice teachers as they develop in their teaching roles.



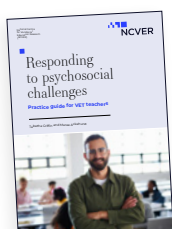
Managing psychosocial challenges in VET: Practice guide for training providers + Quick reference guide

Practical advice for training providers on supporting psychosocial needs in learners and teacher wellbeing.



Developing the educator mindset in VET: Practice guide + Quick reference guide

Explores the importance of developing and sustaining an educator mindset in VET.



Responding to psychosocial challenges: Practice guide for VET teachers + Quick reference guide

A guide for VET teachers on recognising, responding to and supporting learners experiencing psychosocial challenges.



From professional learning to practice for VET teachers: Practice guide + Quick reference guide

Effective approaches for embedding new teaching skills and sustaining improvements in practice.



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