



Strengthening teaching practices in VET

Research summary

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Highlights

- Effective teaching in vocational education and training (VET) requires teaching skills that sit alongside industry expertise. The ongoing development of teaching capability supports teachers to adapt to changing learner needs, strengthen their teaching practice and maintain confidence and effectiveness in an increasingly complex educational environment. Strengthening teaching capability can benefit teachers, training providers and students.
- Given the diversity of pathways into VET teaching, novice teachers enter the profession with varying levels of teaching capability and preparedness. As a result, initial teacher training must be complemented by workplace support. Structured onboarding, mentoring, workload management, meaningful professional development and growth-oriented leadership were identified as useful mechanisms for building teacher capability and confidence.
- The development of teaching capability is most effective when it is relevant, ongoing and connected to practice. Ongoing professional development can be viewed as a cyclical process that includes key stages such as identifying skill needs, accessing professional development, implementing new teaching skills and then measuring change and identifying further skill needs.
- Access to professional development is not enough. Meaningful improvements to teaching practice depend on teachers being able to apply new knowledge and skills to their teaching practice. Four activities that help teachers to apply new skills include formal sharing of key learnings, ongoing conversations with colleagues, making incremental change, and reflective practice.
- Supportive organisational cultures underpin both support for novice teachers and the ongoing development of teaching capability across the VET teaching workforce. For novice teachers, supportive leadership involves building a supportive culture, setting expectations and developing teacher agency. Supportive leadership also provides time, flexibility, trust and space for professional learning, enabling teachers to apply and sustain new skills in their teaching practice.
- The development of three sector-wide resources could provide a stronger and more consistent foundation for developing, supporting and evaluating teaching capability in VET. These are an updated VET educator capability framework, reflective practice guide and resources, and a guide for effective professional development.



Context and project details

This research summary examines how teaching practice can be strengthened for both new and experienced vocational education and training (VET) teachers. It draws on findings from the *Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support* research project.

The summary discusses activities that help novice teachers build confidence in their teaching practice and outlines key elements of a continuous cycle of professional development. It also highlights the factors that contribute to a supportive training provider culture, enabling teachers to develop the knowledge, skills and confidence needed to become confident VET educators and apply new teaching skills in their work. In addition, the summary provides suggestions for the development of three resources to support the VET sector:

- an updated VET educator capability framework
- a professional development guide
- a reflective practice guide and resources

The project aligns with Action 3 of the VET Workforce Blueprint, which aims to strengthen the evidence base on workforce challenges across the sector (Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council 2024). It investigated the development of effective teaching practices via multiple data collection methods:

- A national survey of current VET teachers and assessors
- Semi-structured interviews with novice and experienced teachers, teachers delivering the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, and other relevant training provider staff, such as RTO managers, teacher professional development managers, education managers and portfolio leaders
- National research workshops, held in each state and territory across Australia.

Further information about the project and methodology is available in *Strengthening teaching practice and psychosocial support: Research report*, available from the NCVER website.





The need to strengthen teaching practices

...Because at the end of the day, classroom management and teaching, they're the two things that they're gonna be doing day in, day out, for their careers. If you can't do those two things, then you're probably not going to be super successful or very happy as a lecturer (Manager-Staff capability, WA)

A focus on strengthening teaching practice recognises the diverse contexts in which VET teachers work, the increasing complexity of the teaching role, and the need to build teaching capability beyond the foundations provided by initial teacher qualifications.

The reasons for, and benefits of, ongoing professional development are explored below, with consideration of VET teachers at different stages of their careers.

Initial teacher qualifications

There are multiple pathways into VET teaching roles, both in terms of qualifications and career trajectories, meaning teachers enter the profession with different levels of industry expertise, teaching capability and life experience. In terms of the qualification pathway, unlike school teaching and some other teaching professions, VET teaching does not require a teaching degree as a prerequisite. Instead, many new VET teachers enter the profession by undertaking the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. While this qualification provides an important foundation, views on how well it prepares teachers for the realities of the role are mixed. A common concern reported by research participants is that it places a strong emphasis on compliance requirements, with less focus on developing practical teaching skills. As a result, many novice teachers report feeling underprepared and lacking confidence when they begin teaching, highlighting a need for professional development to build their capability and confidence in the classroom.

Common areas in which novice VET teachers report they need professional development to supplement their initial teacher qualification include:

- Teaching strategies and student engagement
- Classroom management and responding to learners' psychosocial needs
- Supporting diverse learners
- Digital literacy and the effective use of learning management systems (LMSs)
- Time and workload management
- Reflective practice
- Emotional intelligence and wellbeing
- Artificial intelligence literacy
- Developing an educator identity and mindset



The need to strengthen teaching practices (cont)

Interplay between industry expert and teacher

Many VET teachers spend much of their careers developing industry expertise rather than teaching capability. Consequently, moving into VET teaching can involve a significant shift in both career and professional identity. Novice teachers may continue to identify more strongly with their industry background than with their role as educators, potentially underestimating the importance of developing specialised teaching knowledge and skills alongside their industry expertise.

It was kind of a given that if you're an industry expert, you're going to kind of 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, Vic.)

Developing an educator identity alongside a strong industry identity can help teachers see teaching as a professional practice that requires ongoing learning, reflection and skill development. This mindset supports the growth of confident, capable and effective VET educators who are better equipped to meet the needs of their learners.



Complexities of VET teaching

The professional development needs discussed represent only the starting point for building teaching capability. Experienced VET teachers also face evolving challenges, such as increasing learner diversity and more complex support needs, including those related to learners' psychosocial wellbeing. At the same time, VET teachers are required to manage a broad range of interconnected responsibilities, including selecting effective teaching approaches, engaging learners, conducting assessments, developing learning resources and meeting compliance requirements. Together, these demands make VET teaching a highly complex professional role (Griffin & Davidson 2025).

I think the expectation is that it's going to be easy... they think it's going to be easy and it's not. My experience is that the student cohorts are getting more and more difficult. (Program Leader, Vic.)

Recognising that teaching capability needs to be continually developed throughout a teacher's career, regardless of experience level, can help teachers respond effectively to these challenges. The ongoing development of teaching capability supports teachers to adapt to changing learner needs, strengthen their teaching practice and maintain confidence and effectiveness in an increasingly complex educational environment.

The need to strengthen teaching practices (cont)

Benefits of strengthening teaching capability

Strengthening the teaching capability of VET teachers and emphasising the importance of ongoing development of teaching skills can benefit teachers, training providers and learners alike.

For teachers, continued development of teaching skills can increase confidence and capability across a range of learning environments. It can help them develop their own teaching style and adapt their approach to suit different learners, contexts and personal strengths. As their teaching expertise grows, so too can their effectiveness in supporting student learning and engagement.

I'm much more confident in my abilities, but that comes from the years of experience of building up my teacher toolbox; my resource kit.
(Experienced teacher, Vic.)

For training providers, a highly capable teaching workforce can contribute to more engaging learning experiences, improved learner satisfaction and higher course completion rates, all of which can enhance organisational reputation. Investing in the ongoing development of teaching capability can also support compliance with the 2025 Standards for Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) (Australian Government 2025) and demonstrate a commitment to quality training delivery.

Our philosophy is that the first point of contact most students have physically with an RTO is the trainer and assessor. So, I want to make that a positive experience. (Managing Partner/TAE teacher, Qld)

For learners, enhanced teaching capability can create more engaging, inclusive and relevant learning experiences. When teaching approaches are better aligned with learner needs, students are more likely to engage with learning activities and course content. This can lead to a deeper understanding and retention of knowledge and skills, ultimately contributing to improved learner outcomes.





Supporting novice teachers

From competent to confident

Competency is the minimum benchmark; we need confident trainers who cope with diversity and behaviour. (Workshop participant)

Given the diverse pathways into VET teaching, and the real or perceived limitations of initial teacher qualifications in developing teaching capability, support during the early stages of a VET teaching career can significantly influence teaching practice and long-term success.

The research highlighted five key strategies that training providers can implement to support novice teachers:

- Structured and staged onboarding with a holistic focus
- Effective workload management that allows time for skill development
- Ongoing support through formal and informal peer and organisational networks
- Supportive leadership that fosters a growth-focused culture
- Ongoing, needs-based and meaningful professional development

While these strategies are particularly important for novice teachers, supportive leadership and ongoing professional development were also identified as beneficial for experienced VET teachers and are discussed in more detail later in this research summary.

Induction and onboarding

When starting their VET teaching careers, novice teachers often have limited understanding of their training provider's organisational processes, available support services, key contacts, and role expectations. Research participants reported that structured, staged, and holistic induction and onboarding processes help training providers support both organisational integration and the development of teaching capability.

The induction has been an absolute game changer because we connect them with the right people from the get-go... and that has really helped us, as well, identify if there's going to be any additional supports required. (Teacher Development Coordinator, Vic.)

While these processes will vary based on organisational context, RTO size, resources and operating model, some common features of effective induction and onboarding programs are highlighted in figure 1.



Supporting novice teachers

From competent to confident (cont)

Figure 1 Induction and onboarding

Purpose	Examples	Outcomes
• Ongoing, staged and holistic onboarding is more effective than one-off information sessions. • Ensures new teachers are not left to navigate the organisation alone. • Enables leaders and support staff to identify early where additional support may be needed. • Helps build an educator mindset in novice teachers.	• Early engagement with relevant people and resources. • Orientation to organisational systems, processes and RTO standards. • Supervisor and mentor support. • Observation and supported classroom access. • Clear role expectations and boundaries. • Wellbeing check-ins.	• New teachers feel welcomed, informed and supported from the start. • Connections are established with the right people and resources. • Challenges and support needs are identified early. • Strong foundation for ongoing professional growth and development.

Research participants stressed that ongoing onboarding processes are more effective than one-off information sessions, given the complexity and volume of information involved in transitioning into a teaching role.

Supporting novice teachers From competent to confident (cont)

I can see that, in a new educator's development, they develop so much more quickly and they're more confident in their ability in the classroom, because they've been afforded that time upfront. (Experienced teacher, ACT)

Workload management

Managing the workload of novice teachers by reducing their teaching responsibilities can provide valuable time and space for learning and development. Research participants emphasised the importance of protecting this development time, particularly for teachers who are simultaneously completing the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. A reduced teaching load

enables novice teachers to engage in lesson preparation, teaching observations, mentoring, and other support activities, while also allowing time for reflection and the gradual development of effective teaching practices.

Figure 2 shows examples of workload management for novice teachers and outcomes.

Participants acknowledged that implementing some of these approaches can be more challenging for smaller training providers. These arrangements may also be less feasible for casual or sessional teachers, highlighting the need for alternative strategies to ensure all teachers have adequate time and support for professional learning and development.

Figure 2 Workload management

Purpose	Examples	Outcomes
- Protects time and space for learning, reflection and professional growth. - A key enabler for novice teachers.	- Reduced class contact hours. - Fewer units and student cohorts. - Careful allocation of student groups and learner complexity. - Designated non-contact time for lesson preparation and professional learning.	- More time to develop teaching capability. - Reduced workload pressure during transition to teaching. - Build greater confidence in teaching practice. - Stronger foundation for long-term success.

Supporting novice teachers: From competent to confident (cont)

Ongoing support (including peer and organisational support)

Both formal and informal peer support opportunities, ideally introduced during onboarding, are highly valued for developing the teaching capability of novice VET teachers. Research participants identified structured and intentionally designed approaches such as mentoring, buddying, shadowing, and team teaching as particularly effective forms of support. Figure 3 outlines key peer learning approaches, their features, and the outcomes they can achieve in supporting novice teacher development.

Participants emphasised that effective peer support, particularly mentoring, involves more than the transfer of knowledge. It requires an ongoing commitment to supporting the development of the novice teacher, including building their problem-solving abilities, reflective practice, and emotional resilience. Effective mentoring was characterised by the mentor's expertise, consistency, and genuine investment in the new teacher's growth, as well as the quality of the relationship between mentor and mentee. New teachers particularly valued mentors who understood both the organisational context and their specific teaching area.

Team teaching was identified as a particularly effective way to build classroom management skills and confidence in lesson delivery. Working alongside an experienced colleague gave novice teachers the opportunity to observe, in real time, how experienced educators engage learners, manage classroom dynamics, and respond to challenges as they arise. As one participant explained:

We would do some team teaching, which was unbelievable. It was such a good experience for me, especially in my first couple of years of teaching. I had an experienced teacher, and I was able to see how she was doing classroom management. I would like to see more of it done. (Experienced teacher, Vic.)

Communities of practice were viewed as valuable forums for novice teachers to develop their teaching identity, reflect on their practice, and build connections with peers facing similar challenges. By bringing together teachers from different disciplines and career stages, these communities provide opportunities to share experiences, discuss effective teaching approaches, and collaboratively address the challenges associated with the early stages of teaching.

...learning in a community of practice unites people from different perspectives that have common ground, and that's what these are for. (Manager-VET Workforce Capability, NT)

Supporting novice teachers

From competent to confident (cont)

Figure 3 Ongoing support and learning from peers

Purpose	Examples	Outcomes
Mentoring		
• More than knowledge sharing – it builds connection, confidence and capability. • Ongoing connection and commitment to the growth of the new teacher. • Supports problem-solving, reflective practice and emotional resilience.	• Dedicated mentor from day one with regular check-ins. • Two complementary mentors (e.g. teaching development + same teaching area). • Trained mentors with dedicated time and recognition.	• Stronger teaching capability. • Greater confidence and clarity. • Improved problem-solving and reflection. • Increased resilience and wellbeing.
Buddying, shadowing, team teaching and communities of practice		
• Highly effective for building confidence and classroom management skills. • Learn through real-time observation and collaboration. • Gradual increase in responsibility within a supportive environment.	• Shadowing experienced teachers. • Team teaching. • Communities of practice for shared learning and reflection.	• Stronger classroom practice. • More confidence in lesson delivery. • Stronger teacher identity. • Supported professional growth.
Enabling peer support		
• Novice teachers value learning from and with colleagues. • Sharing resources, ideas and experience builds confidence and capability. • Peer connections create a sense of belonging and support.	• Peer-driven teaching and learning groups. • Peer observation and feedback. • Sharing lesson plans and resources. • Informal connections (open workspaces, team lunches, online networks).	• Stronger sense of belonging. • Shared learning and resources. • Improved practice through collaboration. • A culture of collegial support.



Ongoing development of teaching capability

I think if ... we're serious about skilling the future of Australia, surely better teaching is going to help with that, because better teaching equals better learning and better learning equals better application in the workplace. (Manager-Staff capability, WA)

In addition to supporting novice VET teachers, enhancing teaching capability across the VET sector requires ongoing development opportunities for all educators throughout their careers.

A consistent theme emerging from both the interviews and research workshops was that teaching capability development should be viewed as a continuous process rather than something achieved through an initial qualification alone.

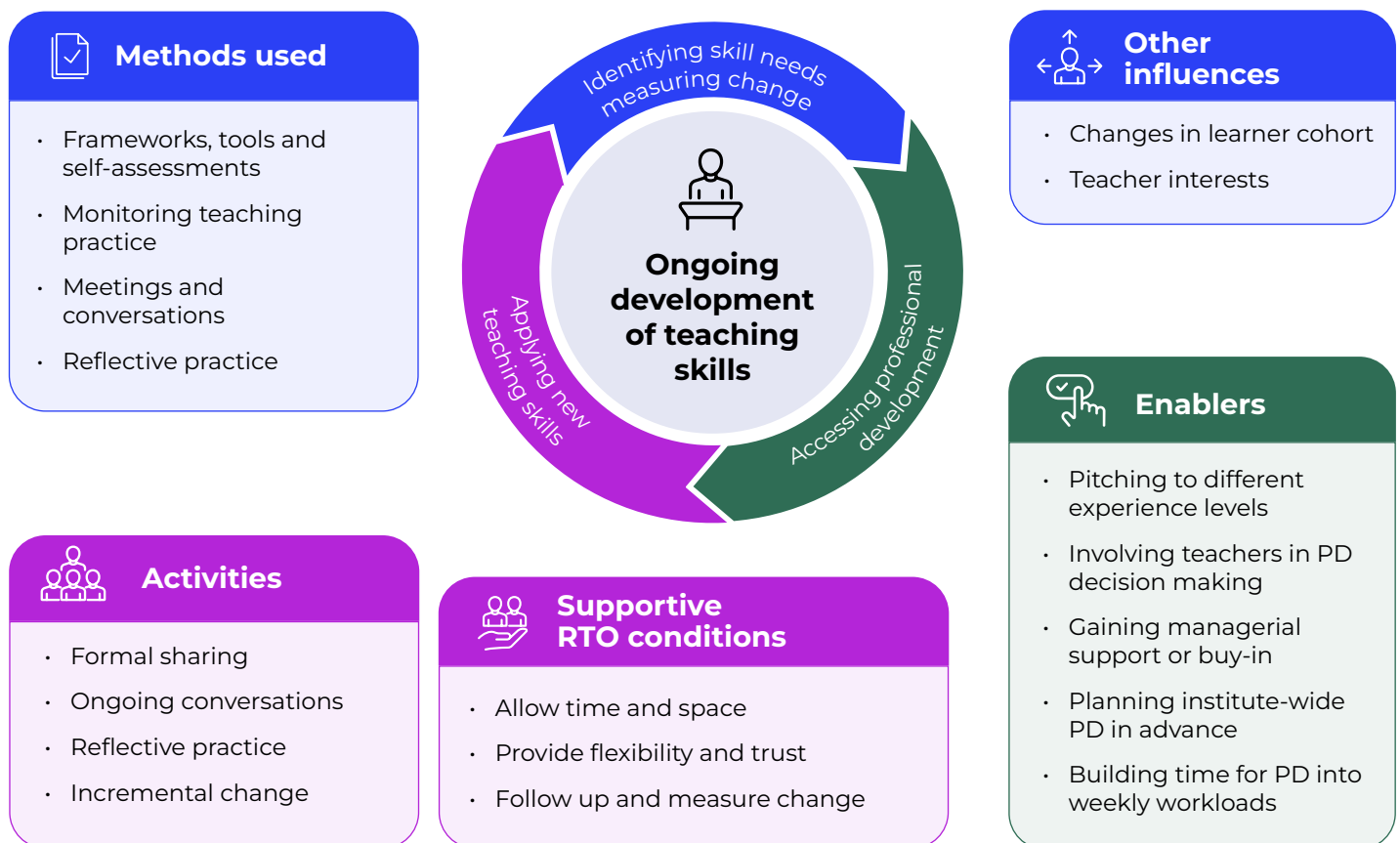
Participants emphasised that obtaining a teaching qualification, particularly the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment, should be viewed as the starting point for developing teaching expertise, not the endpoint.

The development of teaching capability can be viewed as a cyclical process (figure 4). Following the stages of this cycle can help ensure that professional development is relevant, meaningful, and responsive to teachers' needs, increasing the likelihood that it leads to sustained improvements in teaching practice.



Ongoing development of teaching capability (cont)

Figure 4 Ongoing development of teaching skills



Ongoing development of teaching capability (cont)

Identifying skill needs and professional development needs

The research identified four main approaches used to determine VET teachers' capability development needs and professional learning priorities:

- **Using frameworks, tools and self-assessments** – Formal tools such as capability frameworks, skills matrices, and surveys were used by RTOs to identify both organisation-wide capability needs and the development needs of individual teachers. These were typically undertaken as part of annual planning and review processes.
- **Monitoring teaching practice** – Processes such as performance and development reviews, teaching observations by peers or managers, and analysis of student and industry feedback helped identify strengths, areas for improvement, and opportunities for further development.
- **Participating in professional conversations and meetings** – Professional learning needs often emerged through discussions about day-to-day teaching challenges. Regular meetings provided opportunities for teachers to raise concerns, seek support, discuss areas for improvement, and share their professional goals.
- **Engaging in reflective practice** – Reflecting on what worked well, what could be improved, and how teaching challenges might be addressed helped teachers identify their own development needs. Reflection was reported to occur independently, sometimes guided by structured tools or frameworks, or took place collaboratively within teaching teams.

The research also identified two additional influences on the identification of professional development needs. The first was related to changes in the characteristics of the learner cohorts. For example, increases in younger students, migrant learners, or learners experiencing psychosocial challenges, created a need for teachers to strengthen specific teaching capabilities. The second was teachers' professional interests and learning goals, which some training providers considered when determining professional development priorities.

Importantly, participants emphasised that processes for identifying capability gaps and professional development needs were only valuable when they led to meaningful action and relevant learning opportunities. Without a clear connection between identified needs and subsequent development activities, these processes were often perceived as RTO policy-driven 'box-ticking' exercises rather than genuine opportunities for professional growth.



Ongoing development of teaching capability (cont)

Accessing professional development

The research revealed that professional development was organised or accessed at three main levels within RTOs:

- **RTO level** – often focused on compliance-related matters, typically delivered through mandatory professional development days.
- **Department level** – targeted to the needs of a particular department or teaching team. Depending on the context, it focused on compliance requirements, teaching practice, industry currency, or a combination of these areas.
- **Individual teacher level** – tailored to an individual teacher's capability needs, career aspirations, or areas of personal interest. Access to professional development at the individual level was often more affected by workload, time, and funding constraints. As a result, some teachers undertook professional learning in their own time and at their own expense.

Interviewees and workshop participants identified a range of barriers that limited access to, or meaningful participation in, professional development at each of these levels, and suggested strategies to address them (Figure 5).

Importantly, access alone was not considered sufficient. There was strong agreement that professional development needed to be relevant, high quality, and capable of improving teaching practice. Participants also highlighted the value of tailoring professional development to different levels of experience, recognising that novice and experienced teachers often had distinct learning and development needs.



Ongoing development of teaching capability (cont)

Figure 5 Suggestions to enable participation in professional development

Barrier	Suggestion	Supporting quote
Across RTO, department and individual levels		
 Activities tend to be designed for less experienced teachers or those with limited knowledge of a topic	 Pitching professional development to different experience levels	<i>We identified that we needed to split our PD into levels ... we have emerging, proficient, and advanced.</i> (Consultant-Teacher Development, WA)
 Teachers do not have time for professional development	 Building in time for professional development into teachers' weekly workloads	<i>Each week you have 4 1/2 hours of what's called professional activities, and in that time, that's replying to emails, attending meetings, maybe student consultation, but also in that bucket of 4 1/2 hours a week that's also time allocated for PD. So, if you want to attend PD ... it is built into the workload model</i> (A/Manager-Staff capability, WA)
RTO level specific		
 Teachers not attending or participating in professional development organised by training provider	 Gaining managerial support or buy-in for professional development can help support teacher attendance	<i>Culture and resources are a big one, so it really comes from your direct line managers to really encourage professional development and ... give resources.</i> (Mid-career teacher, WA)
 Teachers unavailable to attend RTO professional development due to teaching schedule and limited availability of other teachers to cover their classes due to teacher shortage	 Planning RTO-wide professional development options in advance and advising managers before they develop their teaching schedules allows managers to incorporate the PD into teachers' schedules.	<i>It's helpful when we are presented with a forecast of professional development 12 months ahead because then we can start locking that into our master timetable and then individually as well.</i> (Experienced teacher, Vic.)
 The professional development on offer is not of interest to teachers or related to their own skill gaps	 Involving teachers in decision making around professional development focuses of the RTO. This could be through avenues such as surveys, department feedback, or conversations. Contextualising professional development to the teacher's field of practice and delivering it in accessible and engaging formats.	<i>They don't get a great sense that they're actively involved in the process of working out what PD is helpful to their teaching practice. It's a little more kind of instructed. This is what you need to do next because this is what the [RTO] requires. And I think around teaching practice, there's space for more collaboration with teachers.</i> (Program Leader, Vic.)

Ongoing development of teaching capability (cont)

Activities that supported professional learning fell into four broad categories (figure 6).

Traditional professional development activities, such as workshops, conferences, webinars, online learning, and professional subscriptions, were familiar to research participants and were commonly used to develop teaching skills and knowledge.

Peer-to-peer learning was widely regarded as a valuable source of professional learning, with some participants reporting that opportunities to share experiences and learn from other VET teachers often had the greatest impact on their teaching practice. For teachers working in smaller RTOs, these opportunities could be created through partnerships with other training providers to share knowledge, experiences, and effective teaching practices. Broader networking opportunities, such as

communities of practice, professional networks, and LinkedIn groups, were also seen as potentially valuable sources of professional learning. These might be accessed online if in-person opportunities are lacking.

Higher-level teaching qualifications were considered valuable by some participants but were not seen as a necessary or desirable pathway for all VET teachers, depending on individual career aspirations and professional goals.

Action research was the least familiar professional learning activity among research participants, although elements of it often occur informally. There may be value in upskilling teachers in action research as a method for developing their teaching practice.



Ongoing development of teaching capability (cont)

Figure 6 Professional development categories

 Traditional professional development activities	 Peer-to-peer learning opportunities	 Higher-level teaching qualifications	 Action research
Includes workshops, conferences, webinars, online learning and professional subscriptions. • Larger RTOs tend to have their own repositories of learning programs they have developed in-house to share with teams or individual teachers. They also usually have a team responsible for coordinating teacher development. • Smaller RTOs have a greater reliance on external sources, such as professional subscriptions to organisations such as Velg Training and VET Development Centre. They usually have a single individual to coordinate teacher development, which may be combined with other roles.	Involves mentoring, coaching, peer observation, shadowing, team teaching, informal conversations and communities of practice. • Teachers highly value the opportunity to learn from others both formally and informally. • Being able to share experiences, observe others teaching and ask questions of peers can lead to improved teaching practices. • Peer-to-peer learning strategies for smaller RTOs include building relationships with other RTOs to share knowledge, experiences and teaching practices, and participating in broader networking opportunities, such as online communities of practice, professional networks and LinkedIn groups.	Includes diploma-level and other higher teaching qualifications. • Improved salary and career progression opportunities are initial motivators for undertaking higher-level teaching qualifications. • They provide teachers with a greater understanding of teaching and assessment practices as well as more strategies for engaging learners. • Trade teachers who have completed a higher-level teaching qualification reported that the improvements in their teaching, skills and confidence outweighed any initial concerns about academic ability.	A cyclical process of improvement that involves teachers identifying challenges in their teaching practices, implementing interventions to address them, reflecting on the outcomes, and sharing their learnings. • Action research was the least easily recognised category among VET teachers, except in Victoria where there are fellowships. • Funding and opportunities for formal action research projects appear to have declined over past decade. • It is more likely to be occurring informally through individual teachers trialling new approaches, reflecting on outcomes and adjusting their teaching practices.

Ongoing development of teaching capability (cont)

Applying new teaching skills

Making meaningful improvements to teaching practice depended on teachers being able to apply new knowledge and skills in their day-to-day work, making the implementation stage of the professional learning cycle particularly important.

As one experienced teacher explained:

You're taught something, you're implementing it, and I think that's the big thing with PD, if there's no level of implementation or no level of practice, that loop never gets closed. (Experienced teacher, WA)

Workshop participants and interviewees shared a range of experiences and strategies for putting new teaching skills into practice.

While they acknowledged common barriers to implementation, particularly workload pressures and limited time, they identified four activities that supported the effective transfer of learning into teaching practice (Figure 7).

Participants also emphasised that supportive conditions within training providers were critical to successfully applying new teaching skills. This is discussed further in the section '*Supportive training provider culture*'.

Measuring change

While identifying skill needs marks the beginning of the teaching capability development cycle, measuring change following professional development helps sustain the cycle. The same methods used to identify skill needs could also be used to assess growth in teaching capability after professional development and to identify new or emerging areas for further development.



Ongoing development of teaching capability (cont)

Figure 7 Activities to support application of new teaching skills

Activities	Benefits	Examples
 Formal sharing Sharing key learnings from professional development activities through presentations, emails, reports or meetings.	- Reinforces learning for the teacher and potentially deepens their understanding of the topic - Helps the teacher retain what they learned as explaining concepts to others supports memory and retention - Encourages collaborative learning by exposing other staff to new ideas and strategies / while building a culture of shared practice	- Brief team presentations - Sharing resources or notes - Discussing practical applications during meetings
 Ongoing conversations Continued dialogue with colleagues, managers and peers to support the application and refinement of learning from professional development activities.	- Allows teachers to exchange ideas and helps generate new perspectives and possibilities - Encourages collaborative problem solving by sharing challenges and solutions from real experiences - Supports reflection and refinement of teaching approaches - Creates opportunities for peer support by building stronger relationships through ongoing dialogue	- Peer discussions with other participants after training - Regular team meetings on teaching strategies - Informal conversations with other teachers
 Incremental changes Introducing incremental and/or small changes to teaching practice over time rather than attempting major changes all at once.	- Makes change more manageable as small incremental changes are easier to implement - Enables thoughtful adjustments as teachers can monitor impact - Builds confidence in trying new strategies - Leads to sustainable change as teachers can build on what works	- Trialling one new strategy at a time - Adjusting lesson delivery gradually - Testing different ways of explaining concepts - Expanding successful changes progressively across different classes, units or programs
 Reflective practice Thinking critically about teaching practices before, during and after professional learning to support the ongoing application of new knowledge and skills.	- Encourages purposeful learning - Deepens understanding by thinking about what was learnt and how it may be applied - Helps teachers to recognise what worked well and identify areas for growth - Supports ongoing improvement through making informed decisions about practice	- Identifying goals and areas for improvement at the start of professional learning - Considering key learnings and potential application during and immediately after professional learning - Evaluating changes and refining practices on an ongoing basis



Supportive training provider culture

It's really about sharing and giving that space and freedom to actually do it. I think that's probably my key way of doing things. So, saying 'bring your input, let's make the change', because if we don't encourage that, people will keep the ideas to themselves and nothing will ever change. ([Education Manager, Vic.](#))

Figure 8 outlines the supportive conditions that assisted novice teachers during their transition into teaching, while Figure 9 highlights the organisational conditions that enabled all VET teachers to implement and sustain improvements in their practice.

Underpinning both support for novice teachers and the ongoing development of teaching capability across the VET teaching workforce was a culture of continuous improvement within training providers.

Participants emphasised that leadership played a critical role in creating the conditions necessary for professional learning. Without leadership support, teachers often faced challenges in accessing development opportunities and applying new knowledge and skills in their teaching practice.



Supportive training provider culture (cont)

Figure 8 Supportive leadership for novice teachers

Supportive conditions	What it is	What it may look like
 Building a supportive culture	Leaders understand the challenges novice teachers face and actively support their development. Leaders and experienced teachers model that learning from mistakes is normal, so novice teachers feel safe to ask questions and grow.	• Model vulnerability. • Promote reflective practice. • Be open to feedback. • Support teachers to access the resources and learning they need. • Recognise and celebrate growth and progress.
 Setting expectations	Provide role clarity and set clear organisational expectations for new teachers so they can navigate the transition into teaching with confidence. Communicate expectations through regular, structured check-ins – not assumptions or informal conversations.	• Weekly or fortnightly check-ins in the first semester or year. • Use check-ins for meaningful development conversations. • Use a framework or learning plan to clarify expectations. • Provide timely, constructive feedback. • Ensure expectations are consistent and transparent.
 Developing teacher agency	Building proactive teachers who take responsibility for their development, building capability and resilience quickly. A growth mindset and sense of professional agency can be strengthened and encouraged by leaders.	Encourage teachers to: • Seek mentors or supportive colleagues • Observe experienced teachers • Request feedback or additional induction • Use reflective practice to improve • Seek student feedback proactively • Build professional networks early.

Supportive training provider culture (cont)

Figure 9 Supportive conditions for the application of new teaching skills into practice

Supportive conditions	Why it helps	How to achieve it
 Allowing time and space	Time constraints and competing workload demands limit opportunities to integrate new skills into teaching practice.	• Provide dedicated time within work hours for teachers to reflect on and apply new learnings. • Reduce workload pressures or provide administrative support following professional learning to enable time for teachers to implement new skills. • Create opportunities for teachers to collaborate, seek advice and share insights and learnings following professional learning. • Align professional development with authentic teaching challenges to support relevance and application.
 Providing flexibility and trust	A fear of failure or uncertainty can discourage teachers from implementing changes to improve their teaching practices. Although standardised course delivery requirements may restrict modifications to learning materials, teachers can be encouraged to improve their own delivery practices.	• Foster a culture of continuous improvement, led and modelled by organisational leaders. • Encourage experimentation with new approaches to identify effective strategies for different teaching contexts and learner cohorts. • Promote a supportive environment where teachers can seek guidance, ask questions, and learn through trial and error.
 Following up and measuring change	Limited follow-up support can reduce motivation to apply new learnings while a failure to monitor changes in practice can diminish the perceived value of professional development.	• Provide follow-up after professional development to support the application of learning, reflective practice, and knowledge sharing. This follow-up may be facilitated by line managers, educational leaders, or educator capability staff. • Measure capability development to demonstrate the impact of professional learning and reinforce the value of continuous improvement. Existing mechanisms such as capability frameworks, teaching observations, and student feedback can be used to assess changes in teaching practice and capability over time.



Opportunities and considerations

Three key resources were identified to support the ongoing development of teaching capability across the VET sector: a reflective practice guide, an updated VET educator capability framework, and a professional development framework or guide.

These resources could support teachers at all career stages by helping them identify development needs, apply new teaching skills in practice, and evaluate improvements in their teaching capability over time.

Reflective practice guide and resources

Why?

A reflective practice guide for VET teachers could help transform reflection from an informal and inconsistent activity into a structured process that supports continuous improvement in teaching practice. Although reflective practice was widely recognised as important, participants reported that many VET teachers received limited guidance on how to reflect effectively, what aspects of their practice to reflect on, and how to use those reflections to improve teaching outcomes.

What could it achieve?

A reflective practice guide could promote a more consistent understanding and application of reflective practice across the VET sector. It could also provide teachers with practical tools, frameworks, and strategies to support meaningful reflection, identify areas for improvement, and strengthen their teaching practice over time.

What should be included?

A reflective practice guide for VET educators could include:

- A definition of reflective practice and key principles to guide its use
- An overview of the different aspects of teaching that can be the focus of reflection
- Reflection prompts and guiding questions to support critical thinking about practice
- Examples of evidence that can inform reflection, such as learner feedback, teaching observations, assessment outcomes, and peer discussions
- Practical tools and templates, including reflection journals, checklists, and action-planning templates
- Case studies and examples demonstrating how reflective practice can be applied and embedded in everyday teaching practice
- Guidance on translating reflections into actions that support ongoing professional growth and improvement in teaching practice.



Opportunities and considerations (cont)

Updated VET educator capability framework

Why?

A contemporary, sector-wide VET educator capability framework could provide a consistent basis for assessing teaching capability and monitoring growth over time. Many existing frameworks are becoming outdated and do not fully reflect current teaching practices, emerging technologies, changing learner needs, or the evolving challenges facing the VET sector. While some training providers had adapted existing frameworks to suit their own contexts, others lacked the resources or expertise to develop and maintain such tools. An updated framework could help address this gap and promote greater consistency across the sector.

What could it achieve?

An updated framework could establish a shared understanding of the knowledge, skills, and behaviours associated with effective VET teaching. It could support teachers, managers, and training providers to identify strengths, diagnose capability development needs, guide professional learning, and evaluate changes in teaching capability over time. It could also provide a common reference point for discussions about teaching quality and professional growth across the sector.

Considerations for a guide

To remain relevant and useful, a sector-wide capability framework would be best designed as a living resource that could be regularly reviewed and updated in response to changes in industry practices, technology, learner expectations, and regulatory requirements. An online, flexible framework could support ongoing currency and allow for adaptation to different organisational contexts while maintaining a consistent sector-wide approach.



Opportunities and considerations (cont)

Professional development guide

Why?

A sector-wide guide to effective professional development could provide clear guidance on designing and delivering high-quality professional learning for VET educators. It could support the use of diverse professional learning approaches and help RTOs balance professional development priorities across organisational, departmental, and individual levels.

What could it achieve?

A professional development guide could establish a shared language and common expectations for professional growth across the VET sector. It could provide practical guidance on the characteristics of effective professional development and encourage a focus on improving teaching practice, rather than simply accumulating professional development hours or points.

By outlining the features of high-quality professional learning, the guide could also assist RTOs in identifying and selecting appropriate external professional development opportunities. This could be particularly valuable for smaller RTOs, which often rely more heavily on external providers, subscription services, and professional learning activities.

Considerations for a guide

To be effective, the guide would need to be flexible enough to accommodate the diverse contexts in which VET teachers work and the differing needs of teachers at various career stages. Rather than prescribing specific content, it should focus on the principles and practices that underpin effective professional development.

This could include guidance on designing professional learning that incorporates clear learning intentions, opportunities for practice and application, reflection activities, and collaboration with peers. The guide could also demonstrate how professional development can be contextualised to different teaching and industry settings while maintaining a focus on meaningful learning outcomes and improvements in teaching practice.



References

Australian Government 2025, *2025 Standards for Registered Training Organisations*, viewed July 2025, <<https://www.dewr.gov.au/standards-for-rtos>>.

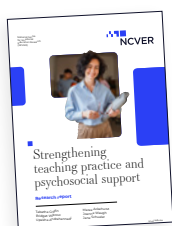
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Skills and Workforce Ministerial Council 2024a, *VET Workforce Blueprint*, Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, Canberra, viewed August 2025, <<https://www.dewr.gov.au/vet-workforce-blueprint/resources/vet-workforce-blueprint>>.

Information and additional resources

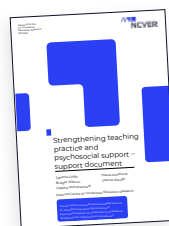
This practice guide is one of several resources developed through the research project *Strengthening Teaching Practice and Psychosocial Support*. The project involved extensive consultation with VET teachers and other VET professionals through a national survey, semi-structured interviews, and workshops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



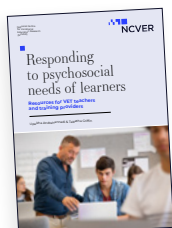
Strengthening teaching practices in VET: Research summary

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.



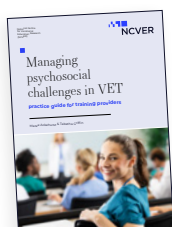
Responding to psychosocial needs of learners: Resources for VET teachers and training providers

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.



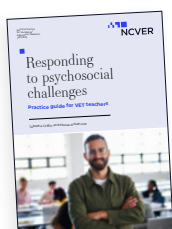
Managing psychosocial challenges in VET: Practice guide for training providers + Quick reference guide

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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