

What can VET learn from teaching and learning experiences in alternative education centres?

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Abstract

This paper examines successful teaching and learning experiences at three Alternative Education Centres (schools) in Queensland where young people labeled “at risk” have been engaged with positive educational results. Then drawing on vocational research it considers how such teaching, learning and supportive student practices evident in alternative schooling can be applied in a vocational education environment to keep students engaged, learning and successfully developing employability skills. The paper shows how some principles of adult learning ‘andragogy’ have been vital to the successful engagement of not only youth in a schooling context but also for youth and mature aged students in the VET environment. The basis for the analysis has been a critical realist framework or meta-theory with key elements of: social scientific investigations in open systems, systems which are acknowledged as being real and having a stratified structural depth, with a plurality of causal mechanism, where an emancipatory explanation is an essential element. Critical realism also provided a methodological framework to determine causality, seeking causal mechanisms both within the social structures and within individuals as they impact on each other, thus fulfilling the purpose of a critical realist social research, namely underlabouring for human emancipation and the promotion of flourishing.

Introduction

This paper examines the findings from my doctoral thesis which investigated what academic and social provisions for alternative school students were working – keeping them engaged and improving their literacy levels and practices. The paper relates these findings to vocational research regarding best practices for retaining vocational students. As part of this comparative analysis Malcolm Knowles’ early andragogical assumptions about the adult learner are discussed. Although “andragogy” has evolved those original assumptions still play a large part in the way teaching and learning take place in the marketized VET environment (Ryan, Mallan, Gwinner & Livock, 2015). By means of a Critical Realist explanatory analysis the essential or “necessary” elements for successful VET engagement are distilled.

Background

In both the schooling environment and vocational education and training (VET) there has been a persistent problem of students disengaging from their education. This has resulted in the schooling environment with the establishment of alternative forms of education which engage a significant percentage of young people labeled ‘at risk’; at risk of disengaging from education, social life and citizenship. While in Australia VET suffers from a very concerning problem of less than an average of 50% completions for both vocational courses and apprenticeships (Mark & Karmel, 2010; Lacey, 2013, ¶3). This paper puts forward the idea that comparing the teaching and learning needs of students in VET with those of at risk students successfully engaged in alternative education could prove informative to those in vocational education. This is because there can be somewhat of a correlation between the two groups. In Queensland, research shows that vocational completions have been under 40% (Mark & Karmel, 2010). Australia-wide apprentices have a less than 50% chance of completing their courses (Lacey, 2013, ¶3). This trend seems to be worsening, for in December 2015 AVETMISS data revealed that Australian VET annual completions were at a 5 year low with completions down 29% over the previous year (NCVER, 2015). Even more true in 2016, is Senator Evans’ 2012 proclamation that ‘The figures for completion of apprenticeships in this country are a national disgrace’ (Evans cited in AAP 2012). Consequently the in-depth analysis provided by the umbrella theory of Critical Realism can be a way of revealing hitherto unrecognised complex social relationships impacting individual students’ vocational engagement.

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Why Critical Realism as Theoretical Framework and Methodology?

The reason why the theoretical framework and methodology of Critical Realism was chosen for my doctoral thesis and applied in this paper is because Critical Realism (CR) is a holistic realist theory. Rather than looking at society from an individual point of view, it views individuals separate from the social world but predated by the social world. Both the individual and the social world are seen as having a stratified depth of internal unseen relationships which either constrain or enable human action. The purpose of Critical Realism is to uncover these unseen relationships [or mechanisms] with the purpose of empowering individuals.

It does this through an explanatory analysis. This takes the form of recurring Marxist based critical questioning to uncover the essential, contingent or non essential factors [relational structures] that prevent individuals from having agency. I have used this recurring critical questioning within Denmark, Ekstrom, Jakobsen and Karlsson's six stages of explanatory research: 1) Description, 2) Analytical Resolution, 3) Abduction/Theoretical redescription, 4) Retroduction, 5) Comparison of theories and abstractions, 6) Concretization and contextualization (2002, pp.108-111). Unlike a traditional approach to research which has one or two research questions Critical Realism allows the researcher to pose a multiplicity of "transcendental" questions that contribute to uncover the essential or "necessary" elements much like descending a mine shaft with a question asked at each level (Figure 1).

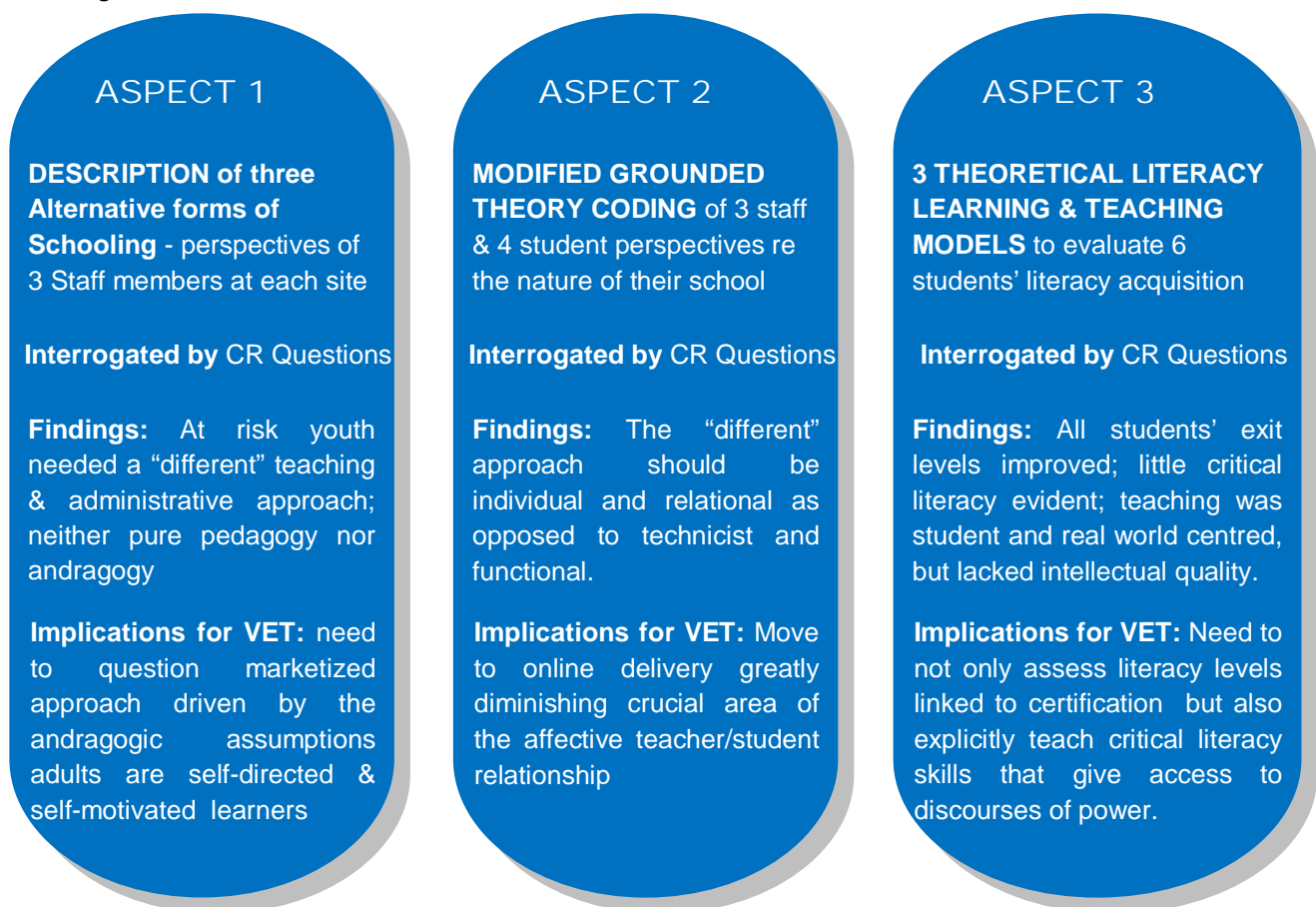


Figure 1. Three Aspects of Alternative Schooling with Implications for VET

Although informed by two pilot sites in Queensland and Texas USA, focus for the study were three alternative schools in southern Queensland chosen as representative of the state's diversity [from capital city, regional city and country town] and averaging an enrolment of 30 students per school. In

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my investigation within Danermark et al.'s explanatory framework, I analyzed *THREE ASPECTS* of the study's three different models of alternative schooling:

- Aspect 1: A Description of the history and alternative schooling model, from interviews with 3 staff members at each site;
- Aspect 2: Modified Grounded Theory to code the perspectives of 4 students and 3 staff members about the nature of learning at their school; and
- Aspect 3: Three Literacy Theoretical Models to analyze a total of 6 students' literacy acquisition: entry and exit NRS [prior version of Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF)] literacy levels, attainment of four areas of critical literacy practices using 4 Resources Model (Freebody, 2004), and Productive Pedagogies Model's four categories of teaching and learning practices that enabled engagement at each school (Appendix A).

The findings for each of these three areas were then interrogated by critical realist transcendental questions (Figure 1). Each of the transcendental/CR questions informed the question for the next analysis with an aim of uncovering the essential elements that answered the study's main questions:

- *What are the **necessary academic and social components** of successful alternative schooling provision for youth at risk?*
- ***Are these necessary components being implemented** in alternative schooling settings?*

For this paper I have leveraged off the doctoral findings and added another level in the mine shaft as it were. This is how the uncovered relationships for each of the three aspects of alternative schooling relate to VET research findings (my own and VET research in general). To this end I ask a transcendental umbrella question:

*IMPLICATIONS FOR VET- What are the **necessary components of a relational and individual approach** with improved outcomes both social and academic for VET students?*

The First Aspect: Description of 3 Alternative Forms of Schooling

To summarise the findings to the first subsidiary question (Figure 2), it would seem that whatever the first cause or generative event initiating the establishment of the three alternative schools it was the at risk student cohort which was at the centre of concern for each centre. Staff or parents at all three centres perceived this cohort needed a "different" teaching and administrative approach. That was a different approach to mainstream schooling's teacher directed pedagogic practices, and a different approach to VET's adult based andragogic practices that assumed learners should be independent, totally self-directed and self-motivated.

Additionally vital to the successful continuance of each program were educational structures that enabled involved personnel's agency. Staff or involved parents needed to have sufficient community networks, and dispositional characteristics to afford them agency, as well as a commitment to "different" teaching approaches needed for youth at risk. The word "different" was used by all interviewed staff members.

IMPLICATIONS FOR VET- A "different approach" Andragogy plus Pedagogy

In the VET sphere principles of teaching and learning plus administrative approaches are overall focussed on what is envisaged as the "adult learner". Consequently VET is primarily conceived of as "an adult learning environment", with certain associated assumptions. These assumptions have been inculcated into various models of adult learning. A prominent model for adult learning and teaching

Figure 2.

1st Subsidiary Question
What are the necessary conditions that brought each alternative schooling site into being, and made its continued existence possible?

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developed by Malcolm Knowles in 1967 is “andragogy”: *andro* meaning the adult male and *agogos* to lead; whereas the term “pedagogy” derives from *paidos* meaning child *agogos* to lead.

Some have said the central tenet of Knowles’ assumptions is that adults are self directed learners motivated by the immediate needs and responsibilities of their adult world; whereas the application of children’s learning is for a future time. However as schools also began to utilize some of Knowles approaches to adult learning he began to perceive of both andragogy and pedagogy as sets of assumptions that could be used alongside each other (Knowles, 1980). Nevertheless in the present marketized environment proponents of adult education still emphasise assumptions of an independent, self-directed, self-motivated adult learner capable of negotiating the difficulties of learning tasks themselves (Smith-Jaggars & Bailey, 2013).

As a result not only academic but also administrative expectations/approaches in VET are orientated to these assumptions about VET learners (Loyens, Magda & Rikers, 2008). However, as the initial explanatory analysis above indicated neither a purely school based pedagogy nor a self-directed approach of andragogy was appropriate for at-risk school learners, could this also be the case for VET learners? Do VET learners also need the “different” approach named above?

The Second Aspect: Modified Grounded Theory

The doctoral study’s next explanatory analysis, therefore investigated the needed “different” approach with a further transcendental question (Figure 3).

This analysis was applied to the first of four relevant theories to redescribe the alternative schooling phenomenon with a more fine grained abduction of further underlying causal mechanisms. A total of twenty one interviews of teachers and students from the three sites were coded using modified grounded theory to reveal these participants views on components of a “different” teaching and administrative approach implemented at their alternative schools.

To summarize: the *common necessary component of a “different” academic, affective and administrative approach was relational and individual, as opposed to a technician and functional approach of mainstream schooling* (Lingard, Hayes, & Mills, 2003). The need for this type of approach has also been reflected in the Dusseldorp report which observed:

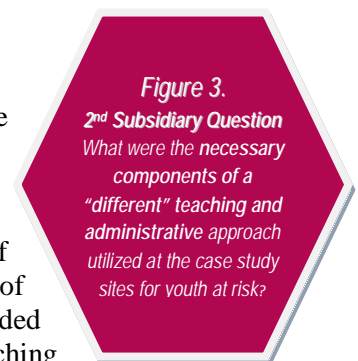
Our systems are relatively good at identifying curriculum standards but weak at constructing and supporting the personal and classroom relationships so crucial to productive learning. This is reinforced by the priority we place on curriculum assessment, which puts standardised content rather than pedagogy at the centre of education (Australian Industry Group & Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2007, p.23).

These sentiments were echoed in a statement made by one student participating in the doctoral study, regarding mainstream schooling:

It’s like they’re not interested if you learn at all. It’s whether they give you all the information or not (Flexi School, Student 4, 8/9/04, 10.11 mins cited in Livock, 2009, p.175).

IMPLICATIONS FOR VET – Are relational and individual approaches evident in Online or Face-to-face delivery of vocational courses and learning support?

Emerging from the above analysis the affective teacher/student relationship was a crucial element to engage at risk youth. However, for VET this is now being diminished by a growing emphasis on technological assisted learning over face-to-face teaching. For example my research has revealed how



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online services have replaced face-to-face learning support and library services at TAFE in Brisbane with greatly diminished staffing (Livock, 2015). Other authors report this is not just a Queensland, but an Australia wide and global phenomenon of withdrawing human support for VET students (Massey & Nivison-Smith, 2013; Smith-Jaggars & Bailey, 2013; Newton & Hase, 2001). Consequently there is now a global concern that this technological/technicist/marketized approach is dehumanising not only VET education but the entire social sphere. As a result the Critical Realist conference in the UK in July 2016 will have global representatives from a wide range of vocational and professional areas addressing this very topic.

Self paced online programs can dismiss the need for students to develop a trusting relationship with their teachers, and dismiss the need for teachers to develop a responsive and mentoring relationship with their students. When teachers know their students individually, as in the apprentice/master model (Brentano, 1870; Brennan, 2003), they are able to quickly respond, not only to students' academic needs but also to their social situations. Teachers in the physical presence of their students can do this more readily by being able to read facial and body language, important for continued affective engagement. Those involved in online teaching do acknowledge that "the face-to-face environment can more easily provide socio-emotional support" (Garrison, cited in Cleveland-Innes & Campbell, 2012) and are now grappling with how to effectively inculcate emotional and affective responsive teaching into online delivery.

The Third Aspect: 3 Theoretical Literacy Learning & Teaching Models

This section had an umbrella transcendental question emanating from the previous Modified Grounded Theory findings (Figure 4). But before answering this umbrella question, it was first important to deconstruct the essential components of literacy practices, productions and pedagogies. Therefore a subsidiary critical realist question (Figure 5) was first used to guide this explanatory analysis.

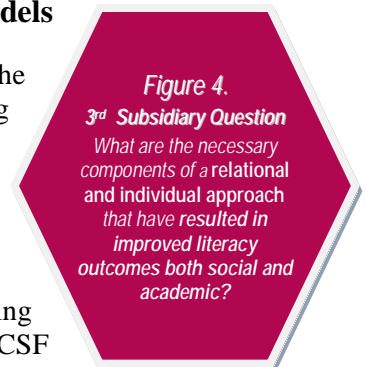
Findings revealed improved literacy outcomes for the alternative schooling students were in the area of functional literacy levels. All improved their ACSF levels on exit.

However regarding the umbrella question (Figure 4) investigating a relational and individual approach to teaching literacy, the research revealed that direct teaching of social/cultural aspects of literacy was lacking. It further suggested this lack of explicitly taught critical discourse skills tied to student's lived experience can impact to further disadvantage the most at risk students in their continued learning engagement and/or life chances. This is what Gee describes as being cognizant of "discourses that give one access to power, social goods, and relative freedom from oppression" (Gee, 2000, p.16).

IMPLICATIONS FOR VET- Relevance of assessing not only students' individual ACSF LLN Levels but also Socio-Critical Learning and Teaching practices

The importance of up-front LLN assessment using the ACSF framework has recently been acknowledged by academics, and policy makers, and more recently been written into legislation and the standards of the VET regulator ASQA (Livock, 2016). Training packages now being developed are also including the needed ACSF level required to meet employment outcomes (Ryan, Mallan, Gwinner & Livock, 2015).

However Livock (2016) reports there is a dearth of critical literacy being taught and practiced in vocational courses. This is both disadvantaging students in employment as well as those transitioning to university. Smith (2013) suggests that the competency based approach to teaching that focuses on skills can be an obstacle to reflective and critical thinking/ learning. She states this is one of the factors creating barriers for students transitioning to higher education. With an additional factor that competency based training packages are actually deskilling teachers (Smith, 2002; Smith 2013).



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Linking this to the Productive Pedagogies and 4 Resources models (Appendix A) it could be said that as in the alternative schools, elements of “Intellectual Quality” *higher order thinking* and *knowledge as problematic* are also missing in the VET sector. However, unlike the alternative schools, VET classrooms do not overly emphasize the “Supportive classroom” elements of considerable *narrative*, *substantial conversation*, *metalanguage*, nor the flexibility of those inclusive elements found in “Recognition of Difference”: the very pedagogies needed for continued student engagement (Ryan et al. 2015)

IMPLICATIONS FOR VET- necessary components of a relational and individual approach with improved outcomes both social and academic

The first component of an individual and relational approach needed for literacy teaching and learning confirmed the previous explanatory analysis for ASPECT ONE regarding andragogy combined with pedagogy to support not only at risk school learners but also vocational learners. At risk learners at alternative schools were *not inherently* self-directed, the basis of andragogy and adult learning theory. Consequently there was much scaffolded support offered as in Vygotsky’s pedagogical approach. Similarly learners in VET whether mature aged or adolescents often lack motivation and self-direction. This is because many VET students often lack needed academic skills, and due to past poor self image as learners, when faced with more than expected academic content disengage from their studies (Ryan et al., 2015; Livock, 2016). For unlike the alternative schools, where there was a high level of scaffolding, research findings reveal few supportive strategies are addressed, either in VET teacher training in any depth, or applied in VET classrooms (Simons & Smith 2008; Smith, 2013). Whereas alternative school teachers not only all acknowledged the need for high level scaffolding, but also implemented a host of both pedagogical and andragogical strategies to keep their students engaged.

Another key element all the alternative schooling staff used to engage diverse/at-risk learners was a responsive and flexible learning environment. In this way andragogy did play a big part in *the teaching focus* at the alternative schools. It could be said that students were self-directed learners in that they gave input to their learning tasks; Knowles’ first assumption of andragogy. Teachers treated students more as adults negotiating with them rather than just telling them as in a pedagogical teacher lead approach. According to Knowles’ second assumption of andragogy by using learners’ experiences as a resource; students’ own experiences and interests were able to be incorporated into their learning plans. Learning tasks often had immediacy and practicality of application; Knowles’ third and fourth assumptions of andragogy (1980). For VET these four andragogical assumptions are often alluded to (Simons & Smith, 2008) but with constrictions of prescriptive training packages and the very limited teacher training of the TAE Cert IV, the learner centredness of andragogy is largely lacking (Smith, 2013). Could this be A cause of approximately 50% of enrolling VET students dropping out of study, as was the case for the at-risk students who had dropped out of mainstream schooling?

The second component of an individual and relational approach for literacy teaching and learning at alternative schools was the need to have small class sizes so teachers could individually connect with students. With the push to make VET a profit making business rather than a government responsibility to educate its populace, small class sizes in VET are a distant memory. Common at larger providers such as TAFE is the lecture theatre presentation, with small break up groups such as found in universities. The problem for VET is that in the past decade VET has lost more and more students to universities with decreasing percentages of enrolments. For example NCVER figures show between 2006 and 2010, university enrolments increased by 17% while there was only a 7% increase for VET (NCVER, 2012). The students who do come to VET expect a more practical hands-on learning experience and often lack academic learning skills to be successful in a more academic environment (Livock 2016; Smith, 2013). To remedy this Ryan et al. (2015) recommend smaller class sizes, achievable by making sure classes are evenly distributed between teachers, so for example, one

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teacher does not have 45 students while another class has only 15. They also recommend increasing the participation in practical components of vocational courses to maintain student engagement.

The final third and fourth components of an individual and relational approach for literacy teaching and learning were to acknowledge the stress and emotional strain teachers faced and the need for their organisations to support them as they endeavoured to implement the needed “different” teaching approach for at-risk students. This equally applies in the VET sector, especially for TAFE teachers who have undergone drastic staff cuts and then the employment of inexperienced casual teachers. In this environment experienced teachers’ load has dramatically increased, where they not only are responsible for their own enlarged classes but also are mentoring inexperienced colleagues (Rice, 2004; Massey & Nivison-Smith, 2013). Consequently, there needs to be a turn-around where VET teachers receive a higher level of systemic support: from their training organisations, from the VET regulator, and from legislation.

As a nation we need to reconsider this drive to downsize and casualise the workforce, and the resultant negative implications not only for VET teachers at the coal face, but also for individuals generally, for family, and community well being (Lucas, 2012; Palmer-Brown, 2014). In the VET sector, over the past five years, when a comparison is made between the increasing marketization of vocational training, and employer satisfaction there has been a marked *decrease* in employer satisfaction with the standard of training delivered by RTOs (NCVER, 2013; NCVER, 2015; Appendix B). The outcome to dispense with an individual and relational approach for VET has been a negative.

FINAL ANALYSIS - Comparing Theories and Abstractions; Concretization and Contextualization

Reviewing the doctoral study’s central questions:

*What are the **necessary academic and social components** of successful alternative schooling provision for youth at risk?*

*Are these **necessary components** being implemented in alternative schooling settings?*

FINDINGS regarding student literacy learning and engaging teaching practices are detailed in Table 1. RECOMMENDATIONS regarding essential academic components of a “different” teaching and learning approach were as follows:

- **Socio-cultural literacy practices** should place greater emphasis *on all nuances* of literacy as a social/cultural practice;
- **Critical literacy** should be ...
 - an integral and emphasised part of the curriculum;
 - not just for students with higher levels of literacy but for all students;
- **Build on present practices** evident at all case study sites ...
 - “metalanguage” and “constant teacher talk”;
 - built into teacher talk *critical questioning to simulate* critical thought processes.
- **Use of a benchmarking standard** such as the NRS to determine student’s incremental literacy skills.

To enable this approach those INDIVIDUALS involved in sustaining the alternative school, should be accepting of a “different” at risk student identity which can be neither “on-task” nor “self-regulatory”. Teaching staff should be: directly trying to build a trusting relationship with students; be “flexible” and “laid back”. Teachers or involved parents need to be afforded agency by sufficient personal community networks, and by their own individual characteristics.

At the level of SOCIETY, there needed to be a shift in the educational philosophy and alignment of institutional structures and administrative personnel. This should be reflected in a willingness of

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Table 1. FINDINGS – necessary components for successful engagement at Alternative Schools

Necessary/Implemented Components of Successful Alternative Schooling Provision for Youth At Risk
<i>ACADEMIC COMPONENTS – Literacy</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Functional Literacy Skills in everyday socio-cultural contexts; ✓ Functional skills increased – all students to varying degrees; X Critical Skills largely missing from all students’ repertoires of practice; X Critical skills not enhanced to the same degree as functional skills.
<i>SOCIAL COMPONENTS - Productive Pedagogies tied to the affective domain of student behaviour</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Recognition of Difference entire suite of teaching practices [exception as described above]; ✓ Practices from Connectedness and Supportive Classroom Environment largely utilized; X Intellectual Quality pedagogies largely missing.

associated educational organizations including teachers to align organizational/teacher norms with at risk student identities, and to practice inclusiveness, even in times of crisis. Administrative structures need to be: “flexible”; aligned to support teachers in implementing “different” approach; allow for and encourage increased friendly interaction between staff/parents as well as enable the involvement and active agency of both parents and teachers. Additionally linked educational institutions should encourage and pay for professional development in the “different” approach for all teaching and administrative staff associated with youth at risk programs [including casual staff].

Finally both teachers and institutions should work together to develop professional networks of alternative schooling practitioners committed to this “different” approach.

IMPLICATIONS FOR VET - What are the necessary components of a relational and individual approach with improved outcomes both social and academic for VET students?

Reviewing the all previous “Implications for VET” discussions in conjunction with alternative schools’ analysis, it is evident that “necessary” or “essential” ACADEMIC provision for successful academic engagement included explicit Vygotsky styled pedagogic scaffolding with a large range of strategies to suit VET’s very diverse spectrum of learners. However, the main teaching and learning focus for VET learners emerged as aspects of andragogy which allow for an emphasis on self-direction:

- on student input into curriculum tasks;
- on using students’ experience as a resource;
- on the inclusion of a larger percentage of practical versus academic content; and
- on making sure curriculum and assessment have real life application in that they meet workplace needs [unlike employer dissatisfaction that *Relevant skills are not taught* increased by 20% between 2011 and 2015 – NCVER, 2013, p.14; NCVER, 2014, p.15].

With regards to foundation skills, it is recommended that students’ individual LLN and learning skills levels need to be ascertained as they connect to their AQF certificates. This needs to be done using the elements of the Australian national foundation skills framework, the ACSF. Additionally teaching needs to encourage critical literacy/thinking that acknowledges the adult work environment which is neither simplistic nor standardised.

Necessary SOCIAL components needed for successful engagement of VET students were found in the individual and relational approach to learners. One-on-one relationships of teachers and students were a key to keeping students engaged; with teachers themselves needing to be supported by systemic organisation in implementing a more student centred flexible approach to their students.

The answer to whether these necessary academic and social components are presently being implemented is fragmented. As far as initially ascertaining students’ foundation skills, legislation and policy is now addressing this issue (Industry Skills Councils, 2014). However, with funding cuts the ability to follow up on revealed students’ skills gaps is poor to say the least with reliance on online support, and little needed individual teacher assistance by literacy experts – so needed when students are emotionally overwhelmed by a plethora of academic assessments (Livock, 2015; Livock, 2016;

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Massey & Nivison-Smith, 2013). De-emphasising the human relationship and mentoring needed in VET has negatively affected training outcomes. Another concern is the prescriptive and academic nature of training packages which have been criticized for overly emphasising individual components of workplace skills lacking a holistic and a creative critical thinking approach needed in the workplace. Initial goals of training packages were to allow for competent teachers who are industry experts to tailor their teaching to individual student and local industry needs (Smith, 2002). However with the changing teacher qualification requirements over the past 30 years as well as with the casualisation of the VET teacher workforce, there has been significant drop in teacher competence with those experienced lead teachers being too overwhelmed by their workload to develop flexible and responsive curriculums linked to training packages. The result has largely been prescriptive inflexible curriculums lacking depth (Smith 2013; Dempsey, 2013; Massey & Nivison-Smith, 2013).

How then to rectify the omissions of the necessary academic and social components for successful student engagement in the VET sector? The writer believes it goes to the basic underlying mechanisms related to the marketized approach to mass education which has emerged more and more forcefully from Thatcherite Britain since the late 1980s. There needs to be a changing of this theoretical stance based on Choice Theory, that the market should determine educational process. This is in stark contrast to humanistic approaches to education as promoted by early educators such as Maslow and in opposition to father of critical realism Bhaskar's conceptualisation of the Eudemonistic Society, where "the free flourishing of each is the condition for the free flourishing of all" (Bhaskar, 1994, p.154). The doctoral thesis re-theorized Bhaskar's conditions for flourishing as the "Give" and "Get" principles (Livock, 2009). In the VET environment when the focus is on "getting" the best dollar value for training product produced, only a relative few benefit with a negative outcome for the whole community. On the other hand when "giving" is the focus, giving time, money and individual support then all students reach their goals – all flourish: the individuals, their families and their communities.

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APPENDIX A. Productive Pedagogies

PRODUCTIVE PEDAGOGIES - 4 Dimensions of Practice (Education Queensland, 2004)			
1. Intellectual Quality	2. Connectedness	3. Supportive Classroom Environment	4. Recognition of Difference
i) Higher Order Thinking	i) Knowledge Integration	i) Student Control	i) Cultural Knowledge
ii) Deep Knowledge	ii) Background Knowledge	ii) Social Support	ii) Inclusivity
iii) Deep Understanding	iii) Connectedness to the World	iii) Engagement	iii) Narrative
iv) Substantive Conversation	iv) Problem based Curriculum	iv) Explicit Quality Performance Criteria	iv) Group Identity
v) Knowledge as problematic		v) Self-regulation	v) Citizenship
vi) Metalanguage			

APPENDIX B. Employers' use and views of the VET system in 2011, 2013 & 2015

Table 12. Reasons for dissatisfaction with the VET system as a way of meeting skill needs by type of training, 2011 and 2013 (%) (excerpt from NCVET, 2013, p.14)

Reasons for dissatisfaction with vocational qualifications as a job requirement (Base: dissatisfied employers with jobs requiring a vocational qualification)		
	2011	2013
Not enough focus on practical skills	35.3%	23.0%
Relevant skills are not taught	25.4 %	36.3%
Training is of a poor quality or low standard	39.5 %	54.0%
Reasons for dissatisfaction with apprentices and trainees (Base: dissatisfied employers with apprentices/trainees)		
Apprentice/trainee had a poor attitude	37.0 %	7.6%
Relevant skills are not taught	27.1 %	39.5%
Not enough focus on practical skills	24.9 %	17.6%
Training is of a poor quality or low standard	36.7%	34.1%

Table 13. Reasons for dissatisfaction² with the VET system as a way of meeting skill needs by type of training, 2013 and 2015 (%) (excerpt from NCVET, 2014, p.14)

Reasons for dissatisfaction with vocational qualifications as a job requirement (Base: dissatisfied employers with jobs requiring a vocational qualification)		
	2013	2015
Not enough focus on practical skills	23.0%	41.0%
Relevant skills are not taught	36.3%	44.3%
Training is of a poor quality or low standard	54.0%	43.7%
Reasons for dissatisfaction with apprentices and trainees (Base: dissatisfied employers with apprentices/trainees)		
Apprentice/trainee had a poor attitude	7.6%	5.8%
Relevant skills are not taught	39.5%	41.7%
Not enough focus on practical skills	17.6%	26.9%
Training is of a poor quality or low standard	34.1%	42.5%