# JMA ANALYTICS

CAPABILITY MEASUREMENT

# How to use strategically VETCAT® data about capabilities

An interview about the value of VETCAT® data with
Louise Turnbull, A/Manager Capability, and
Katy Gould, Project Manager Teacher Development,
TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute

*Based on an interview conducted by Dr John Mitchell on 28 July 2011. The interview was recorded and fully transcribed then edited by Dr John Mitchell and validated by Louise Turnbull.*

Background

The VETCAT® survey was conducted at TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute in November 2010. In December 2010 the Institute received 34 VETCAT® reports of over 30 pages – one for each of the 8 Business Lines, one for each of 25 different RAM categories and one whole-of-Institute report. Louise Turnbull with the assistance of Katy Gould oversaw the implementation of the surveys and the unpacking of the reports.

VETCAT® was re-opened seven months later, in June 2011, for those WSI staff who were new to the organisation or missed out the first time round. The timing was aligned with the upcoming annual review process where Teachers and Head Teachers meet with their line managers to identify work priorities for the next 12 months and their priorities for capability development.

Across the two survey periods, over 900 Institute practitioners completed VETCAT® and received their own 12-page report.

Audience and purposes

The intended audience for this document are workforce development peers of Louise Turnbull and Katy Gould who can use or are using VETCAT® to enhance VET practice and the capacity of their organisations.

The purposes of this interview are to:

- stimulate ideas about how to use insights from VETCAT® to inform workforce planning and development and the quality of teaching and learning

- encourage the development of a national community of practice among users of VETCAT®.

THE INTERVIEW

*(As most of the responses are from Louise Turnbull, Katy Gould's responses are marked KG and those by Louise are unmarked.)*

What were the first actions you took when you received the VETCAT® reports?

One of the first things we did when we received the reports was to upload them to our VETCAT® WIKI which is accessible to the Faculty Directors (Directors Education). We used the WIKI not only for promoting the tool but as a repository for all the VETCAT® documents.

Following the debrief you gave to the WSI Board, Katy and I met with all of the Directors of Education individually to discuss their Business Line (faculty) reports and to get their feedback on the information and data from these reports. We also met with them as a whole group to talk about their workforce capability priorities, based on the current WSI strategic plan. Some priorities were developed when the strategic plan was first developed back in 2010 but we wanted to revisit those priorities with them, and see how they matched up with what came out of the overall responses from VETCAT® at the Institute level. We also wanted to get the Directors of Educations' 'take' on what their priorities were and to see how that all aligned with the VETCAT® data.

Four main workforce capability priorities came out of those discussions and three aligned very well with the main priorities for workforce capabilities that came out of VETCAT®. They were e-learning and technology, business literacy and learning and assessment. The other one was higher education, and that was about building the capability of our staff to support the Institute moving into the delivery of higher education courses in particular areas. The first three of those priorities everyone agreed on were the big ones and we had data on them through VETCAT®, and that was terrific.

The Directors of Education have multiple faculties reporting to them and requested RAM (individual faculty) level reports be produced to provide a more granular picture of their business lines. We provided these reports to them in Semester 1 2011. A number of the Directors Education requested we do the Ann Denning 'traffic light analysis' of their reports, which we did.

What broad topics did you raise with the Directors of Education?

We talked to them about their reports, which we sent to them in advance. They thought the reports were very good and they also looked at them in terms of workforce planning.

What it did show them was, for example, in a lot of the areas there was a lack of foundation novice practitioners. The data showed that very clearly, so that supported their arguments for recruiting more staff. We had conversations around that.

We also asked them for what they thought the data was telling them. They responded that it confirmed their intuition or gut feelings about staff capability requirements. But for the first time we had more than anecdotal evidence about capability. This was the first time they actually had data showing where the gaps were and where the strengths are.

Did you talk to them about the individual reports?

We talked to them about the individual reports. We encouraged their head teachers and teachers to ask teachers to bring those reports along to the individual teacher annual reviews. We also worked with the Manager College Operations (to whom the Head Teachers report) on how the individual reports could be used and shared the 'How to have professional conversation' paper provided by you.

How will they use the VETCAT® RAM level reports?

They're going to use them as part of their planning when they do their business strategy, which they have to have done by the end of the year. That'll be the first time they've done a business strategy with the data. They have also discussed the Business Line and RAM reports with their Head Teachers at key meetings and Workforce Capability attended some of these meetings to participate in this discussion.

Why do you think the re-opening of the VETCAT® survey in June 2011 was so successful, when an additional 169 completed it?

It was due to the combination of a number of things. We developed a vodcast with the Institute Director talking about how we were using the VETCAT® reports and we used that as part of the promotion that the survey was re-opening. At the Head Teachers forum (attended by 90 Head Teachers) we provided an opportunity for Head Teachers to discuss their thoughts on the VETCAT® tool and promoted the fact that it was re-opening in 2 weeks time for those who missed out. And we had a couple of head teachers who are on our project control group talk to the other Head Teachers. We also relied on the Managers Educational Programs and Directors Education to promote with teachers. Head Teachers were also emailed directly on two occasions to engage them in promoting the survey. So the message was going out using a range of strategies and channels.

Also, word of mouth is so powerful, so maybe people who did VETCAT® the first time around were saying, 'Oh, you should do this' and other people maybe started thinking 'Oh well, it would be good to have a go at this, instead of sitting around and talking about it'.

Which committee is unpacking the VETCAT® data?

The group was originally called the VETCAT project control group but at the first meeting we decided the focus needed to be holistic and encompass all aspects of teacher development not just what we discovered from VETCAT®. The group is now called the Teacher Development Project Control Group which acts like a steering committee to provide high level advice on priorities for teacher capability development. Both of our Associate Directors are on that committee, which is fantastic. The group also includes two Directors of Education, two Managers of Education, two head teachers and Katy and I from Workforce Capability. Once again, the different levels in the organisations are represented.

There's such a strong interest in teacher development in the Institute, that's why it's such a fabulous place to work. There's so much support for workforce capability generally.

The role of that group is to review our current programs for all teachers: new teachers, head teachers, part-time teachers, full-time teachers. The first thing we looked at was how to better support new teachers: we have had a program in place for two years to support new

teachers and we're actually just about to pilot modifications to that program in semester 2 2011. For example, one of the things we're doing is having more in the program on e-learning and technology use and more on foundation skills for teachers, because it's a big area for new teachers, particularly if they're not an ex-part-time teacher who's just become permanent.

How did VETCAT® influence this group?

The VETCAT® data spawned the development of this group. The WSI strategic plan dashboard was revised to include particular mention of VETCAT® which means we will be required to report on implementation of strategies that came out of the VETCAT® exercise. One of the strategies on the WSI strategic dashboard is to establish a project control group to review and provide advice on teacher development strategies. If it wasn't for VETCAT®, we probably wouldn't have set up this group.

What other sources of data does VETCAT® sit alongside, or interact with?

As I just mentioned, the VETCAT® data sits with the strategic priorities and the strategic dashboard which then flows down into all our planning documents. The Directors Education have to do a business strategy each year and I'm sure this year they're going to be using the VETCAT® data to inform the workforce development and the workforce planning and succession planning and a workforce capability component of their business strategy. VETCAT® will be really useful in that process.

What new activities has the VETCAT® data triggered besides the control group?

What VETCAT® has helped us with is looking at where the strengths are in our Institute: which faculty areas or Business Lines have strengths, for example, in business skills or learning and assessment. It has made us think about how we can use our own people across faculties, breaking down the silos, to build capability across the institute. All the Directors of Education think that's fabulous.

I don't think we ever would have got to that that thinking so quickly if it wasn't for the fact that everyone can see everyone else's VETCAT® report and we did the traffic light analysis and we could see across the Institute very clearly, and where the strengths and weaknesses lie against particular skills and capabilities.

Our traffic light approach was based on Anne Dening's (TAFE SA Regional Institute) model for unpacking VETCAT® data which she shared at the national CAT forum in December last year.

KG: Last year we piloted a fledgling business skills program. VETCAT® didn't inform that initiative but VETCAT® will help us to shape our response in terms of developing capabilities in the business skills program, because we now know from the VETCAT® reports that we have a lot of strength in the Institute in the business skills area. That's a very exciting program.

It sounds as though you are using VETCAT® data to appreciate and build in your expertise in-house.

KG. Yes, we are trying to identify and build on our strengths. When Louise first came into this job she had a vision very much of using our strengths and not always looking outside for capabilities. VETCAT® gives us data on those capabilities.

How else are you using the VETCAT® data?

For the annual teacher review process, we're going to be really strongly encouraging head teachers to encourage staff to use their VETCAT® reports as part of that process.

What improvements could be made to VETCAT®?

Some of the teachers are a little bit sensitive to the categories like advanced learning and assessment specialist. Some people are put off by the learning and assessment specialist being described basically as being able to deliver in different modes, as there are a lot of very, very innovative learning and assessment specialists who only work in one or two particular modes. I call that category the delivery specialist, rather than the learning and assessment specialist, after that feedback.

And with the category of commercial specialist, some people have pointed out that that category is really about customising and personalising learning for enterprises.

What's next in terms of unpacking the VETCAT® data?

We're encouraging staff to talk more about their individual reports, if they are willing. I'm also keen to see how we can help the Directors of Education use the VETCAT® data when they're doing their business strategies in the coming year. And we're going to talk to the planning unit about modifying the template for business strategies to include a component on workforce capabilities.

We're using the VETCAT® data when it's relevant. We keep it at the top of our minds and we looking for the opportunity to map it to something that's happening. We're responding to the VETCAT® data in relation to this whole area of teacher education and teacher development. I'm very passionate about workforce capability.