

# JMA ANALYTICS

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## QUANTITATIVE MEASUREMENT

# It isn't just about return to industry, there are a lot of other strategies

**An interview about the value of CURCAT™ with Anne Dening,  
Senior Educational Manager – Innovations, Teaching & Learning, TAFE SA Regional**

*Based on an interview conducted by Dr John Mitchell, 1 March 2011. The interview was fully transcribed then edited by Dr John Mitchell and validated as accurate by Anne Dening.*

### **Purpose and audience**

The purposes of this interview are to:

- stimulate ideas about how to use CURCAT™ to revitalise VET practice
- encourage the development of a national community of practice among users of VETCAT™ and CURCAT™ who are focused on improving quality in their registered training organisations (RTOs).

The intended audience for this document are workforce development peers of Anne Dening who can use CURCAT™ to enhance VET practice.

### **Background**

The CURCAT™ survey was conducted at TAFE SA Regional in June 2010. The Institute later received seven reports of thirty pages or more for CURCAT™ – one for each of the six faculties and one whole-of-Institute report. The Institute undertook VETCAT™ at the same time.

### **THE INTERVIEW**

#### **In terms of vocational currency, why is it important to review and revitalise your TAFE teaching workforce?**

I think it's important to know where you're at with your vocational currency. It's too easy for people to say things like they've been industry. I suspect that there are a lot of myths going around about people's vocational currency and so for me it was really important to have some baseline data from CURCAT™ to find out where we were at.

Also, if you're making plans as a manager to move into another field like a different Certificate IV or the diploma and advanced diploma market, then you need to know whether you've got the talent to do that or the experience to do that.

**What were some of the key insights provided by the CURCAT™ data about your teaching practitioners?**

We were very surprised to find that about 53% of the people who responded actually had tertiary qualifications in their industry area. Denise Bradley's definition of a tertiary sector was an advanced diploma or higher and we found we had a very high number of people with tertiary qualifications in their industry specialisation.

The other insight for us was that we had great variation [about currency] by faculty. It was good to find that out because then those faculties could do something about it and address it.

**How has the CURCAT™ process been helpful to you, in your role, in reconceptualising and revitalising TAFE work and workers?**

Because I've got the CURCAT™ data and I've been through the process, CURCAT™ gave me a different group of strategies that could be on the agenda in terms of keeping people vocationally current. It isn't just about return to industry, there are a lot of other strategies that could assist as well, and that part of the CURCAT™ process was very useful. People seem to get hung up on the idea that 'I've got to spend six months in industry' and I think we need to find other ways for our people to stay current.

**What actions have you taken, or might you take, to unpack the CURCAT™ data and its implications with the faculties?**

I have unpacked each CURCAT™ faculty report for myself and then made a separate appointment to talk to each of the faculty managers about their report and the implications for them. In the case of one faculty, as a result of this process they made decisions about putting some people into a diploma course so that accredited training could actually assist with their vocational currency. Other faculties have deliberately employed people on a 0.8 basis, particularly in nursing where lot of our nurse lecturers are one day a week in industry, four days a week in TAFE. So CURCAT™ gave the faculties some new models.

Everybody's looked at some different models for industry currency, following the CURCAT™ process, and one of the really good things as part of my role is that I can show people what other faculties have done about it.

**What new strategies (eg PD programs) have been or might be developed as a result of this dialogue across the Institute?**

Well two weeks ago I put up some project money for industry currency projects in faculties and I received a load of responses. One faculty wants to use the money to formalise all their industry reference groups across the state so that on an AQTF basis they would have an industry reference group for every sub-program that they teach in. Another faculty wanted to send ten people to a national conference in the childcare sector with the condition for them getting the money that they write a report about how this has assisted them and that their report goes onto the teaching and learning intranet page for sharing with everybody else. I gave them the CURCAT checklist of strategies and said this is what you need to use as your reference point for your reports.

**In terms of reconceptualising and revitalising TAFE work and workers, what do you expect to be the long-term benefits of CURCAT™ and these new strategies?**

I'd hope that we can continue doing more work-based projects and learning from each other as well as some staff doing accredited training in their vocational area and sharing that knowledge across their team. I think that's really, really vital, particularly in regional areas: if we want to move out students to higher levels of training, we need highly skilled people ourselves.

The old adage is that if you only ever did Grade 2 Maths yourself that's about the limit of what you can teach, and it's actually so much easier to teach Grade 2 Maths if you've already done much higher levels of Maths. I think the same applies to VET programs: you can give students a much broader perspective of the industry if you know more about it than them.

This applies to the VET sector in general: the more qualifications in education our people have, the greater the depth of their knowledge, the better they will be as educators.