

NATIONAL CENTRE FOR VOCATIONAL EDUCATION RESEARCH

Vocational education and training workforce data 2008: A compendium



*Edited:
Hugh Guthrie*



NATIONAL CENTRE
FOR VOCATIONAL
EDUCATION RESEARCH



Australian Government
Department of Education, Employment
and Workplace Relations



NCVER

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Edited: Hugh Guthrie

National Centre for Vocational Education Research

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About the research



Vocational education and training workforce data 2008: A compendium

Hugh Guthrie (Editor), NCVER

There has been a continued interest in the numbers and characteristics of those who make up the vocational education and training (VET) sector's own workforce. To address this, the Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) commissioned the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) to undertake three projects, updating previous work (NCVER 2004). Each project generated a report which is included in this compendium:

- The first report, 'Getting the measure of the VET professional: An update', draws on analyses of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the Survey of Education and Training (SET) and the Census of Population and Housing to provide an updated demographic profile of VET professionals and VET practitioners.
- The second report, 'National TAFE workforce study 2008', provides national data on the TAFE workforce in 2008 and, where possible, compares this with 2002 data.
- The final report, 'VET workforce collection: Feasibility report', considers what needs to be known about the national VET workforce and what options are available for collecting that information.

The reports confirm the difficulty of getting accurate information and numbers for the VET workforce at present. We know little about the movement into and out of the sector and the career paths of VET staff. Nor do we understand much about the qualifications—teaching and vocational—VET staff hold. This type of information is important if there is to be a national approach to building a more 'professional' VET workforce.

Tom Karmel
Managing Director, NCVER

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Overview

The projects

There has been continued interest in the numbers and characteristics of those that make up the VET sector's workforce. To address this NCVER was commissioned by the Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations to undertake three projects to update previous work (NCVER 2004) and to examine the feasibility of a national and more sustained collection of VET workforce data. Each project generated a report, which is incorporated in this compendium:

- ✧ The first chapter, 'Getting the measure of the VET professional: An update', draws on analyses of ABS data from the Survey of Education and Training (SET) and the Census of Population and Housing to provide an updated demographic profile of VET professionals and VET practitioners.
- ✧ The second chapter, 'National TAFE workforce study 2008', provides national data on the technical and further education (TAFE) workforce in 2008 and, where possible, compares this with 2002 data collected for the report, *Profiling the national vocational education and training workforce* (NCVER 2004).
- ✧ The final chapter, 'VET workforce collection: Feasibility report', considers what needs to be known about the national VET workforce and what options are available for collecting that information.

The findings

VET workforce numbers

VET and TAFE workforce numbers were estimated in the first two reports.

The first study examines the characteristics of those who self-identify as being involved in the provision of vocational education and training, whether in a direct role as a practitioner or in broader roles such as management, administrative support, planning or marketing. The Survey of Education and Training data, using weighted counts, estimate the TAFE workforce in 2005 at about 70 800, and a total VET workforce across all provider types at over 440 000.

The second report focuses specifically on TAFE providers and suggests the national TAFE workforce increased from 53 800 in 2002 to 57 800 in 2008, an increase of 7.4%. Over the period the number of practitioners increased by 8.2%, while the number of non-teachers increased by 6.0%. Staff increases were predominantly female.

There are a couple of clear messages. First, large numbers of people are involved in delivering vocational education and training, but these numbers are not being captured and reported consistently or comprehensively. Second, while numbers reported in the first and second studies for the TAFE workforce are in the same ball park, there are clearly discrepancies. Some may be the result of definitional issues. Others are caused by the nature of the sampling process: an individual interview in the case of the SET data and point-in-time staffing data in the case of the TAFE study. Both have limitations. In 2005, the SET depends on respondents identifying their main work as concerned with providing vocational education and training; that is, it is the primary component of their job. It does not take account of the large numbers of casual staff who may be involved in

providing education and training, but not as their main job. The TAFE study undercounts staff numbers, particularly casual ones, as it only counts those staff who are on the books at the chosen point in time, not those who taught at other times throughout the year. We will consider alternative data collection approaches later in this overview.

VET workforce characteristics

The first two studies tell us something of the characteristics of the VET workforce, but most about those in TAFE. Collectively, it is clear that:

- ✧ VET professionals are increasingly involved in direct activities; that is, activities that are directly concerned with the development, delivery and assessment of courses/modules.
- ✧ VET professionals are increasingly older, and older VET professionals are increasingly found in TAFE. Nationally, the TAFE workforce is older than the Australian labour force in general.
- ✧ There are roughly equal numbers of male and female VET practitioners in TAFE (although the number of female practitioners slightly outnumbers the males), with more of both employed on a part-time, casual or contract basis.
- ✧ Female staff in the TAFE workforce are more likely to be employed on a non-permanent basis and less likely to be employed full-time than males.
- ✧ Lengths of service in the national TAFE workforce are high, with permanent staff having longer lengths of service than non-permanent—whether male or female.

Using census data, the first report suggests that proportions of full- and part-time staff have been stable over a ten-year period (1996 to 2006). The second report, with its TAFE focus, is equivocal and it is not clear from the available data whether, or to what extent, the rates of non-permanent employment have changed.

Finally, the first study suggests that there may have been a shift in the qualification profile of professionals in TAFE providers with, in particular, an increase in the proportion holding bachelor and, particularly, postgraduate qualifications. A decreasing proportion held VET-level qualifications. A range of reasons can be suggested to account for why such changes might have come about, particularly in TAFE. Unfortunately, the second report contained generally poor or incomplete information on the qualifications held by TAFE staff. It is not that the data are not available; they are required for AQTF 2007 compliance. However, they are not uniformly available on staff databases. Further work is needed to understand if and why such a change in qualification profile might have occurred.

Data issues

The first report has limitations that have already been discussed above. The SET data are useful indicators of trends at national level, but are more unreliable at individual jurisdiction level. The census data are of little value.

The second report uses point-in-time data. While this has limitations as we have already discussed, and is restricted to TAFE providers alone (a disadvantage from which the SET data do not suffer), the quality of data collected for the second report has improved from that gathered for 2002. In particular, the data were reported on a more consistent basis by states and territories, in part because of real improvements in data quality and handling, but also because a data dictionary was provided by our project with definitions of the key data elements. However, significant data issues remain and ways to overcome them are proposed in the feasibility study which constitutes the third report.

Alternative approaches to collecting VET workforce data

Currently there is no targeted and consistent collection of data on the VET workforce and information has to be inferred from other surveys and collections (such as the census). This limits the extent to which data can be used for workforce planning and policy development, particularly at the national level.

There are two possible ways of collecting the information. One is an administrative collection using information already stored in the HR systems of training organisations. The other is a direct survey of employees.

An administrative collection could provide a profile of the VET workforce in terms of employment characteristics, qualifications, teaching areas, demographics and workforce flows. An administrative collection is an effective way of collecting data if there is an ongoing need for such data. Although initial set-up costs can be high, these costs reduce once system changes are implemented. With the exception of characteristics of training organisations such as workforce flows, a survey could address all of the areas above, as well as provide information on employees' job satisfaction, professional development activities, previous careers, motivation for entering the VET workforce and intention to remain there.

The choice of methodology will be based on the relative importance of the possible data elements and will also be affected by issues such as the time taken to implement, the running costs, and the scope of the collection.

Both methodologies have strengths and weaknesses. The best solution may be a combination of the two. Undertaking a regular (for example, annual) administrative collection of the public workforce is suggested if there is an ongoing need for the information. This would be supplemented with a survey of employees in both public and private providers every few years. Together this would provide a comprehensive picture of the VET workforce in Australia.

References

NCVER (National Centre for Vocational Education Research) 2004, 'Profiling the national vocational education and training workforce', commissioned paper for the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA), NCVER, Adelaide.

Getting the measure of the VET professional: An update

Peter Mlotkowski and Hugh Guthrie

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Summary

This report draws on analyses of Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data from the Survey of Education and Training (SET) and the Census of Population and Housing to provide an updated demographic profile of VET professionals and VET practitioners.

A number of caveats are attached to this analysis, all relating to changes made to the primary source of data, the Survey of Education and Training. Some operational definitions used in the NCVER 2004 publication, namely the breakdown of training providers, have not been retained here, but this is unavoidable. Also unavoidable is the need to derive the VET workforce in 2005, given the broadening of questions in SET.

Caveats aside, a number of clear findings emerge, or rather are reinforced:

- ✧ VET professionals are increasingly involved in direct activities; that is, activities that are directly concerned with the development, delivery and assessment of courses/modules.
- ✧ VET professionals are increasingly older, and older VET professionals are increasingly found in TAFE.
- ✧ There are roughly equal numbers of male and female VET practitioners in TAFE, with more of both employed part-time than full-time.
- ✧ The proportions of full- and part-time staff have been stable for ten years.
- ✧ An increasing proportion of VET professionals are self-employed.

In addition, there may have been a shift in the qualification profile of professionals in TAFE providers with, in particular, an increase in the proportion holding postgraduate qualifications. A range of reasons are suggested to explain why such a change might have come about, but we also suggest that further work is needed to understand if and why such a change in qualification profile has occurred.

Getting the measure of the VET professional

Introduction

This report updates some data presented in the NCVET 2004 publication *Profiling the national VET workforce* using two primary ABS data sources—the Survey of Education and Training and the Census of Population and Housing.

Both of these data sets provide nationally consistent information on the VET workforce, based on those who self-identify as being involved in the provision of vocational education and training. An updated demographic profile of the VET workforce is provided here by analysing data from the 2005 SET and the 2006 Census of Population and Housing. Where possible, operational definitions used in the 2004 publication have been retained and data replicated.

Background

Defining VET professionals and practitioners

The SET data, on which the NCVET's 2004 publication is based, make a distinction between a VET professional and a VET practitioner on the basis of a variety of work activities. These activities include:

- ✧ development of courses/modules
- ✧ delivery of courses/modules
- ✧ assessment of courses/modules
- ✧ management of education or training
- ✧ development of plans
- ✧ administrative support
- ✧ marketing programs.

A VET practitioner is defined as someone involved in any of the top three activities, which are directly associated with teaching, learning and assessment functions. The definition of a VET professional is broader, incorporating a wider range of work roles. This is consistent with Dickie et al. (2004), who describe VET practitioners as those staff of registered training organisations (RTOs) who are directly involved in delivery of teaching, training and/or assessment programs that are nationally recognised. VET professionals include VET practitioners and those staff who provide leadership, management and support for teaching, training and assessment within registered training organisations. In addition, a range of other staff work in generic, transferable roles such as accountants and marketing and maintenance staff. These staff, together with the VET practitioners and other VET professionals, make up the VET workforce.

Defining VET providers

To provide further insight, the NCVER publication in 2004 groups VET professionals and practitioners by the kind of training provider which employs them. The training providers are grouped into the following categories:

- ✧ TAFE
- ✧ non-TAFE training organisations (ACE, Skill Centres, business colleges, other private training organisations)
- ✧ other organisations which provide training (professional or industry associations, product manufacturers or suppliers)
- ✧ enterprises who provide in-house training for their employees.

These operational definitions allow the 2004 publication to provide a nationally consistent demographic profile of the VET workforce, and how this varies across different types of providers.

Summarising the earlier work

NCVER (2004) found that:

- ✧ The work of VET professionals was changing, with individuals considerably more likely to be involved in direct activities in 2001 than they were in 1997.
- ✧ The age profile of VET professionals moved upwards between 1997 and 2001, with older VET professionals concentrated in the TAFE sector.
- ✧ A high proportion of VET professionals were self-employed.
- ✧ The majority of VET professionals had a post-school qualification in 2001, although most VET practitioners did not have a qualification in education and training.

Issues with updating the data

Updating the data presented in the NCVER 2004 publication is complicated by changes made to the primary source of data, the SET. The 2001 SET refers to the provision of vocational education and training specifically; the questions in the 2005 SET have been broadened and refer to all education and training. In addition, the classification of organisations at which persons are employed to provide education or training has changed (Box 1). However, this does not mean that we cannot derive VET professionals and practitioners from these data.

According to the new classification of training providers, we define the VET workforce in 2005 as those people employed to provide education or training in TAFE or technical colleges, other education/training organisations, and other organisations primarily for education/training employees of current employer or business. By contrast, the VET workforce in 1997 and 2001 is defined as those people employed to provide vocational education or training in: TAFE or technical colleges, non-TAFE training organisations, other organisations which provide training, and enterprises. The result is a moderate decrease in the sample size between 2001 and 2005 (table 1).

The distinction between a VET professional and a VET practitioner is made, again, on the basis of activities performed in the provision of education or training, the classification of which has not changed between 2001 and 2005. That is, a VET professional in this report is a person involved in any of the top five activities listed in Box 1, whereas VET practitioners develop, deliver or assess courses or modules.

The training provider groupings used in the last publication cannot be replicated due to changes made to the relevant question in the SET (see Box 1). Hence we have decided to group training providers into just two categories: TAFE and all other organisations.

Table 1 provides the weighted counts used in the calculation of percentages in this report.

Table 1 Weighted counts by training provider, 1997–2005

	1997	2001	2005
	'000	'000	'000
VET professionals			
TAFE	59.1	86.9	67.4
All other organisations	950.7	901.8	816.0
Total VET professionals	1 009.9	988.8	883.4
VET practitioners			
TAFE	45.8	71.3	61.8
All other organisations	609.0	673.2	615.8
Total VET practitioners	654.8	744.6	677.7
VET workforce			
TAFE	69.2	90.4	70.8
All other organisations	1 150.9	987.4	880.0
Total VET workforce	1 220.1	1 077.8	950.8

Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (1997, 2001a, 2005).

Box 1 Changes to questions in the SET, 2001 and 2005

2001	2005
Questions referring to provision of VET	Equivalent questions
<i>Whether provides vocational education or training in current job</i>	<i>Whether provides education or training in main job</i>
<i>Types of vocational education or training activities performed</i>	<i>Types of education or training activities performed</i>
Development of courses or modules	Development of courses or modules
Delivery of courses or modules	Delivery of courses or modules
Review or assessment of courses or modules	Review or assessment of courses or modules
Management of education or training	Management of education or training
Development of plans	Development of plans
Administrative support	Administrative support
Marketing programs	Marketing programs
<i>Organisation at which employed to provide vocational education or training</i>	<i>Organisation at which employed to provide education or training</i>
TAFE or technical college	TAFE or technical college
University or other higher education	University or other higher education
Primary or secondary school	Primary or secondary school
Professional or industry association	Other education/training organisation
Equipment or product manufacturer or supplier	
Industry skills centre, Skillshare centre or other government training centre	
Business college, adult or community education centre	
Other private training organisation	
Other institution or organisation	
Primarily for employees of current employer or business	Other organisation primarily for education/training employees of current employer or business
Other	Other organisation primarily for education/training other than employees of current employer or business
<i>Whether had obtained a non-school qualification in education or training</i>	<i>Whether had obtained a non-school qualification in education or training</i>

Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (2001a, 2005).

Activities of VET professionals

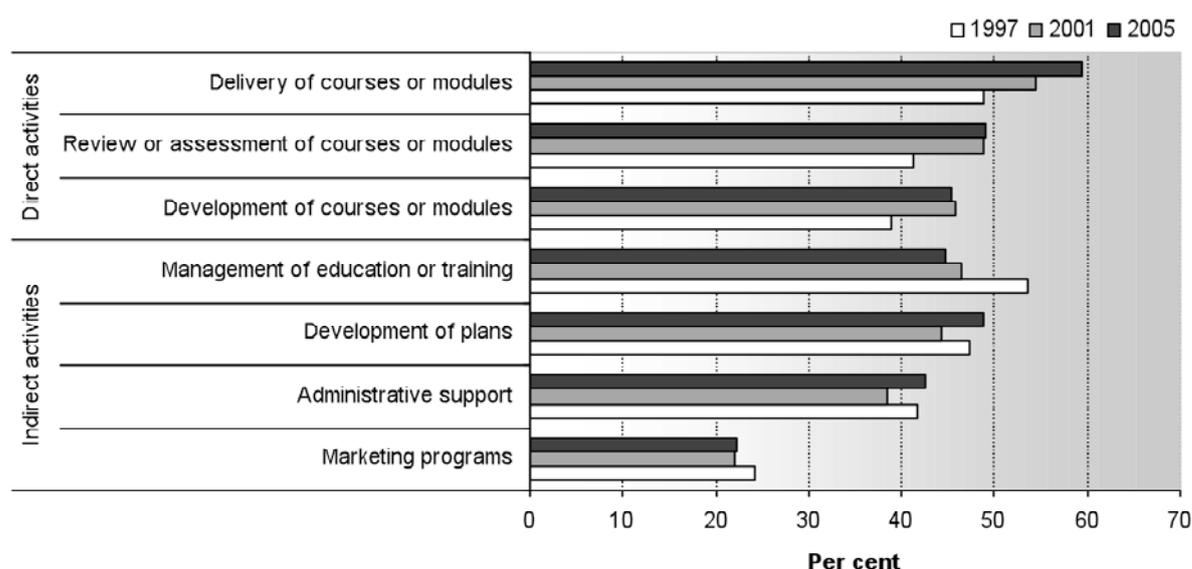
VET professionals are increasingly involved in direct activities

From the Surveys of Education and Training, we obtain information on the kind of education and training activities in which VET professionals are involved. These can be subdivided into direct and indirect activities, with direct activities constituting the development, delivery and assessment of courses/modules.

Figure 1 details the activities undertaken by VET professionals, comparing 1997, 2001 and 2005. The most common activity, and becoming increasingly common, is the delivery of courses or modules. The least common is marketing programs.

Between 1997 and 2005, the focus of activities undertaken by VET professionals has changed, with individuals in 2005 considerably more likely to be involved in direct activities than they were in 1997. Conversely, they are less likely to be involved in indirect activities. The best illustration of this is the fall in the proportion involved in the management of education or training, which ranked as the most common activity in 1997 and has fallen to fifth in 2005.

Figure 1 Activities undertaken by VET professionals, 1997–2005



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (1997, 2001a, 2005).

VET professionals are mostly VET practitioners

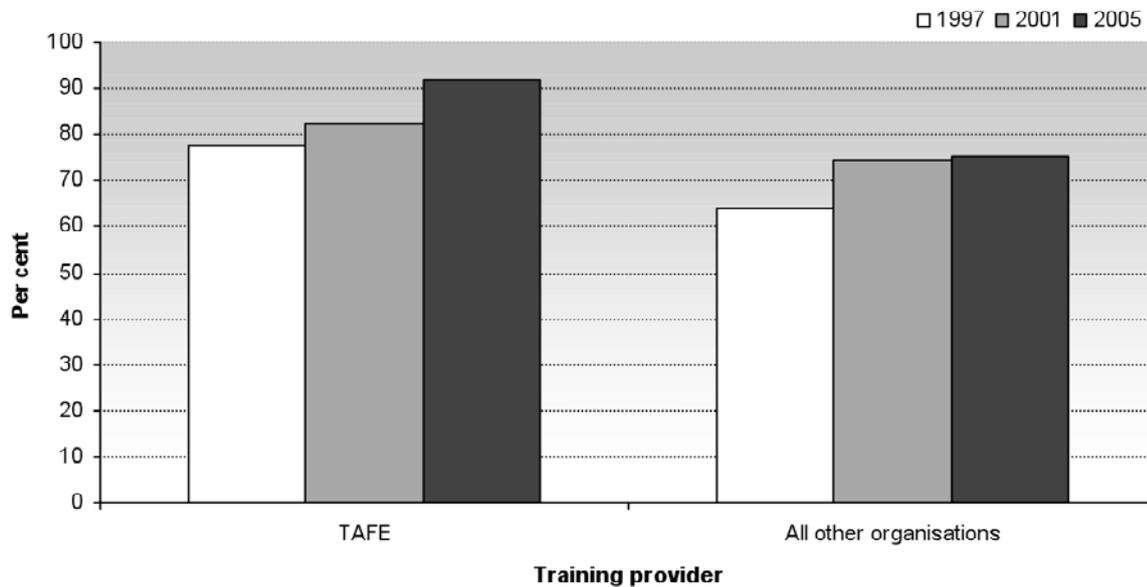
Figure 1 showed how VET professionals were more involved in direct activities in 2005 than they were in 1997. Involvement in direct VET activities—delivery, development and assessment of courses or modules—is the core activity of VET practitioners.

Using this definition, most VET professionals are involved in one form or another of these direct activities—in other words, VET professionals are also largely VET practitioners.

Figure 2 breaks down the percentage of VET professionals involved in direct activities by the kind of training provider who employs them. The figure shows that VET professionals employed in TAFE, which provides education as its main activity, are more likely to be involved in direct VET activities than individuals employed in all other organisations providing education or training, whose main activity is less likely to be the provision of education.

The difference in the percentage of VET professionals involved in direct activities between TAFE and all other organisations is increasing (16.4% in 2005 compared with 7.4% in 2001).

Figure 2 VET professionals involved in direct activities, by type of training provider, 1997–2005



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (1997, 2001a, 2005).

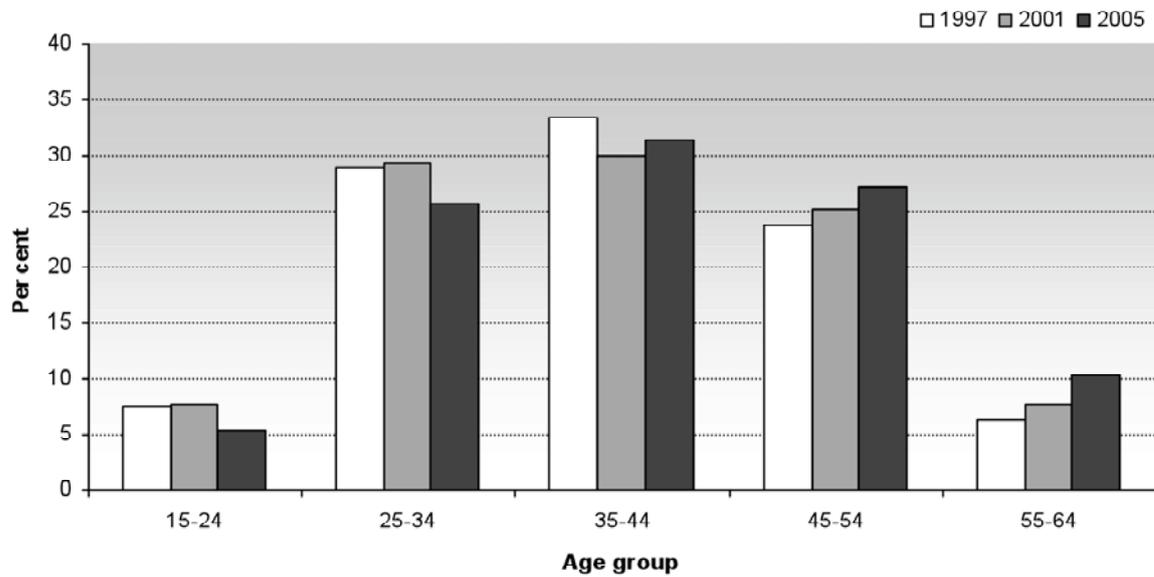
Ageing of the VET workforce

VET professionals are becoming increasingly older

It is well known that the Australian population is ageing. The median age of the population increased from 33.7 years in 1995 to 37.0 years in 2006, and is projected to rise to 45.2 years by 2051 (ABS 2006b). In line with this trend, figure 3 shows that the age profile of VET professionals shifted upwards between 1997 and 2001, and again between 2001 and 2005.

In 2005, 37.6% of VET professionals were aged 45 to 64 years, compared with 30.0% in 1997. Conversely, the percentage of VET professionals aged 15 to 34 years decreased from 36.5% in 1997 to 31.0% in 2005. Reinforcing this trend, the scope of the SET was expanded in 2005, for the first time collecting information from persons aged 65 to 69 years. (In 2005, there were 2400 VET professionals aged 65 to 69 years in TAFE, and 5700 in all other organisations.) However, for the sake of consistency we have excluded these people from the analysis in figure 3, as well as everywhere else.

Figure 3 Age profile of VET professionals, 1997–2005



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (1997, 2001a, 2005).

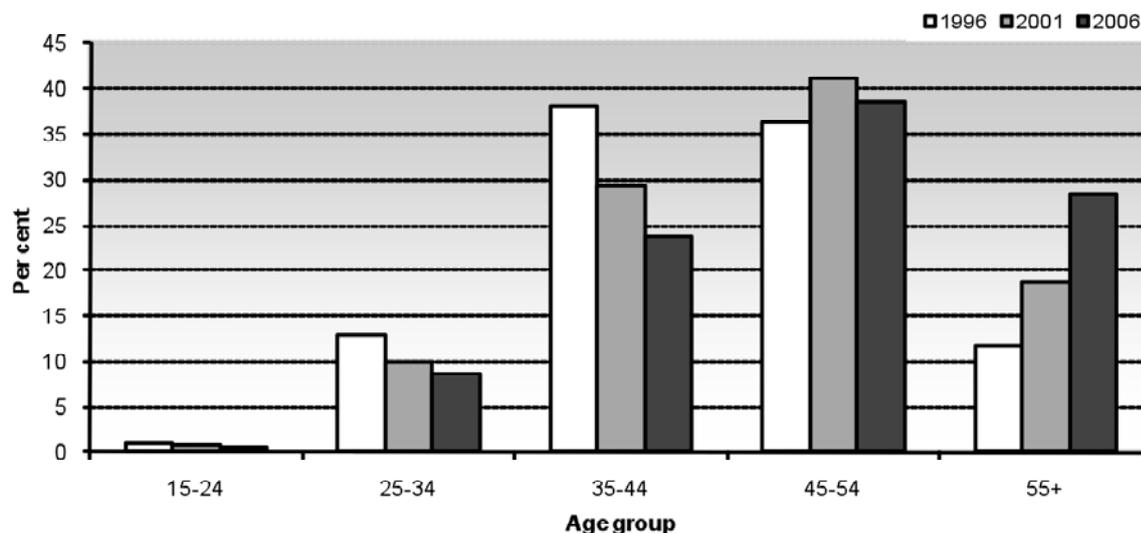
VET practitioners in TAFE are, on average, older than VET professionals

We can use census data to compare the age profile of VET practitioners working in TAFE and VET professionals as a whole, bearing in mind that a high percentage of VET professionals are VET practitioners (figure 2).

Using census data forces a change in definition. A VET practitioner in the census is a person with the occupation of vocational education teacher (ASCO 2422) in their main job. For our purposes, a VET practitioner working in TAFE is a vocational education teacher employed by Australian, state or territory governments.

The data indicate that VET practitioners in TAFE have an older age profile than is the case for VET professionals as a whole. In 1996, 48.0% of VET practitioners in TAFE were aged 45 years or over. By 2001, this had increased to 59.9%, with 18.7% aged 55 years or more. And by 2006, 66.9% of VET practitioners in TAFE were aged 45 years or more, with 28.4% aged 55 years or more.

Figure 4 Age profile of VET practitioners in TAFE, 1996–2006



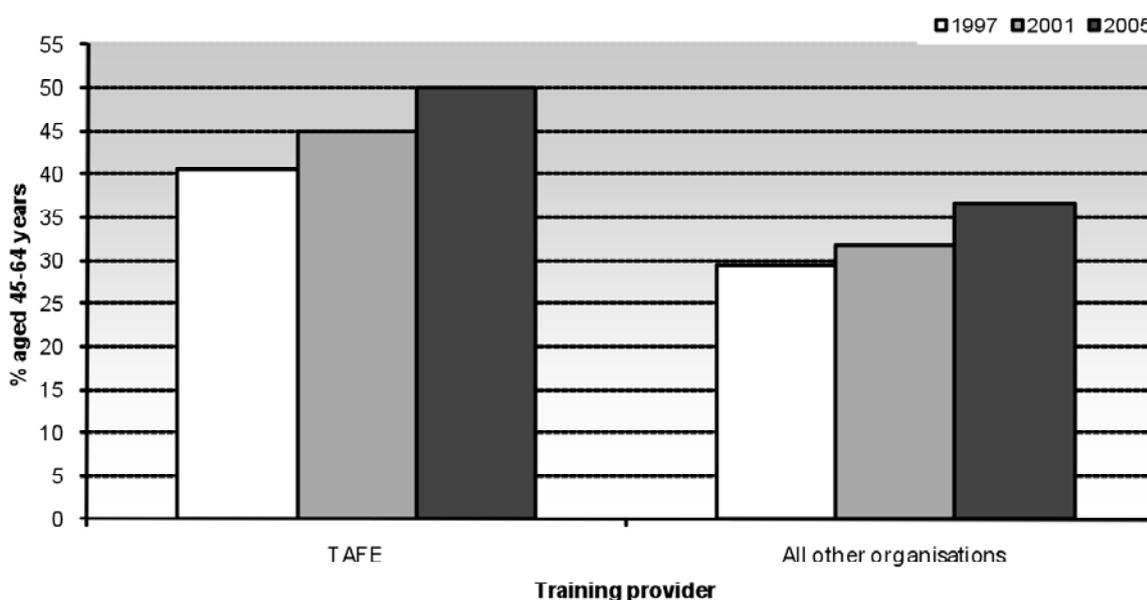
Notes: In census data, a VET practitioner working in TAFE is defined as a person with the occupation of vocational education teacher (ASCO 2422) in his or her main job working in the public sector.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (1996, 2001b, 2006a).

Older VET professionals are concentrated in the TAFE sector

The finding that VET practitioners in TAFE are older than VET professionals as a whole is also borne out in figure 5, which compares the percentage of VET professionals aged 45 to 64 years by the kind of provider who employs them. The figure clearly shows that the percentage of older VET professionals in TAFE is considerably higher than in all other organisations, although the percentage is increasing proportionately in both.

Figure 5 Older VET professionals by type of training provider, 1997–2005



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (1997, 2001a, 2005).

Employment status of VET professionals and practitioners

More TAFE teachers are employed part-time than full-time

The Census of Population and Housing indicates that there are roughly equal numbers of male and female VET practitioners working in TAFE. The census data also indicate that there is a greater proportion of males than females in full-time positions. Consequently, there is a greater proportion of females than males in part-time positions. Overall, 46.6% of VET practitioners in TAFE in 2006 were employed full-time, while 48.5% were part-time. These numbers have been stable over the three collection periods, although there appears to have been a very slight decline in the proportion employed part-time (that is, they worked one to 34 hours on the week before census night). Nevertheless, if those who did not work in the week prior to census night are also taken into account (and are those most likely to be casual or contract VET practitioners working part-time), then the numbers are virtually constant.

It must be noted here that the census only identifies TAFE teachers where that is their *main* job. The census figures are, therefore, certain to *understate* the true population of part-time VET practitioners in TAFE, because some people whose main job is in another field and who teach with TAFE on a part-time, casual or contract basis, will not have been captured. Nonetheless, the finding from the census that more TAFE teachers work on a part-time basis than full-time is a significant one.

Table 2 VET practitioners in TAFE by gender and employment status, 1996–2006

	1996			2001			2006		
	Male %	Female %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %	Male %	Female %	Total %
Full-time ^(a)	31.0	15.7	46.6	29.7	16.8	46.5	29.5	17.1	46.6
Part-time ^(b)	18.9	31.2	50.1	18.5	30.4	48.9	18.1	30.4	48.5
Did not work ^(c)	1.3	1.3	2.6	1.6	1.7	3.3	1.8	1.7	3.5
Not stated ^(d)	0.4	0.3	0.7	0.7	0.6	1.3	0.9	0.5	1.4
Total	51.5	48.5	100.0	50.5	49.5	100.0	50.3	49.7	100.0

Notes: (a) Worked 35 hours or more in week prior to census night.

(b) Worked 1–34 hours in week prior to census night.

(c) Worked zero hours in week prior to census night.

(d) Hours worked in week prior to census night not stated.

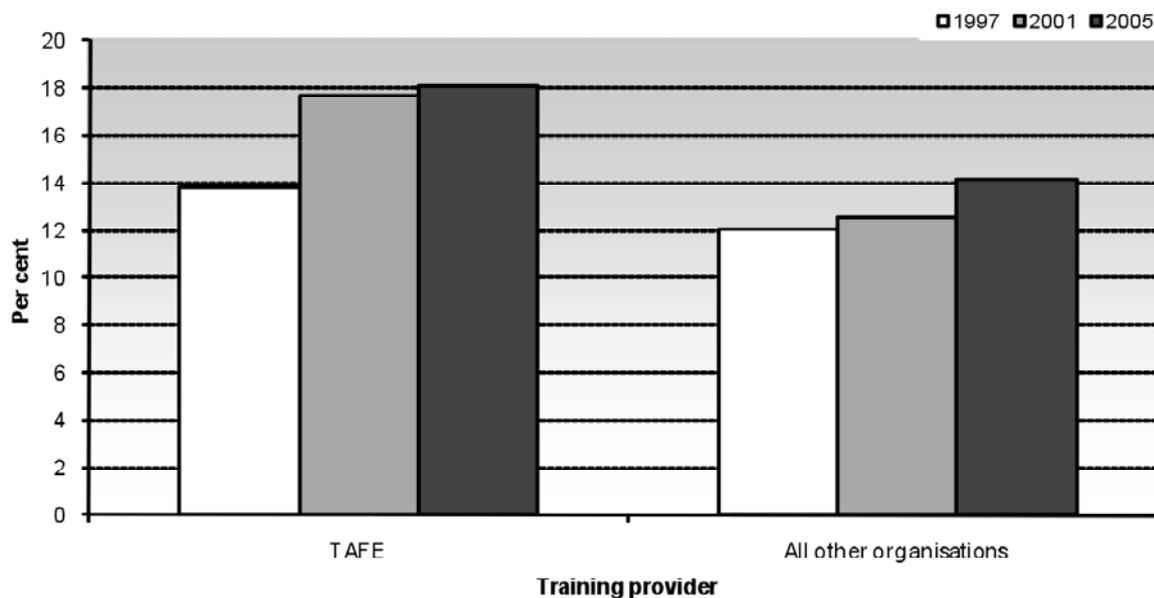
In census data, a VET practitioner working in TAFE is defined as a person with the occupation of vocational education teacher (ASCO 2422) in his or her main job working in the public sector.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (1996, 2001b, 2006a).

A high proportion of VET professionals are self-employed

Figure 6 indicates that the percentage of self-employed VET professionals is on the increase. The percentage of self-employed VET professionals working in TAFE increased from 13.9% in 1997 to 18.1% in 2005, while self-employed VET professionals in all other organisations increased from 12.1% in 1997 to 14.2% in 2005. Self-employment status refers to a person's main job, which may or may not be as a VET professional, so this should be regarded more as an individual attribute rather than a job attribute. Indeed, what it suggests is that many VET professionals are employed on a part-time, casual, sessional or contract basis to teach in the area of expertise which constitutes their main job. What it also shows is that there only appears to have been a very slight increase in the proportion of those in TAFE identifying as self-employed between 2001 and 2005.

Figure 6 VET professionals who are self-employed by type of training provider, 1997–2005



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (1997, 2001a, 2005).

Qualifications of VET professionals

In this section we examine the qualifications held by professionals, drawing both on SET and census data. In addition, we examine the proportion of those holding an education qualification.

Qualification levels

Figure 7 uses the SET data and shows the percentage of VET professionals in 2001 and 2005 holding particular qualifications by the type of training provider employing them. These are subdivided into postgraduate, bachelor degree, and other post-school (or VET) qualifications.

In 2001, VET professionals working in TAFE were much more likely to hold a post-school qualification than all other VET professionals: roughly eight out of ten, compared with two out of three. They also had the higher proportion with VET qualifications, more than half. VET professionals working outside TAFE were slightly more likely to hold a higher education degree.

Between 2001 and 2005, the percentage of VET professionals in TAFE holding a postgraduate degree more than doubled, while the percentage holding a bachelor degree increased from 13.1% to 21.1%. The percentage of VET professionals in TAFE with a VET qualification decreased from 53.1% to 38.8%, while the percentage without a post-school qualification decreased from 17.9% to 6.4%. At the same time, there has been a relative decrease in the proportion of those VET professionals holding no post-school qualification in the other organisations that provide VET training and small increases in those holding both postgraduate and bachelor degree qualifications, as well as VET qualifications.

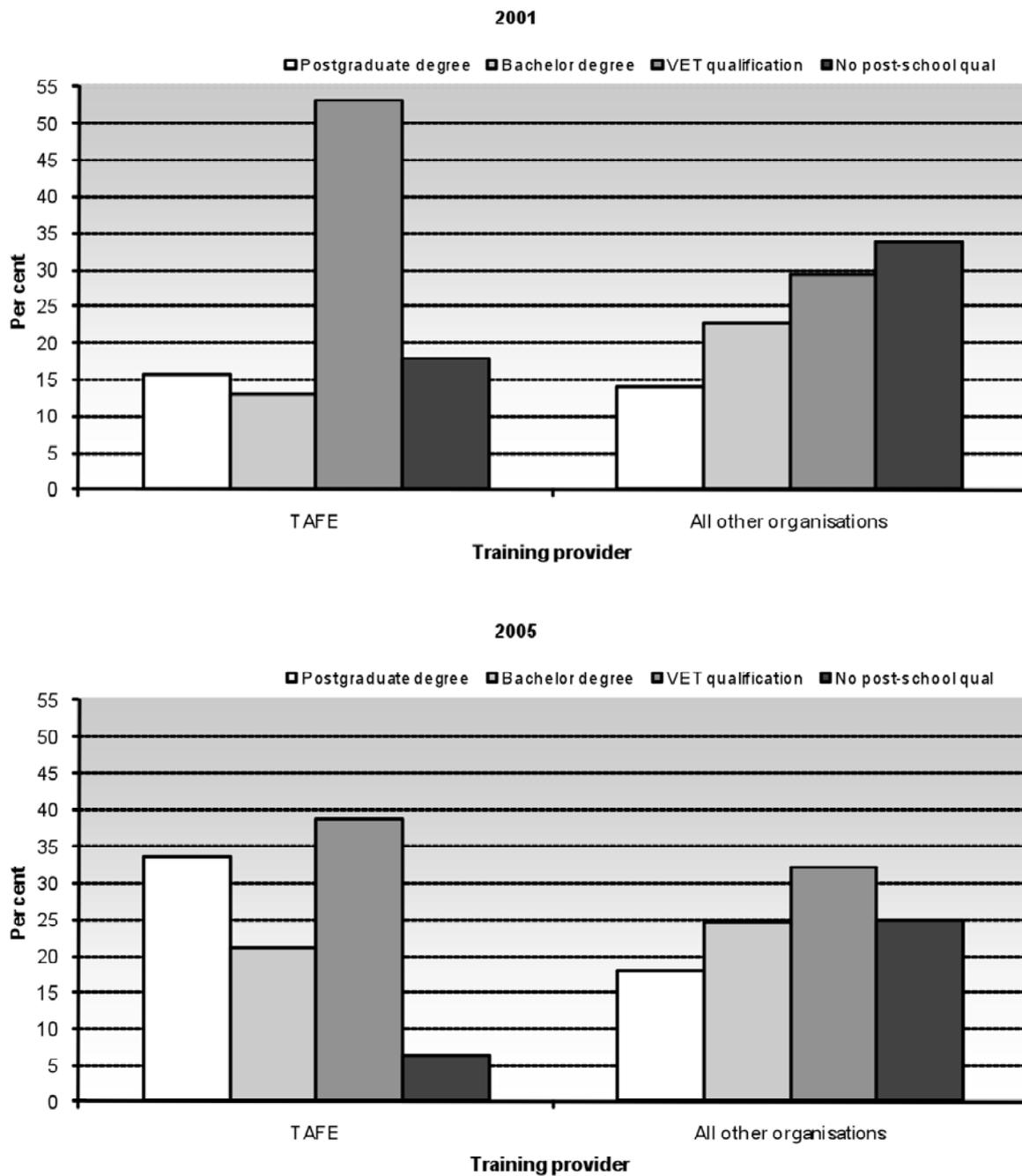
The TAFE findings are the most interesting finding to arise from this study, but are difficult to interpret. In part, this is because of the magnitude of the apparent shift in such a short time frame. Nevertheless, the increase in the percentage with a higher education or bachelor degree and the decrease in the percentage with a VET qualification may be due to a combination of the following factors:

- ✧ the active recruitment of staff with higher levels of qualification, particularly at degree or post-graduate level
- ✧ the encouragement to pursue higher-level qualifications—particularly degrees—by VET providers, or because staff are undertaking such awards for personal interest or to enhance their career prospects
- ✧ regulatory requirements which mean that staff need to have professional qualifications at or above the level they are teaching (nevertheless, it appears that the proportion of students undertaking diploma and advanced diplomas has declined over the period; that is, there has been no growth in the proportion of students studying at higher levels)
- ✧ a number of providers, including the dual-sector providers in two jurisdictions, offering programs at degree level.

Changes made to the SET for 2005 do not allow us to filter the VET workforce data any more than we have.

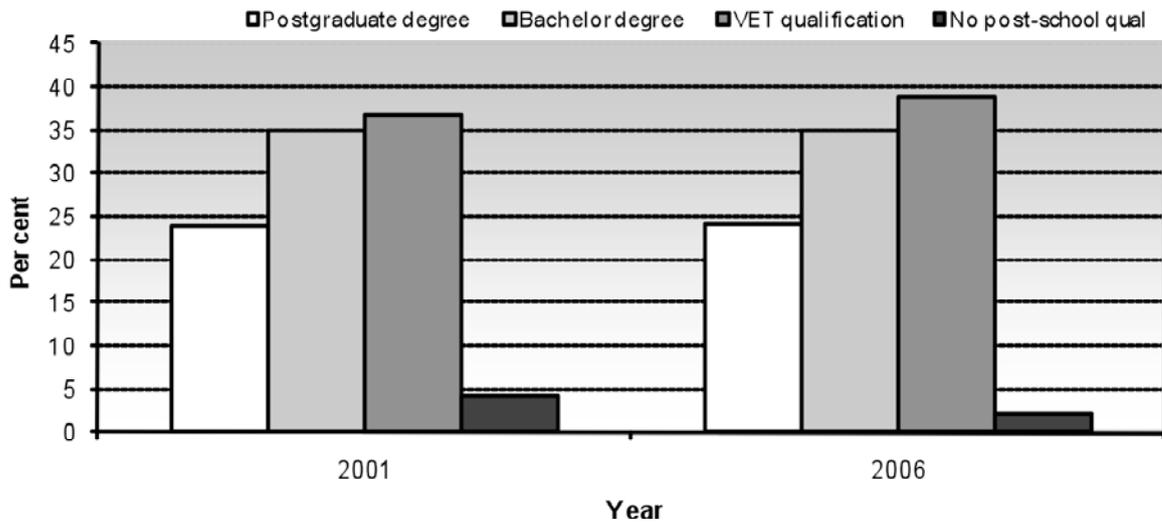
To try to confirm this trend we used the Census of Population and Housing data for 2001 and 2006. Figure 8 compares the qualification profile of VET practitioners working in TAFE between 2001 and 2006 and represents a dramatic contrast to the SET data. There is no marked shift in the proportion of VET practitioners in TAFE with a higher education qualification. By contrast to figures 7 and 8, the proportion with a VET qualification increases slightly between 2001 and 2006. There is also a slight decrease in the proportion with no post-school qualification.

Figure 7 Qualifications of VET professionals by type of training provider, 2001 and 2005



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (2001a, 2005).

Figure 8 Qualifications of VET practitioners in TAFE, 2001 and 2006



Notes: In census data, a VET practitioner working in TAFE is defined as a person with the occupation of vocational education teacher (ASCO 2422) in his or her main job working in the public sector.

Data refers to highest post-school qualification.

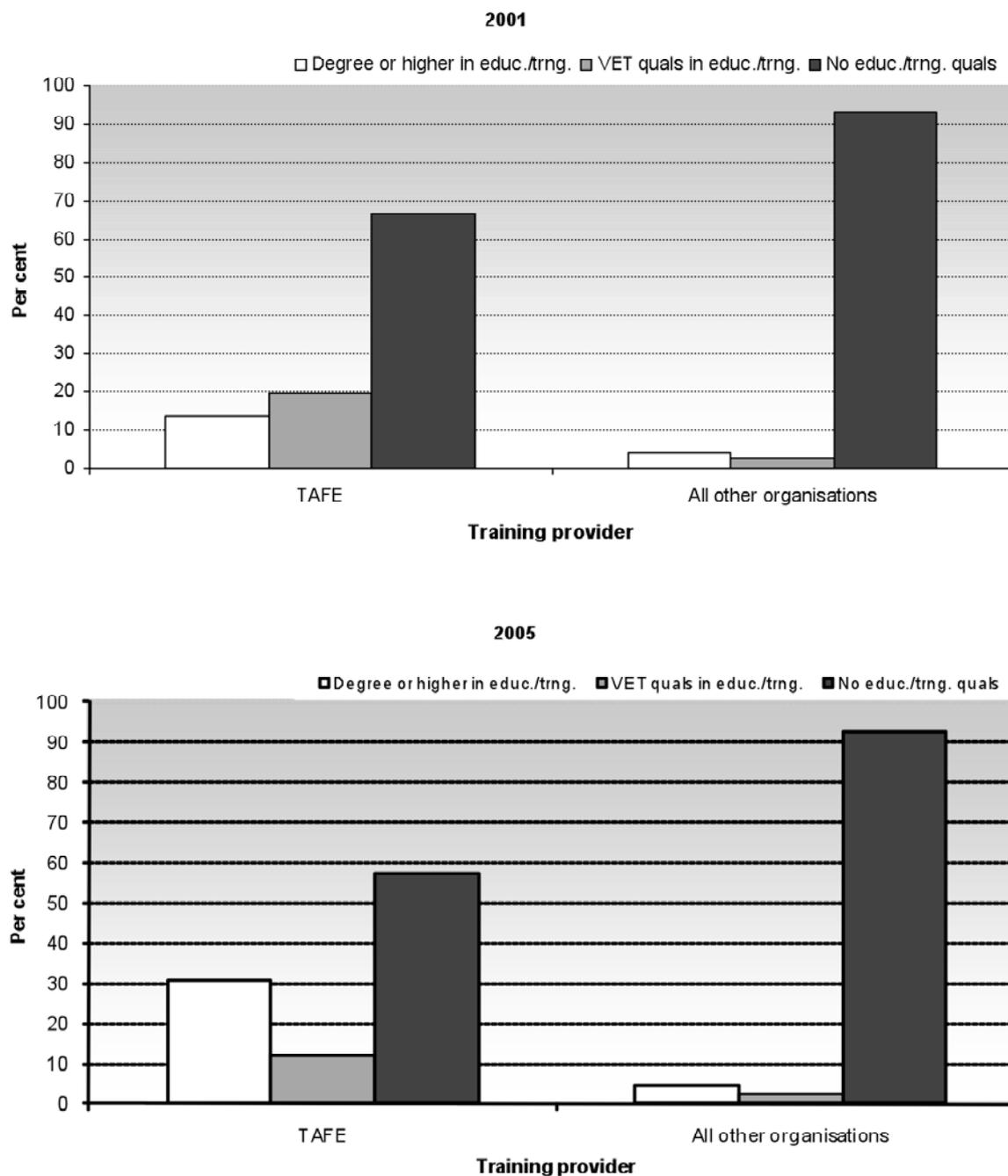
Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing (2001b, 2006a).

Qualification levels in education and training

The SET also asks VET practitioners whether they held a qualification in education or training. Figure 9 shows that the very clear finding is most do not. Outside VET practitioners working in TAFE, where it was around one in three in 2001, only around one in ten have a qualification specifically in the field of education or training.

Between 2001 and 2005, there is a significant increase in the percentage with a higher education qualification and a decrease in the percentage with a VET qualification, in line with the trend shown in figure 7. However, it is difficult to draw concrete conclusions about these findings, for reasons already discussed.

Figure 9 Education and training qualifications of VET practitioners by type of training provider, 2001 and 2005



Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training (2001a, 2005).

Data issues

This study uses two sets of data to develop a profile of VET professionals and VET practitioners. Across the two sources there is enough commonality in the findings to give a broad analysis of the characteristics of VET professionals and practitioners. However, several weaknesses are identified.

First, there are differences in the way in which the SET and Census of Population and Housing are collected. The SET is gathered using a face-to-face interview with the sampled individual. Potentially, this makes it more reliable than the census, where the form is completed by anyone in

the household. Comparing the SET data (figure 7) and census data (figure 8) for 2001 shows considerable differences in the proportions of TAFE professional staff holding qualifications at all levels. By contrast, the equivalent 2005 SET and 2006 census data are generally better aligned.

Second, there has been a change in scope to relevant questions in the SET. This has complicated the task of making data comparable between the years. And it should be noted here that this problem will, in one sense, continue to exist with the 2009 SET and, in another sense, disappear. This is because the 2009 SET will revert to asking questions about the provision of vocational education and training specifically, although it is still unclear whether the classification of training providers will likewise revert. The uncertainty that comes with analysing the 2005 data will remain, but it is hoped that the 2009 SET will be comparable with the 2001 edition.

Finally, there is a very large disparity in the numbers employed as VET practitioners between the census data and the SET (table 3). VET practitioners working in TAFE number 61 800 in the 2005 SET. This compares with 19 300 persons employed as vocational education teachers in the public sector in the 2006 census data. It should be noted that the NCVET 2004 publication found a similar disparity between sample sizes in the 2001 census and 2001 SET.

Table 3 Different estimates of the size of the VET workforce

	Census	SET^(a)
	2006	2005
VET professionals	n/a	418 200
in TAFE	n/a	67 400
in all other organisations	n/a	350 900
VET practitioners	26 900	343 900
in TAFE	19 300	61 800
in all other organisations	7 600	282 100
VET workforce	n/a	443 200
in TAFE	n/a	70 800
in all other organisations	n/a	372 400

Notes: (a) Excludes other organisations primarily for education/training of employees of current employer or business.

Source: ABS Survey of Education and Training & Census of Population and Housing (2005, 2006a).

These data issues and the equivocal findings in relation to qualification levels strengthen the case for a properly conceived and nationally consistent collection of VET workforce data. Such a collection would be better able to advise policy at national, jurisdictional and provider levels.

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