

**Helping school-based VET teachers make meaning of their work**

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This paper identifies several issues emerging from the introduction of dual-accredited vocational courses in the NSW Higher School Certificate in terms of equity, curriculum and the forms of knowledge which have traditionally been privileged within Australian secondary schools. In particular, this paper aims to explore how school-based vocational teachers make meaning from their work in relation to the interpretation and implementation of these curricula within a critical framework which acknowledges the broader social and political environments acting on the vocational agenda. Reflecting on some initial learnings from a related research project and her PhD studies, the presenter discusses some methodological and practical implications of conducting practitioner and participant research within a secondary school in NSW—research in which language, communication and teacher ‘talk’ are seen as important to how VET is viewed and ‘created’ within the school culture, and how school-based vocational teachers [and their students] construct notions of ‘competence’, competency standards and the curricula in which they are embedded. This paper also considers to what extent these understandings might challenge the values and assumptions which underpin the traditional academic/vocational divide within Australian secondary schools.