

Generic Competencies and Workplace Reform in the Australian Construction Industry

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This is a SPIRT project between the University of Technology and the Department of Public Works. The paper will be a summary of the project to date, including research findings relevant to VET.

The initial focus of the research has been to identify the significance of the generic competencies with particular reference to workplace reform. The four sites surveyed provide evidence that the generic competencies are indeed significant, but tend to be found in 'clusters' rather than operating independently. The competencies of teamwork, communication and planning have been identified as significant to all survey participants.

The major workplace reforms of Occupational Health & Safety and Environmental Practices have been selected as sites to further explore the role of the competencies. These are sites of workplace reform that are at different stages of development within the construction industry and that require transferability if they are to be truly effective.

There are interesting indications that the industry has yet to develop mechanisms for systematising learning if the transferability of the competencies is to be effective. Our research indicates that experience and/or expertise in an area of reform does not necessarily transfer easily from job to job. The industry often relies on the capabilities of the individual rather than developing mechanisms to reproduce their particular expertise.

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