

Problems to problematics – a journey

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The concept of practitioners as researchers is attractive in the vocational education sector. Many vocational teachers are former professionals who value practical knowledge more highly than academic knowledge. However, if the lack of practitioner based research reported on at conferences is any indication, it would seem that not many VET professionals view their work as research.

This paper describes the journey of a former female electrician, current TAFE teacher, who is now completing her Ph.D. It also describes the challenges she overcame to make the transition from tradesperson to researcher. It is a personal account of discovery (What? There is more than ONE reality and truth may not be true?). It describes the important relationship between role changes and professional growth. Most importantly, this paper develops the argument that without sustained access to purposeful conversations which promote higher order thinking skills, teachers are unlikely to become able to see their work as problematic and identify their practices as research.

This paper may well be typical of the outcome when a practitioner becomes a researcher – it makes no apology for its lack of references to the academic literature and relies on and celebrates personal experience as a valid form of data.