

2007 E-learning Benchmarking Project Report on Victorian ACE Student Survey

INTRODUCTION

The Australian Flexible Learning Framework (the Framework), conducts annual surveys of the uptake and use of e-learning in the vocational education and training (VET) system. In 2007 the E-learning Benchmarking Project conducted four surveys: registered training organisations (RTOs); VET students; VET teachers and trainers; and employers with employees undertaking accredited training. A full report on the 2007 E-learning Benchmarking Project, including the overall results and details on the survey methodology, is available from the Framework's E-learning Indicators website at: <http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/e-learningindicators>.

On request the 2007 E-learning Benchmarking Project also ran separate e-learning surveys for select groups using the standard benchmarking surveys. One of these was for a project involving students undertaking courses with a group of Victorian ACE providers as part of a 2007 ACE LearnScope project and the AccessACE trial:

- BRACE
- CAE
- Community College East Gippsland
- Coonara Community House
- Djerriwarrh Employment and Education Services
- Upper Beaconsfield Community Centre
- Werribee Community Centre.

The standard e-learning benchmarking survey for students was modified slightly to better reach these ACE students and reflect their e-learning experience.

SURVEY RESPONSES

The survey generated 42 usable responses from ACE students from August to November 2007.

- 31 were female; 7 were male; and 4 did not indicate their gender
- 5 were less than 35 years of age; 10 aged 35 to 44 years; 12 aged 45 to 54 years; 13 aged 55 years or over; and 2 did not indicate their age
- 2 were from the Northern ACFE region; 12 from Eastern region; 6 from Southern region; 13 from Western region; 3 from non metropolitan regions; and 6 did not indicate their region
- 5 were in full time employment; 14 were in part time employment; 21 were not employed; and 2 did not indicate their employment status.

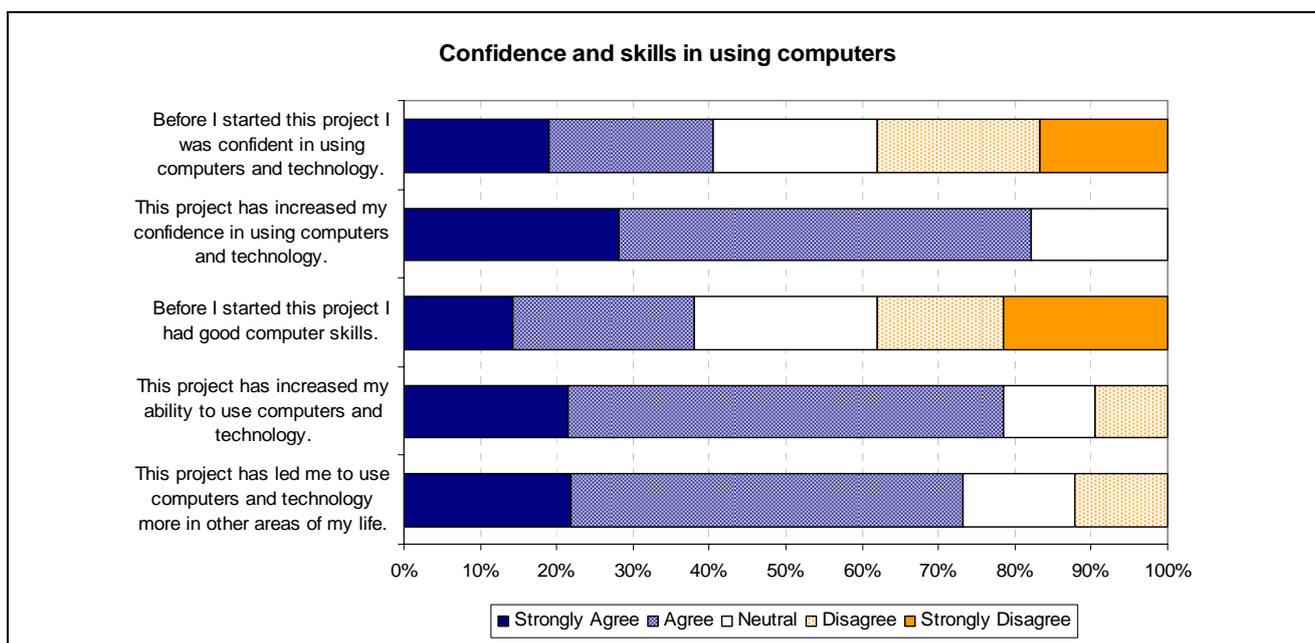
The students were undertaking a range of courses including:

- Certificate IV Business (Frontline Management)
- Certificate IV ESL English
- Certificate III Community Services Work
- Certificate III in Aged Care
- Certificate II CGEA
- Certificate in Information Technology
- Computers for Beginners
- Desk 2 English
- Digital Story Telling
- ESL Online (computers)
- Using Business Technology.

SURVEY RESULTS

Confidence and skills in using computers

The survey responses indicate that the project had a significant impact on the ACE students' confidence and skills in using computers. Only 40% of students surveyed said that before the project they were confident in using computers and technology and had good computer skills. By participating in the project 80% said that they had increased their confidence and skills in using computers, and 70% said that the project had led them to use computers and technology more in other areas of their life. This pattern of response showing increased confidence and skills was similar to that for VET students generally in the 2007 benchmarking survey, although more pronounced for this group of ACE students (i.e. 40% and 80% for ACE students vs 75% and 60% for all VET students).



The comments from students about their experience of the project support this finding.

“Being exposed to ‘new’ technology has been beneficial in gaining greater confidence in computer access. Wikispace (is) definitely a little addictive and always informative.”

“I have embraced my learning journey and feel that this experience has improved my training ability and skills.”

“I was involved in establishing a wiki for a project. I also became involved in developing the wiki for Cert 2 and 3 COMMWORK. I have learnt more about HTML Coding to enhance the appeal of wikis. It was fun. My geekiness is finally paying off!!”

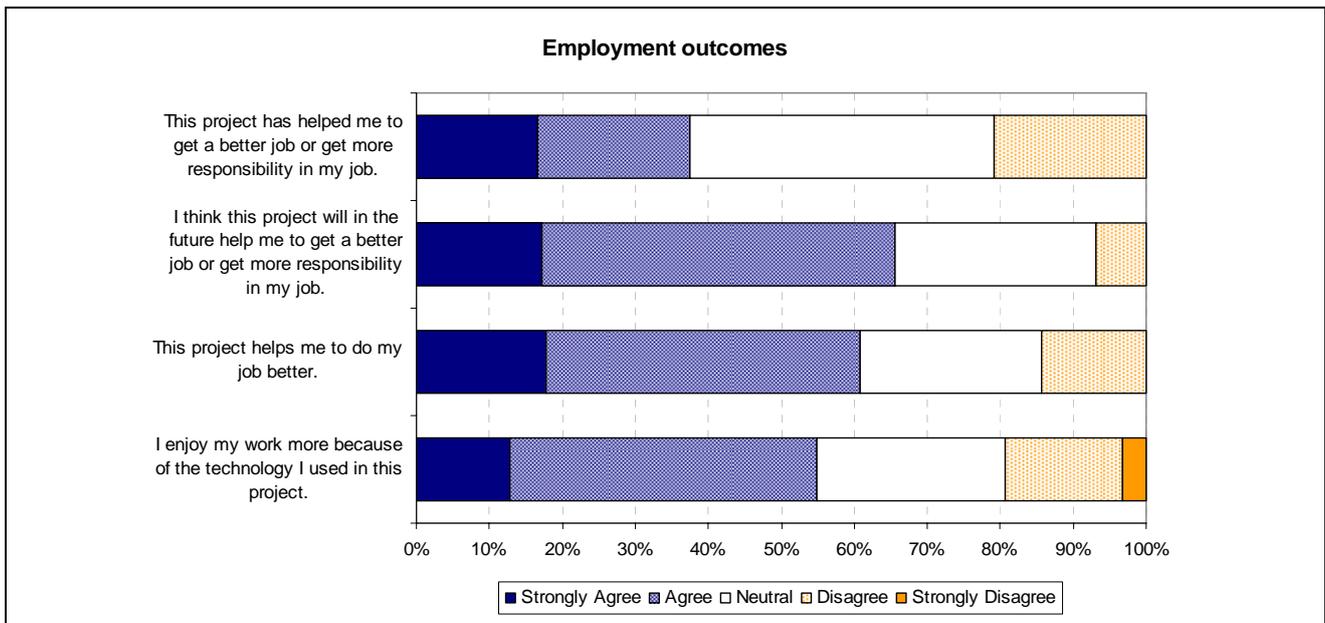
“This course and the help of the tutors has made me more confident and has opened a whole new world for me.”

“I found that I used my computer at home a lot more and it increased my confidence in regards to writing letters. I did enjoy the experience.”

“I want to tell you this the first time I used this computer. I feel good I can written every thing. I want to thank you for teach me more. I want to tell God pleas you about the computer.”

Employment outcomes

The ACE students were generally positive about the impact of the course on their current employment situation or the prospect of getting a better job, with 65% saying that they thought participating in the project would in the future help them to get a better job or more responsibility in their current job. These findings were similar to or slightly more positive than those for all VET students, particularly against the question about enjoyment of work. Fifty five percent of ACE students said they enjoyed their work more because of the technology in the project, compared with 42% in the 2007 national benchmarking survey.



Several students talked about the impact of the project on their work.

“It helped me get my job. It was fun and convenient.”

“I hope I turn out to be an excellent online trainer and am able to bring with my training a sense of community, as my trainers did for me.”

Flexibility and choice

The project provided ACE students with some choice in when, where and how they undertook their learning, with around 60% to 70% saying the computer part of the project enabled them to choose:

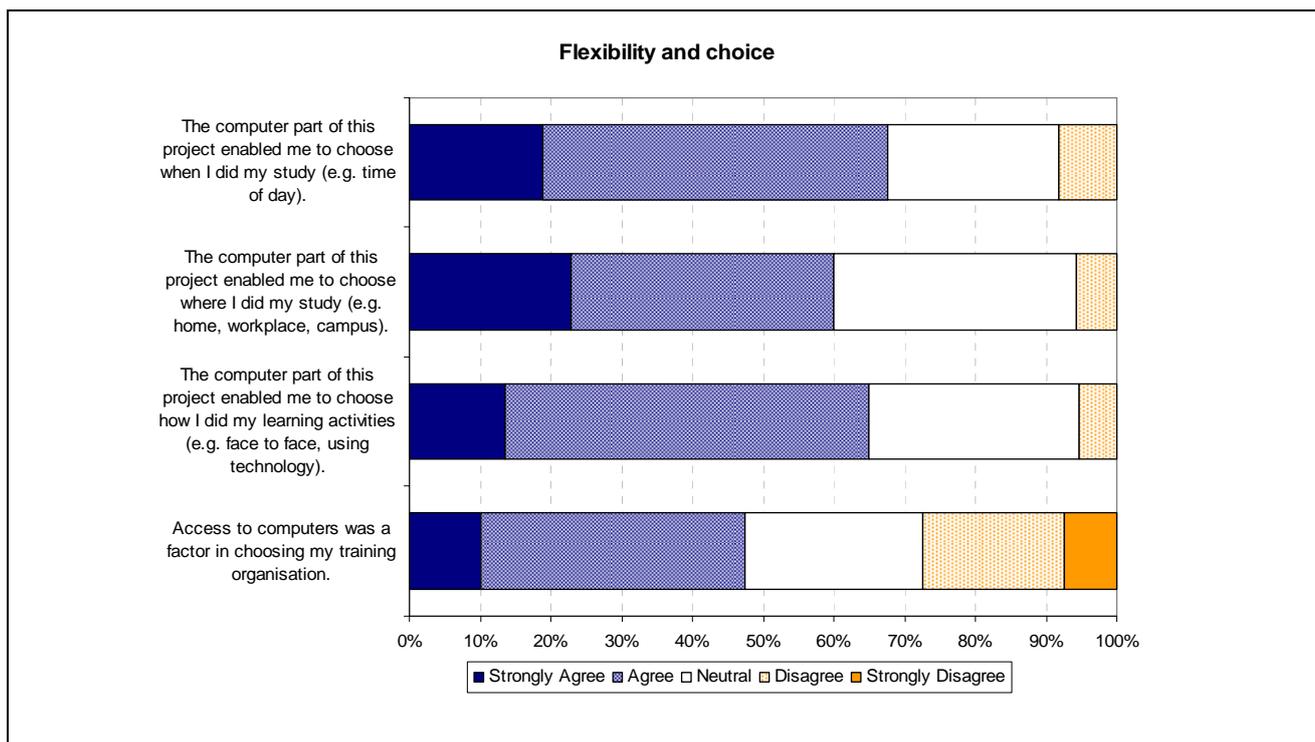
- when they did their study (e.g. the time of day)
- where they did their study (e.g. home, workplace, campus)
- how they did their learning activities (e.g. face to face, using technology).

These results were generally the same or slightly more positive about the flexibility involved in using technologies than the overall VET student population (who had positive responses in the 50% to 60% range for the equivalent questions).

“Convenient to fit study around the demands of full time work and family commitments.”

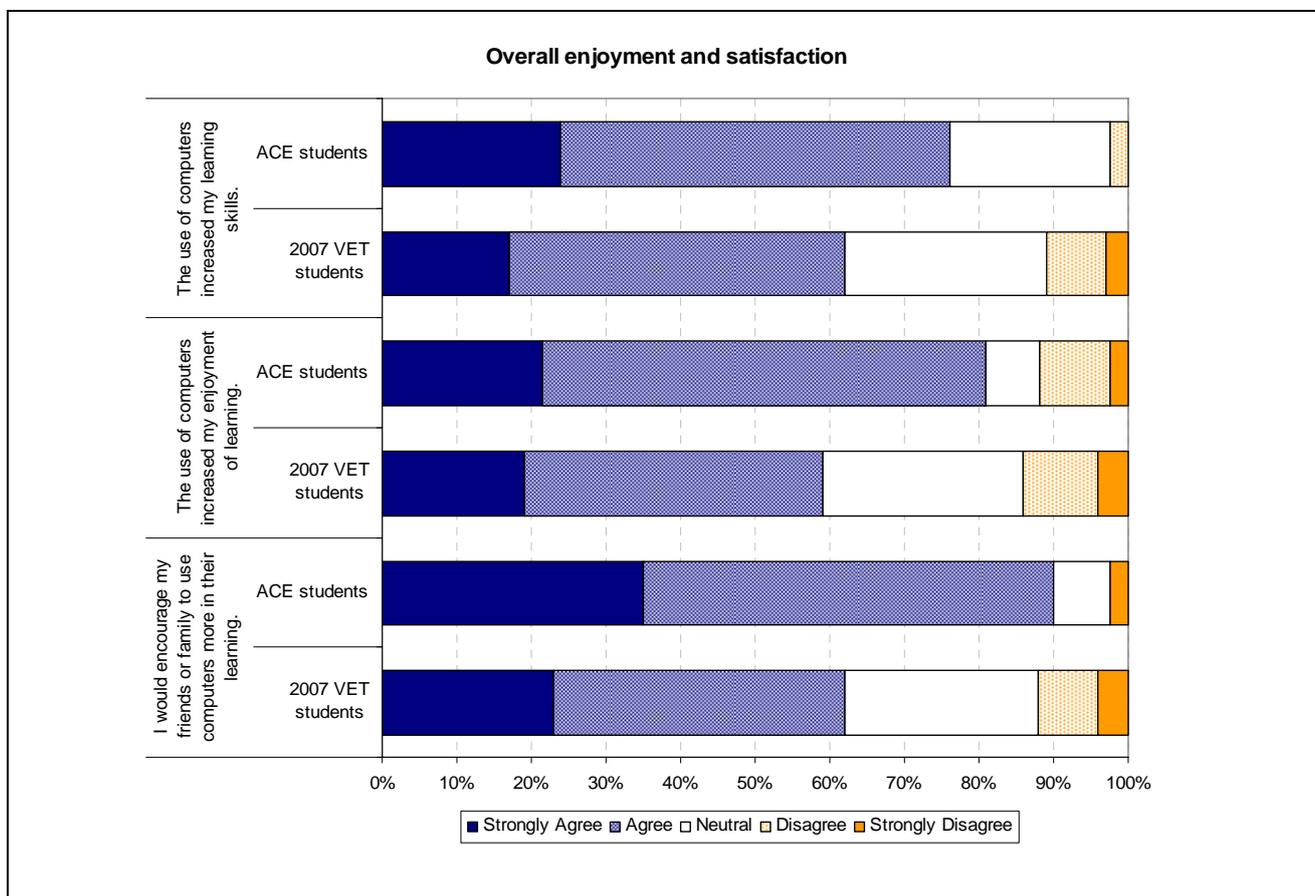
“I enjoyed being able to study at home. It was comfortable.”

“It assisted me with following up on lessons I was unable to attend recently. It allowed me to complete my assessment tasks on time. Thank you.”



Overall enjoyment and satisfaction

Aside from the significant impact of the project on increasing ACE students confidence and skills in using computers and technology, the main finding from the survey was students' high level of overall satisfaction with their participation in the project.



Seventy six percent of students from the project who responded to the e-learning benchmarking survey said that the use of computers had increased their learning skills. Eighty percent said the use of computers had increased their enjoyment of learning. These responses were much higher than in the overall 2007 VET student survey.

"E-learn has enhanced my training ability. It has provided me with a fascinating look into a new world of technology."

"I enrolled in a Digital Story-Telling class and as part of this course I have done a film about a Chinese traditional instrument called 'Guzin'. It helps me improve my knowledge in multimedia and it was fun, interesting and convenient."

"I learnt far more than I imagined I would."

"The course was fun and it has erased many of my fears about computers."

When asked if they would recommend the use of computers in learning to their friends 90% of respondents said they would, compared with 62% for all VET students. This indicates a very high level of overall satisfaction with the project experience, even though there were some students who did not fully enjoy their time.

"I enjoyed the creativity of creating Powerpoints and implementing my first e-learn class. I am extremely grateful to being offered a place in this project."

"I am going to spend next term converting SFH Supervisor to online."

"This way we will have both food handling accredited courses up and running online."

"Enjoyed discovering new technology and how it could assist learning. Felt awkward at first communicating online but it has been a valuable tool for sharing resources and information."

"I have found this project to be daunting, frustrating, and stressful. But it has forced me out of my comfort zone and to try something new. I have now bought a computer and am looking forward to expanding my knowledge with computers."

E-business services

The survey also asked ACE students about their use and experience of using e-business services offered by their training provider (e.g. online access to information on courses and policies, online enrolment and payments, online library services, online access to results). Very few students had used any of these services (less than 20%), although some indicated that if the services were available they would use them.