

FOUNDATION SKILLS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

Scoping a foundation skills professional standards framework – Consultation Kit

August 2013

FOUNDATION SKILLS WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

This kit should be filled out after participants have read the *Scoping a foundation skills professional standards framework* consultation paper.

Group Feedback Form

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| Workshop session date: | 8 October 2013 |
| Organisation: | Western Australian Council for Adult Literacy |
| Number of participants: | 15 |
| Location: | Perth, WA |
| Facilitator: | Theo Bekkers |
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Please select the most accurate description of the way in which this feedback represents the views of your workshop participants.

This feedback represents:

the consensus view of participating individuals

the majority view of the workshop participants

a compilation of the range of views expressed by workshop participants

other:.....

.....

Diagram 1: Possible extent of the foundation skills workforce



Diagram 1 is a rough sketch of the possible extent of the foundation skills workforce. It is created as a starting point for talking about the diverse environments for foundation skills delivery in Discussion Point 1.

Responses to workshop discussion questions:

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| Discussion point 1: <i>scoping the foundation skills field</i> | |
| Where are the boundaries of the foundation skills field? | <p>There is no existing ‘foundation skills field’ since ‘foundation skills’ is a recent coinage. There are defined ‘core skills’ teaching roles. There are no well-defined ‘employability skills’ teaching roles since these skills are nominally embedded in Training Package specifications and there are no discrete qualifications for employability skills. The whole of the teaching force in the VET sector are (nominally) responsible for teaching employability skills and the point of differentiating a field – foundation skills – become moot because it includes everybody. Clearly nobody is successfully teaching ‘employability skills’ because employers are unhappy with the quality of employees/graduates. There has not been time yet for the Core Skills for Work (CSfW) to impact on practice. This project could consider the role of CSfW in identifying useful practices and influencing professional qualifications.</p> |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| <p>Does the field include only occupations that are solely focused on foundation skills development, or should it include the notion of 'associated' job roles that have some responsibility for, or interest in, foundation skills development?</p> | <p>For the purpose of developing professional standards, the clearly defined existing teaching roles associated with 'core skills' courses and qualifications should be the focus:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TESOL • Adult Literacy • Adult Numeracy |
| <p>Are there domains, programs or occupations that are missing from diagram 1 (above) – or some that should be excluded?</p> | <p>Please focus, not on the roles defined by work context, but on the content of the teaching. Some groups with different learning needs have been identified as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Very young people (14 yrs+) • Aboriginal • Migrants and refugees • Prisoners |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| Is there a need to define and agree upon what is meant by a foundation skills practitioner? | Foundation Skills practitioner is not a helpful term – it suggests a singularity. There is clearly not one kind of practitioner. Teaching roles need to be differentiated along specific content knowledge and professional skill. (See above). |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| <i>Discussion point 2: considering the purpose of a professional standards framework</i> | |
| Should a professional standards framework focus only on foundation skills education specialists or should it also include related occupations where a level of knowledge and skills in foundation skills is an addition to the required core skills and capabilities? | <p>A professional standards framework should focus on LLN specialists initially. Other workers in the vocational training and adult education sectors may wish to work towards developing the specialised dispositions, knowledge and skill that LLN specialist teachers require to be effective teachers.</p> <p>Specialist teachers of LLN may wish to access professional development to learn how to teach the applied communication and cognitive skills grouped</p> |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| | <p>under 'employability skills.</p> <p>There is real danger in failing to recognise that substantial professional knowledge and skills is required to teach LLN.</p> |
| <p>How can the diversity of the foundation skills field be accommodated in a professional standards framework?</p> | <p>It cannot immediately. This must be a work in progress. Standards must pertain to specific teaching, content specialisations and the specific needs of client groups.</p> <p>However, there would be advantages in recruiting specialist literacy and numeracy teachers from a wider range of socio-economic groups and developing the profession so that that it more closely reflects the student demographic and range of language practices.</p> |
| <p>What components of a professional standards framework will be critical for ensuring that it is useful and sustainable?</p> | <p>Must be useful in informing IR agreements</p> <p>Must have the backing the relevant professional organisations.</p> |
| <p>What management mechanisms would need to be put in place to implement and maintain</p> | <p>How long is a piece of string?</p> <p>Formal arrangements must be established and maintained linking</p> |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| a professional standards framework for the foundation skills field? | specification in LLN and other curriculum documents, teaching training in a range of tertiary organisations, IR agreements, commonwealth and state policies and programs. |
| What role could existing membership organisations play in the implementation and maintenance of a professional standards framework? | <p>Membership organisation endorsement would be necessary as a first step. (See for example ACTA's Standards for TESOL Practitioners)</p> <p>Information about what standards/qualifications are required for different job roles could be posted on websites. See for example http://www.victesol.vic.edu.au/careers-in-tesol.php</p> <p>If the professional organisations are to have a substantial role in providing advice, monitoring, registration of teachers etc then the issue of appropriate levels of funding must be raised.</p> |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| Discussion point 3: <i>identifying knowledge and skills for the foundation skills field</i> | |
| Could a matrix or framework of knowledge and skills be developed to describe the range of capabilities needed in the foundation skills field? | See ACTA's Standards for TESOL Practitioners which includes dispositions. This framework could easily be adapted for Adult Literacy and Adult Numeracy Teachers. Arguably, a fourth would be needed for teachers specialising in Digital Citizenship. |
| Are some areas of knowledge and skills essential for everyone in the field? | No. A single field does not exist. There is also a grave danger in specifying a lowest common denominator since this might easily be interpreted as the 'standard' There is some evidence already that the Cert IV TALLN unit, having been made compulsory, now qualifies graduates to claim specialist skills in LLN. |
| Are there identifiable specialisations that could usefully be described in a matrix or framework? | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TESOL • TESOL with no education in 1st language • English as second dialect |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ESB with low levels of reading/writing • Numeracy from beginning levels • Digital citizenship which covers a range of technology – computer / tablets/ phones • Employability skills (there is no established practice through accredited curricula or through teacher training that can be nominated here.) |
| <p>Could any or all of these skills be encapsulated within an existing framework such as the VET Capability Framework? (see Appendix C of the consultation paper)</p> | <p>Much of what has happened in the VET sector under the guise of national consistency, accountability and management frameworks has actively undermined the status, qualifications and roles of qualified adult literacy and adult numeracy teachers. Now is an ideal opportunity to describe what is different and valuable about the people who can teach LLN skills successfully.</p> |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| Discussion point 4: <i>using qualifications to describe professional requirements</i> | |
| How do historic and currently available qualifications in LLN relate to the needs of foundation skills specialists? | <p>TESOL qualifications are well established in all education sectors and help contribute to higher outcomes in TESOL courses.</p> <p>Adult literacy and adult numeracy teaching qualifications hardly had time to get established before they were undermined by the marketisation of VET and the failure to specify high level of skill needed to teach LAN accredited curricula.</p> <p>At the very least TESOL teachers and ALN teachers should have professional parity, standing and employment conditions.</p> <p>TESOL teachers' skills and knowledge is cross sectoral. Arguably, literacy and numeracy teaching skills are also shared by primary sector teachers and adult sector. Adult education principles may need to be included in the qualifications that are specifically used in the adult sectors.</p> <p>Potentially, all LLN specialist teachers may need to consider the ways in</p> |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| | <p>which their practice incorporates teaching the application of cognitive and communication skills for purposes and in contexts that are useful to students, including the workplace context. Those already implementing a 'social practices' approach may be at an advantage here.</p> |
| <p>Do any qualifications fully capture the knowledge and skills required by foundation skills specialists?</p> | <p>The specialists and specialisations already represent a highly differentiated 'field'. No one qualification adequately specifies skills and knowledge needed, and none should try. Different qualifications are needed for different content specialisations.</p> |
| <p>Are there any critical skills and capabilities required by the foundation skills workforce that are not covered by any existing formal qualifications?</p> | <p>Bidialectal skills and knowledge (needed to teach Aboriginal English speakers) are not represented.</p> <p>The social practices approach (used successfully in Scotland) is not well articulated in formal qualifications, particularly those generated in the VET sector.</p> <p>Australian policy discourse favours an emphasis on skills development and measurement which is antithetical to good practice in adult education and adult LLN education in particular. An emphasis on use of assessment and assessment frameworks as a means of generating awareness about</p> |

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| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
| | complex LLN learning has resulted in: |
| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
| Discussion point 5: <i>defining on the job requirements</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Counterproductive focus on decontextualised skills • Too much time spent on measurement • Mistaken belief about what constitutes LLN practice • Claims from people with no specialist knowledge to be LLN experts because they know the name of an assessment framework. |
| Could levels be used to describe developmental stages of foundation skills expertise and experience? | <p>It is possible to think of levels that would lead general trainers toward a standard established for TESOL/LAN teachers. There could be four rather than three. These levels are to do with skills and knowledge of content areas rather than the context (workplace, TAFE college etc):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embedded (the VET teacher who incorporates FS in training activities) • Apprentice (a person working towards specialist skills) • Entry Level specialist (a person meeting the skills and knowledge requirements but without substantial experience) |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="969 344 1912 376">• Fully Competent Specialist teacher (qualified and experienced) |
| <p data-bbox="293 400 920 568">How much on-the-job experience is needed by foundation skills practitioners working in various roles or contexts?</p> | <p data-bbox="969 400 1727 432">Different specifications would apply to different levels.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li data-bbox="969 488 2033 687">• An Entry Level Specialist, for example might be required to undertake a minimum of 100 hours practicum as part of training, and two years (full time equivalent) working with access to supervision from a Fully Competent Specialist Teacher. <li data-bbox="969 727 2024 871">• For a person to move from the Embedded level to the Apprentice level, 50 teaching hours (LN focus) working under supervision with formal study in the appropriate skill sets units from TAE. <li data-bbox="969 911 2018 1110">• For a person to move from Apprentice to Entry Level Specialised Teacher and enrol in a post graduate qualification, 100 hours teaching units from accredited LLN curriculum under supervision as an entry requirement. |

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| <p>Are there, or should there be, established mechanisms for gaining the necessary on-the-job experience?</p> | <p>Practicums, with minimum nominal hours must be included in qualifications.</p> <p>Working under supervision for a specified time could also be utilised (see above). The supervision should be provided by a professional with appropriate content knowledge who meets the highest level of a three or four component standard.</p> |
| <p>Should formal or consistent methods for documenting on-the-job experience be developed?</p> | <p>Yes – but there is so much compliance related documenting work already required this could be the straw that breaks the camel’s back.</p> |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| Discussion point 6: <i>creating a system for continuing professional development</i> | |
| Could a system for continuing professional development (CPD) be created that will meet the needs of the foundation skills field? | <p>There is no foundation skills field. If there is to be one, it has to be created. One way to do this is to establish a requirement for meaningful CPD and link this to IR requirements.</p> <p>Please note that currently there is a lot meaningless and wasteful CPD associated with everyone in the VET sector, whether they need it or not, continually updating their TAE Cert IV.</p> <p>Whatever system may be put in place, it should learn from the mistakes of the current one.</p> <p>One problem that the proposed standards framework could address is the requirement for LLN teachers with specialist high level qualifications needing to undertake lower level qualifications eg the TAELLN Cert IV unit.</p> |
| How can a highly casualised workforce be accommodated in a CPD system? | It can't. The conditions under which people are employed must be addressed first. |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| Who would take responsibility for managing a CPD system? | Who would? Currently RTOs are completely distracted with making sure their staff meet compliance around TAE Cert IV. There is no time, space or money for anyone to do any CPD that might be more useful to them. |
| Should there be one system, or many, to accommodate the diversity of the field? | Depends what is meant by system. Clearly the field is highly differentiated and may be employed under different industrial awards. |
| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
| Discussion point 7: <i>establishing requirements for specialist areas</i> | |
| Can areas of specialisation be clearly identified within the foundation skills field? | See above |
| What is the best way to describe the unique | Some professional organisations have produced advisory documents (see |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
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| <p>knowledge and skills requirements of specialist areas?</p> | <p>http://www.tesol.org.au/files/files/61_ACTA_Bro_PRINT_Aug06.pdf</p> <p>Other professional organisations may follow suit. However, this advice will only become effective if is recognised in IR agreements and followed by curriculum developers.</p> <p>This is a key issue for quality improvements in teaching and learning</p> |
| <p>Does there need to be a distinction between specialists who operate across delivery contexts (e.g. numeracy specialists, NESB specialists) and those who specialise in a particular delivery context (e.g. WELL practitioners)?</p> | <p>The most important distinctions are between the content specialisation determined by the different needs of learners. TESOL, literacy and numeracy are very different fields; teachers need different skills and knowledge, but possibly similar dispositions, values and beliefs.</p> <p>Dealing with teaching and learning is the core activity. Dealing with the delivery context is secondary.</p> |

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| <p>Discussion point 8: <i>determining the need for a code of practice</i></p> | |
| <p>Are there any ethical operating principles for the foundation skills field that are not already established in the broader education and training system?</p> | <p>There is a very grave danger that individuals with a bit of training/knowledge will believe they are the full bottle on the delivery of LLN without the underpinning knowledge of dispositions and understandings (as in the TESOL Standards.)</p> <p>There is an ethical duty to ensure that our systems offer students access to very well trained and effective teachers. This is particularly important where second chance education is involved and students may already have sustained damage from poor schooling or other life events/circumstances. The most disadvantaged should get the best chances and the teacher is the single most influential factor in successful learning.</p> <p>It is clearly unethical to fail to provide adequate service to students, just as it is unethical to create an expectation among trainers that specialist skills and knowledge is not needed to teach LLN. Learning a new language is a complex undertaking; learning literacy and numeracy skills is similarly demanding. Arguable we should be raising the bar for specialist teachers.</p> |

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| | <p>Students would benefit if all their teachers were more aware of the complexities of language learning and language difference, so perhaps there is an ethical imperative in outlining a process and an expectation that all teachers become more skilled and pathway to do so is clearly identified.</p> <p>Good practice guidelines might be more useful than a Code of Ethics. See for example documents published on the Irish National Adult Literacy Agency (NALA) website.</p> |
| <p>What does this mean for practitioners operating outside of accredited VET delivery</p> | <p>In the first instance, focus on the delivery of accredited training in the VET or adult education sectors.</p> |

| Discussion questions | Summary/key points |
|-----------------------------|---|
| Additional comments/issues? | <p>Creating a standards framework presents an opportunity to raise the status of specialist teachers and create parity of recognition for professionals teaching in all the LLN fields.</p> <p>There is a real danger that the effort to create something called a Foundation Skills Practitioner that includes specialists and generalists brings about yet another slide towards the lowest common denominator.</p> <p>Trying to be inclusive may be counterproductive.</p> |