
What happened to the professionals?

Professional teaching standards and the role of adult literacy and numeracy teachers working in the vocational sector.

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Productivity and Foundation Skills

- National imperatives and focus

 - COAG targets (qualification levels)

 - Economic growth and sustainability (productivity)

 - Workforce development

 - Labour market participation

 - Social inclusion

- What are foundation skills

 - Core Skills – LLN

 - Employability Skills

COAG Outcomes and Targets

OUTCOMES

- The working age population has gaps in foundation skills levels reduced to enable effective educational, labour market and social participation
- The working age population has the depth and breadth of skills and capabilities required for the 21st century labour market.

PROGRESS MEASURES

- (a) Halve the proportion of Australians ages 20-64 without qualifications at Certificate III level and above between 2009 and 2020.
 - (b) Double the number of higher qualification completions (diploma and advanced diploma) between 2009 and 2020.
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Contradictions

- The government has pledged more money to LLNP when, paradoxically, the figures show that numbers in this program have dropped significantly (NCVER, 2011)
 - Teachers of these skills are becoming less qualified at the same time as the call to upskill is becoming louder
 - Slippage between the LLN skills and capabilities that workers need in a knowledge society and the focus predominately on skill building at the lower levels of the ACSF.
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Specialist teacher supply

- Skills Australia suggest the 'supply of adult language, literacy and numeracy professionals is insufficient to meet current training needs across the nation' (2010, p.38).
 - They also point out that supply will continue to decline as baby boomers retire
 - They suggest there is a need for measures to 'entice' more practitioners into the field
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Specialists and generalists

- In the business of promoting the message of literacy as everybody's business there seems to be slippage between skills of awareness and identification and specialist LLN teaching skills
 - LLN – three sets of specialist teaching skills
 - No other VET practitioner can teach without specialisation in their vocational field (plumbing, plastering, cooking, automotive, aged care etc)
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Teaching literacy IS Rocket
Science – why we need a
specialist workforce

Two over-arching principles

- Productivity/value for money

Adults who present for adult literacy tuition, are by definition the people who found it difficult to benefit from instruction. These people require better instructors. It is a waste of taxpayers' money to employ someone who does not have the skills to do the job. It is inefficient and ineffective.

- Equity

Adults who present for literacy tuition have already been failed by the education service they received. We may consider it a human rights issue that the service they receive as an adult should not replicate the original failure.

Teaching literacy is complex and difficult

- It must be difficult because we fail so often.
 - If it were easy, the problem would already be solved in early childhood education.
 - It is complex because it involves two complex semiotic systems: one 'natural' and one 'artificial'.
 - Understanding complex semiotic systems, and the means by which they are mastered entails sustained academic study.
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Spoken language v written language

- Spoken language is learnt by 'osmosis' in the first 5 years of life.
 - Producing and decoding written language is learnt as a result of instruction.
 - Failure of learning must be understood to be a systemic failure of instructional method.
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Systemic failure of instruction - reasons

- Failure to appreciate the complexity of:
 - ‘domain’ knowledge (know how language works) and
 - pedagogical knowledge and skill (how to teach what many people find difficult to learn).
 - Inadequacy of teacher preparation programs.
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Inadequacy of teacher preparation programs

- Moats, Louisa C. (1999) *Teaching Reading IS Rocket Science*, America Federation of Teachers, Washington

www.aft.org/pdfs/teachers/rocketscience0304.pdf

- Rowe, Ken and National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (Australia), "Teaching Reading" (2005). Teaching and Learning and Leadership, http://research.acer.edu.au/tll_misc/5
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Teaching adults

- More difficult than teaching children

 - Didn't learn as a child

 - Competing priorities

 - Fossilised/compensatory strategies

 - Resistance

 - Demand for relevance

- Lack of research base for androgogy

 - No clear evidence on efficacy of code-based v meaning-based approaches

 - Rigorous understanding of language as social practice missing

Adult literacy and numeracy teachers need:

- Deep domain knowledge
 - Broad and deep instructional knowledge and skills
 - Capacity to diagnose and adapt instruction following research-based evidence
 - A national standard to guarantee skills, status and income
 - Access to continued professional learning
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Adult literacy and numeracy provision in the VET sector

- Associated with lower level qualifications
 - Associated with the most disadvantaged (least productive) people
 - Curriculum replaced by training products specifications
 - Undertaken by non-specialist staff
 - Unsupported (reduced access to relevant professional development)
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Adult literacy and numeracy teachers in the VET sector

- Specialist teachers are (were) the most highly qualified in the VET sector (AQF 8+ qualifications)
 - Required to hold a Cert IV - status of higher level qualifications undermined
 - AQTF specifications for staff skills
 - Casualisation and HECS - closure of specialist qualifications
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VET sector response

- Create VET sector qualifications for specialist teachers at lower AQF levels
 - Nominate responsibility for literacy and numeracy 'skills development' to all VET sector staff
 - Create a Foundation Skills Training Package at Cert I and Cert II
 - Focus on 'measurement' - ACSF
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Result of VET reform

- Depleted specialist workforce
- Unrealistically low minimal teaching qualifications
- Loss of rigorous and relevant curriculum
- No robust relevant pedagogical research
- Loss of status and income for specialist teachers

NO SPECIALIST WORKFORCE!

Solution – teacher quality

- Research identifies teacher quality as the single most important factor influencing educational outcomes
 - Schools sector has National Partnership Agreement on Teacher Quality
 - National Teacher Standards have been developed for progression from Graduate to Lead Practitioner
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Options

- Remove HECS from tertiary courses for literacy/ numeracy teaching qualifications
 - Negotiate with at least one uni in each state to devise more rigorous teacher preparation programs to produce literacy and numeracy specialists for all sectors.
 - Address the human resource statements in all literacy and numeracy courses to include a very high degree of specialist knowledge (domain and pedagogical) equivalent to that for TESOL teachers.
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Options (cont)

- Work with unions to address IR awards for specialist teachers.
 - Funding for literacy provision should be costed so that professionals can be employed.
 - Establish a research practice that uses the research on early literacy and produces evidence about what works for adults.
 - Establish a fund to provide access to tertiary training over the next five-ten years and build specialised workforces.
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TESOL qualifications

- A qualified TESOL is a person who holds a postgraduate qualification that includes a supervised teaching practicum in TESL/TESOL or a 4 year B Education qualification with a TESL/TESOL method.
 - Approved qualifications include:
 - B Ed with TESL/TESOL as a method
 - Diploma of Education with TESL/TESOL as a method
 - TESL/TESOL within Graduate Certificate in Education
 - Graduate Certificate in TESL/TESOL
 - Graduate Diploma in TESL/TESOL
 - Appropriate Masters degree, which includes a TESOL specialisation such as:
 - Masters of Arts (TESL/TESOL)
 - Masters of Applied Linguistics
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